

University of California San Diego

HIUS 144

Jews and the History of American Diversity

Professor Hasia Diner

Tuesday/Thursday 5-6:20.

Room 1106B Humanities Building

Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 10-12:00

hrd1@nyu.edu

Jews and the History of American Diversity

This undergraduate course seeks to place the experience of American Jews into the context of the nation's religious, ethnic, and racial diversity from the colonial period through the later part of the twentieth century. The course will explore the ways in which this minority group, which never constituted more than 4 or 5 percent of the population of United States, by necessity had to interact with a wide variety of individuals representing a range of religious, ethnic and racial groups. The Jews' political, economic, and social and cultural integration required that they interact with others. They also had to cope with the ways in which these many other Americans evaluated and understood them, including but not limited to the force of anti-Semitism.

The Jewish encounter with these different kinds of Americans differed, group by group, and each encounter represented a different kind of history. Major events in American and Jewish history left their mark on these relationships. We will ask how the Jews' concentration in the commercial sector, their whiteness in the eyes of the state, and the legacy of European anti-Semitism structured the Jewish encounters with other Americans. The Civil War, the era of mass migration, and the vast expansion of American industry, and the conquest of the North American continent will be considered. The Holocaust indeed functions as a watershed event, but the Great Depression and the New Deal, post-war suburbanization, the civil rights movement, and the turmoil of the late 1960s also proved formative. As such, the course will be organized by group, yet within each one of these histories a chronological presentation will be followed.

We will look at political developments but also literary, artistic and intellectual manifestations of how Jews constructed these other Americans, and conversely how they made sense of the Jews in their

midst. Keep in mind that the course is not organized chronologically, but by group, but we will in the classroom lectures explore development over time and deal with the chronology that way.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students should be prepared to discuss the readings for each class. We will devote the last half hour of one class a week for students to discuss their papers with the instructor. Classroom discussion which will demonstrate having read the assigned books will count for 10 percent of the class grade.

1. [40 percent of grade] Students will prepare a 15 page paper due on May 29. We will discuss the details of the paper in class, but note that papers **must be based on original work and any cases of plagiarism will be dealt with firmly and severely.**

Students will turn in on April 24 a one page abstract, a bibliography, and an outline of the paper. [10 percent of grade]

2. Students will watch several films and will write reaction papers to each film, commenting on how the film illustrated themes discussed in the class and the readings. [10 percent]
3. Students will write one page synopses to those books marked with an asterisk on the list of readings. Each paper should be one page long and it should answer the following questions:
 - What question has the author asked?
 - What sources did the author use?
 - How is the book organized?
 - What conclusion did the author reach?

[20 percent]

-
4. There will be a final take home examination: 25 percent
-

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS

Week One: April 3/April 5

An Overview: Placing Jewish immigration and settlement patterns in context. [This week will offer students a broad outline of the history of Jewish immigration to the America, starting in the seventeenth century and will sketch out the basic nature of their settlement in America, as it changed over time, and will offer a broad perspective on how their adaptation reflected certain key issues in American life. These will involve religion, politics, race, economics, and immigration.]

Reading: Hasia Diner, *A New Promised Land*

Week Two: April 10/12

Jews and Protestants: Protestantism functioned as the "founding faith" of the colonies and of nineteenth century America. How did Protestantism and particularly its effort to evangelize among the

Jews, impact on Jewish integration? [Reading, Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People*]* [synopsis required]

Week Three: April 17/19 [Note No Class on 4/19]

Jews and Catholics: In most cities, Jews interacted and lived in close proximity to Catholics of various ethnic backgrounds. Jewish history, extending back for centuries involved a deep antipathy between these two, deeply rooted in the actions of the Catholic church in Europe, including but not limited to such profound phenomena as the Inquisition, the Crusades, the Church's creation of ghettos, and the like. How in urban America did Jews and Catholics and their respective institutions engage with each other? [Egal Feldman, *Catholics and Jews in Twentieth Century America*] * [synopsis]

Week Four: April 24/April 26

Jews and Other European Immigrants: In the United States Jews came in contact, as a result of where they lived and how they made a living, with other immigrants from Europe. These included both immigrants from countries they had lived in, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, and other parts of central and eastern Europe. They also encountered Europeans new to them, most importantly Irish and Italians. This week will explore the range of interactions between Jews and these other immigrants from Europe. [Several Scanned articles, to be distributed]

Week Five: May 1/ May 3: American Anti-semitism: This week will focus on the changing sources and manifestations of anti-semitism in the United States. How did it constitute the legacy of a European tradition and how did it, at the same time, reflect the tensions of race, class, and ethnicity in America? [Reading: Gerber, David, ed., *Anti-Semitism in America*] : film: "Gentleman's Agreement" "

May Six: May 8/May 10

Jews and African Americans: A rich and provocative literature has examined the ways Jews made sense of and constructed relationships of various kinds with African Americans, from the era of slavery through the twentieth century, and has focused on such issues as Jewish slaveholding, Jewish business relationships with African Americans, the involvement of Jews in the civil rights movement, and the rise of tensions between the two groups on a political as well as a lived level. Given the size of the literature and the complexity of the subject, three weeks will be devoted to this topic. [Readings: Diner, Hasia, *In the Almost Promised Land: American Jews and Blacks, 1915-1935** Synopsis ; Film: "The Jazz Singer"

Week Seven: May 15/17: Jews and African Americans and Week Eight: May 22 and 24

Reading: Cheryl Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters** [synopsis]

Week Nine: May 29/31: Jews and Asian Americans

This subject has been relatively little studied and only a few scholars have studied how Jews and Chinese and Japanese Americans met and interacted with each other. Looking at cities like San Francisco in particular this week will explore how Jews responded to the anti-Chinese movement of the mid-nineteenth century and the Japanese relocation during World War II. It will also explore the role of the Jewish labor movement in trying to unionize Chinese workers in the garment industry.

[Reading: Ellen Eisenberg, *The First to Cry Injustice*] * Synopsis

Week Ten: June 5/7 Jews and Americans on Hispanic Background

As was the case of the previous week, only a sparse literature exists on this subject, although some scholars are beginning to look at this issue. While there is a small literature on crypto-Jews in the Southwest who functioned in the Hispanic communities, having come to the Americas with the Spanish invaders, the actual lived contact is a twentieth century phenomena in Los Angeles and other cities with large Jewish and Hispanic populations. Obviously the category "Hispanic" is fraught with complexity and in different regions can refer to Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Cubans, Mexicans, among others, and includes both immigrants and their children. Studies of neighborhoods like Boyle Heights have begun to excavate some of this interaction.

[Reading: George Sanchez, ed., *Beyond Alliances: The Jewish Role in Reshaping the Racial Landscape of Southern California*]* Synopsis : Scanned article, George Sanchez, "What's Good for Boyle Heights is Good for the Jews," *American Quarterly*, 2004

The take home examination will be due electronically on the day when the in-class examination is scheduled. Details to follow.