

AMERICAN JUDAISM

RELI 372 001 Spring 2008

Dr. Randi Rashkover

Department of Religious Studies

MW 1:30-2:45

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Office hours: Mon-Wed 10:15-11:15 or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is a survey of both American Jewish history and American Jewish theology. Historical topics covered include Judaism in the Colonial period, the wave of German-Jewish immigration to America in the mid-nineteenth century, the flood of Eastern European Jewish immigrants from 1880-1924, the conflicts between American Jews of German and Eastern European descent, anti-Semitism in America, and the role of women in American Jewish life. We will also cover the changes that Jewish theology has undergone, from the rise of Reform Judaism in America as a result of German immigration, to conflicts between Jews over the issue of Zionism, to Mordecai Kaplan's founding of the Reconstructionist movement in Judaism and the way in which this opened the way for Jewish theologians in other denominations to think more deeply about the meaning of Jewish belief.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

For you to learn about the development of Judaism in America from 1654 until the present time

For you to see how American Jewish identity has been related not only to an ideal of America as a land of freedom, but also to the differing identities of Jews in the various countries from which immigrants arrived

For you to understand the variety of ideas about God and Jewish identity in contemporary American Jewish theology

As always, for you to improve your skills in writing, reflection, and research

REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance. Attendance will be taken at every class. Students with more than 3 unexcused absences will be penalized by a full letter grade.

Do the Reading.

Participate or inaugurate class discussions. (10%)

Two Papers: 3-8 pages (30% each)

Take-Home Final Exam (30%)

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

University regulations stipulate that no student shall be penalized for missing class due to a religious holiday; please let me know if a religious holiday you plan to observe fall on a day scheduled for class.

TEXTBOOKS

For purchase:

Jonathan D Sarna, ed. *The American Jewish Experience*

Joseph Soloveitchik, *Lonely Man of Faith*

Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Who is Man?*

Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States*

In addition, I will provide e-text versions of certain texts listed below.

SMALL PRINT

A syllabus is a legally binding document, and therefore I reserve the right to make appropriate changes in the readings, requirements, and policies of this course. It is your responsibility to keep yourself updated on course information.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Week 1 Introduction and Judaism in the Colonial and Early Modern Periods

Reading: Mordecai Noah, "Proclamation to the Jews",
Diner, 1-71, Sarna 3-37

Week 2 Immigration of German Jews and Beginning of Reform

Reading: Immigration: Diner, 71-111, Sarna, 43-58, 82-112
Reform: Diner, 112-154, Sarna, 59-81

Week 3 Immigration of Eastern European Jews

Reading: Diner, continue with 77-111, Sarna 117-36, 151-64

Paula Hyman "Gender and the Immigrant Jewish Experience"
<http://www.history.umd.edu/Faculty/BCooperman/NewCity/Jewishwomen.html> and Irving Howe, World of Our Fathers (e-text)

Week 4 Reform Judaism after 1885 and Orthodox Judaism

Reading: Pittsburgh Platform
<http://www.ccarnet.org/platforms/pittsburgh.html>), Kaufmann Kohler, "The Concordance of Judaism and Americanism" (e-text), "The Orthodox Jewish Congregational Union of America" (e-text)

Week 5 Conservative Judaism

Reading: Solomon Schechter, "Catholic Israel" (e-text), Neil Gillman, Conservative Judaism 32-47 (e-text) , Sarna, 165-82

Week 6 Tension Between German and Russian Jews/Zionism

Reading: Sarna 136-50, 243-55
Louis Brandeis, ³Zionism is Consistent with American Patriotism² (e-text)
Columbus Platform
(<http://www.ccarnet.org/platforms/columbus.html>
<<http://www.ccarnet.org/platforms/columbus.html>>)

Week 7 Anti-Semitism

Reading: The Manhattan Beach Affair² (e-text)
Henry Ford, The International Jew (e-text)
Sarna 183-93, 199-216, Diner, 205-253

Week 8 Mordecai Kaplan and Reconstructionist Judaism

Reading: Kaplan, Judaism as a Civilization 80-87, 108-25, 130-32, 151-69, 173-224, 385-94 (e-text)

Kaplan, The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion 40-103 (e-text)

Diner, 253-255

Week 9 American Judaism's Golden Age and Beginnings of Existentialist Judaism

Reading: Sarna 257-67, 293-311 (skim 273-92), Diner, 259-304
Will Herberg and the Beginning of Existentialist Judaism, "From Marxism to Judaism" 49-145, 187-221(e-text)

Week 10 Joseph Soloveitchik: Existentialist and Orthodox

Reading: Soloveitchik, The Lonely Man of Faith, 1-51, 52-112

- Week 11 Abraham Joshua Heschel: Reshaping Faith as Action
 Reading: Heschel, Who is Man?
 Edward Kaplan, "The American Mission of
Abraham Joshua Heschel (e-text)
- Week 12 Feminism and Judaism
 Reading: Ellen Umansky, "Spiritual Expressions" (e-text)
 Paula Hyman, "Ezrat Nashim and the
Emergence of a New Jewish Feminism" (e-text)
 Sylvia Barack Fishman, "Negotiating
Egalitarianism and Judaism" (e-text)
- Week 13 Changes in Contemporary American Judaism
 Reading: Diner, 259-358
- Week 14 Review