

Course Syllabus
Western Washington University Fall, 2015

AMST 206 THE JEWISH-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE (3)

An overview of the Jewish experience in America, past and present Jewish American marginalization, encounters with anti-Semitism and impact on the national scene. Study of Jewish Americans as a secular community, a community of faith, and an American minority ethnic group. (WWU Course Catalog)

Location of Classroom: Academic Instructional West 403

Day/time: Monday and Wednesday 4:40-5:50 pm

Instructor Information: Steven A Hoffman

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Cell: 360-303-0265

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS/OBJECTIVES

Jews have never been a large percentage of the total American population, but they have made great contributions to the cultural, intellectual, and social life of this country.

This course is intended to provide students with an understanding of the American Jewish experience, with a particular emphasis on the development and culture of American Jewish communities.

Areas of study include the immigrant experience; Jewish American literature; religious and social responses of American Jews to the challenges of modernity; modes of integration into American culture and society; traditional denominations and religious innovations; gendered experiences; interaction with "mainstream" American culture; Anti-Semitism; Jewish traditions, practices, and beliefs.

The course agenda includes a heavy amount of reading of primary and secondary sources, discussion, class lectures, guest speakers, film, music, and literature. A grade will be assessed based on satisfactory attendance, class participation, submission of assignments, quiz grades, a presentation, and a research paper.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Thanks to the staff at the library, students in ACS206 no longer need to purchase a print copy of the Course Reader. All required reading material can be found through the Course Reserves at the WWU library website as well as linked via canvas in "Modules" sidebar..

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Each class will be part lecture, part seminar. Be ready to take good notes during class. Students will participate in the discussions based on the assigned readings. Students are expected to do all the reading for each class meeting and come prepared to participate in discussions.

Important Dates to Note TBA

____ Class meet at regular time at Chabad Center with Rabbi Avremi Yarmush

____ Class meets at regular time at Congregation Beth Israel with Rabbi Joshua Samuels

____ Shabbat service dates

Grading

Reading/Writing Assignments 40%: Class discussion will invite thoughtful questions based on the assigned reading. Written responses as well as class/group discussion will be used during the quarter to assess the student's comprehension of the reading assignment.

Quizzes 20%: These will be formatted as short answer responses or as short writing assignments to given prompts. Quizzes may be announced beforehand or unannounced. Quizzes are designed to assess student's knowledge and should be expected based on assigned reading material

Mid Term: 20%

Students will choose either a presentation to the class on a specific identified Guiding Question OR a research paper dealing with an issue in the Jewish American Experience.

* Specific instructions for the mid term assignment will be provided at a later date.

Shabbat Service & Written Reflection Paper 10%

Our class will be attending a Shabbat service. A one-page reflection paper, of about 200 words describing and contextualizing your experience.

Attendance 10% - Attendance, except for cases of illness or emergency is required and expected. Please see me if a situation affects your ability to attend or do course work. I will do my best to work with you but can only do so if you alert me to the need. Absences resulting in missed quizzes or assignments need to be made up before the next class meets.

* In order to earn a grade, students must maintain a minimum of 90% attendance.

Schedule of Topics (subject to change)

Monday, 9/28 Course overview, introductions course expectations and requirements, attendance policy and procedure

Wednesday, 9/30 What are the basic beliefs, values and traditions of Judaism?

Monday, 10/5 Judaism (continued) Shabbat: "A Palace in Time"

Wednesday, 10/7 Judaism (continued) Kashrut, Holidays, Life cycle events

Monday, 10/12 Class meets with Rabbi Avremi Yarmush at Chabad Center for Jewish Learning

Wednesday 10/14 Class meets with Rabbi Joshua Samuels at Congregation Beth Israel

Monday, 10/19 Who are the American Jews? Demographic data, movements; Identity Issues

Wednesday, 10/21 Jewish Identity in America Film: Yidl in the Middle

Monday, 10/26; Wednesday, 10/28; Monday, 11/2; Student Mid Term Presentations

Wednesday, 11/4 History of Jews in America: 1654-1880

Monday, 11/9 History of Jews in America Eastern European Migration to America 1880-1920

NO CLASS WEDNESDAY 11/11

Monday, 11/16 History of Jews in America Twentieth Century Post WWII

Wednesday, 11/18 Yiddish language and culture: Guest Rena Ziegler

Monday, 11/23 Issue: Does Anti semitism Still Exist in America Today?

NO CLASS 11/25

Monday, 11/30 American Jews and Israel: Understanding the Arab Israeli Conflict

Wednesday, 12/2 Last Class

SCHEDULE of TOPICS, ASSIGNMENTS, QUIZZES

MONDAY, 9/28

Course overview, introductions course expectations and requirements, attendance policy and procedure

Reading assigned for next class: Cone – “The Mystery of Being Jewish” (CR)

Writing Assignment #1 Due _____ Submit on Canvas

What did Elie Weisel mean when he said, “To be Jewish is to live a thousand miles away from the Temple and see it burning?”

What did Martin Buber mean by a Jew’s “collective memory?”

How does Molly Cone explain “Jewish nature” or “that mysterious something present in the Jewish makeup?”

* IMPORTANT: Use examples specific from the articles

Please limit your response to 1P, DS, F12

WEDNESDAY, 9/30

Topic: What are the basic beliefs, values and traditions of Judaism?

Reading assigned for next class

Kertzer - "What is a Jew?"

Kushner – "What We Believe About People

Writing assignment Submit via Canvas Due _____

Please limit your response to 1P, DS, F12

Instructions: show connections between what David Harris says being Jewish means to him, to what you learned from your reading of both Harold Kushner and Morris Kertzer

* IMPORTANT: Use examples specific from the articles

Please limit your response to 1P, DS, F12

MONDAY, 10/5

Topic: Shabbat: "A Palace in Time"

Reading assigned for next class:

"Prologue and a Palace In Time" Heschel (CR)

"What is Shabbat? Jewish Virtual Library (CR)

"Shabbat Our Way" Tracy Hahn-Burkett (CR)

Writing Assignment # _____ Submit via Canvas Due _____

Explain what you think is meant by the quote "more than Israel has kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept Israel." Use your knowledge from the selections "What is Shabbat," "The Sabbath" (Heschel), and "Shabbat Our Way (Hahn-Burkett) to explain this phrase.

* IMPORTANT: Use examples specific from the articles

Please limit your response to 1P, DS, F12

WEDNESDAY, 10/7

Topic: Kashrut, Holidays, Life Cycle Events

Reading assigned for next class:

Greene - "Spiritual Molecules"

Kletnik- "Kashrut 101"

Writing assignment # _____ Submit via Canvas Due _____

From Greene, "Spritiual Molecules"

Why does Greene write, “spiritual molecules make more sense than chemical ones, in attempting to explain the reasons for laws of kashrut?

From Kletnik, “Kashrut 101”

How does she relate “mindfulness” to keeping the kashrut laws?

* It is OK to combine your response on the topic of kashrut combining thoughts from Greene and Kletnik, but not required should you choose to respond separately

* IMPORTANT: Use examples specific from the articles

Please limit your response to 1P, DS, F12

MONDAY, 10/12

Class meets with Rabbi Avremi Yarmush

WEDNESDAY, 10/14

Class meets with Rabbi Joshua Samuels at Congregation Beth Israel

MONDAY, 10/19

Topic: Who are the American Jews? Demographic data, movements; Identity Issues
Quiz

Reading assigned for next class:

Dimon - "The Struggle to Understand What it Means to be Jewish in America Today"

Wertheim - "Why Do Jews Love Baseball?"

Dreier - "Thank You Shawn Green"

"I AM JEWISH" excerpts (CR)

Writing Assignment # __ Due _____ Submit via Canvas

Select ONE of the following choices:

Choice #1

From

"The Struggle to Understand What it Means to be Jewish in America Today" Dimon (CR)

"Why Do Jews Love Baseball?" Wertheim (CR)

"Thank You Shawn Green" Dreier (CR)

•Identify a common thread in these reading selections, related to how American Jews identify with their Jewish-American identity. Explain the common thread using examples from each of these articles

Choice #2

From the excerpts from "I AM JEWISH"

•How do the four selections compare or contrast in their views on being Jewish?

* IMPORTANT: Use examples specific from the articles

Please limit your response to 1P, DS, F12

WEDNESDAY, 10/21

Jewish Identity in America (continued) Film: Yidl in the Middle

Writing assignment # ___ Due _____ Submit via Canvas

Film "Yidl in the Middle"

1. What does Booth mean by describing herself as "Jew in the Middle?"
2. How has her Jewish identity changed over the years?
3. What does the film tell us about American Jewish life?

MONDAY, 10/26; WEDNESDAY, 10/28; MONDAY 11/2

Student Mid Term Presentations

Writing assignment # ___

Reading assigned for next class:

Marcus - "The American Colonial Jew"

AJHS - "Jefferson and the Jews"

AJHS - "The Trefa Banquet and the End of a Dream"

WEDNESDAY, 11/4

History of Jews in America: 1654-1880

Quiz

Reading assigned for next class

"Nicholas I - Statutes Regarding Military Service of Jews"

"Alexander III May Laws"

Diner - "A Century of Migration"

Blech - "The Lingering Curse of Anti Semitism"

MONDAY, 11/9

History of Jews in America Eastern European Migration to America 1880-1920

Quiz

Reading assigned for next class

Heilman - "Starting Over: Acculturation and Suburbia, The Jews of the 1950's"

Writing assignment # ___ Due _____ Submit via Canvas

Samuel Heilman states

"...the fifties were apparently a calm enough time for planting or, more precisely, replanting of Jewish life in America"

Explain how American Jews of the 1950's were motivated to "replant. Why did American Jews of the 1950's decide to leave life in the cities? What was their new life like in the suburbs? What new challenges did they face?

Use examples and quotes from the reading selection to support your statements in your essay.
Please limit your response to 500 words, DS, F12

NO CLASS WEDNESDAY, 11/11

MONDAY, 11/16

History of Jews in America Twentieth Century Post WWII
Reading assigned Excerpts from The Joys of Yiddish (Rosten)
Writing assignment # _____

WEDNESDAY 11/18

Yiddish language and culture: Guest Rena Ziegler
Reading assigned for next class _____
Einstein – “Why Do They Hate The Jews?”
Ford – “The International Jew: The world’s problem”
“The Protocols of the Elders of Zion”

MONDAY, 11/23

Issue: Does Anti Semitism Still Exist in America Today?
Quiz
Reading assigned for next class:
Harris - “What Israel Means to Me”
Cohen – “The Relationship of American Jews to Israel”

NO CLASS 11/25

MONDAY, 11/30
American Jews and Israel: Understanding the Arab Israeli Conflict
Quiz

WEDNESDAY, 12/2

Last Class

UNIVERSITY POLICIES: Academic Honesty Policy, Reasonable Accommodations, Student Right and Responsibilities Code, Emergency Response Guide

Academic Honesty Policy. Students could be referred to:

Plagiarism Policies & Guidelines at WWU WWU Libraries

The Student's Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism WWU Dept. of Sociology

Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism (brochure) WWU Libraries

Appendix D of the Western Catalog: Academic Honesty Policy and Procedure.
Short version:

WWU Academic Honesty Policy (WWU Catalog 2009)

Academic dishonesty is not tolerated at Western Washington University. Someone commits an act of academic dishonesty when he or she participates in representing something as the work of a student that is not in fact the work of that student. A Western student who is caught committing such an act at Western typically fails the course in which it occurred, and repeated such acts can lead to dismissal from the University. For a full description of the academic honesty policy and procedures at Western, see Appendix D in the catalog.

Reasonable Accommodation - an invitation to students with special needs to request accommodations for any physical or learning disability:

Sample statements:

Reasonable accommodation for persons with documented disabilities should be established within the first week of class and may be arranged through: Disability Resources for Students, Old Main 110; additional information is available at <http://www.wwu.edu/depts/drs/> Telephone: 650-3083 / Email: drs@wwu.edu

Reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities may be arranged through Disability Resources for Students (Old Main 110; 650-3083; drs@wwu.edu; <http://www.wwu.edu/depts/drs/>)

To request disability accommodation or assistance related to required course procedures, please contact Disability Resources for Students located in Old Main 110; additional information is available at:
<http://www.wwu.edu/depts/drs/> Telephone: 650-3083 / Email: drs@wwu.edu

Western is committed to equal opportunity and non-discrimination in all programs and activities. Requests for accommodation or assistance should be directed to Disability Resources for Students located in Old Main 110; additional information is available at:
<http://www.wwu.edu/depts/drs/> Telephone: 650-3083 / Email: drs@wwu.edu

Student Rights & Responsibilities Code - statement about or link to online version

Sample statement:

In this course, students are held responsible for upholding all aspects of Western's Academic Honesty Policy and Procedure, and the Student Rights and Responsibilities Code.

Emergency Response Guide- WWU recommends faculty include a statement about emergency response at Western.