History 3808G
Jewish Life in North America Since 1880
2023-24 | Winter 2024
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This is a draft syllabus. Please see the course site on OWL for a final version.

Course Description:
This course examines the history of Jews in the United States and Canada, highlighting their changing family, spiritual, social, and work lives, exploring themes of identity, assimilation, activism, and upward mobility, and considering how Jews have helped shape North American life through their struggles and achievements.

Prerequisite(s):
1.0 History course at the 2200 level or above.

Course Syllabus:
Between 1880 and 1920, over two million Eastern European Jews left their homelands to begin new lives in the United States and Canada. This seminar course will examine these Jewish immigrants and the generations which followed, highlighting their changing family, spiritual, social, and work lives, and both their struggles and achievements. In so doing, the course will explore a variety of themes related to ethnicity, religion, gender, and class, including cultural identity, assimilation, social activism, and upward mobility. These topics and themes will help elucidate how Jews have helped shape North American life by both conforming to and rebelling against its dominant culture.

Learning Outcomes
Students should be able to

1. explain the central priorities, struggles, and achievements of successive Jewish generations, and the ways in which these concerns and experiences influenced, and were shaped by, various historical trends and movements.

2. explain the ways in which ethnic and religious identity intersects with issues of gender and class, and the ways in which it can change over time and across generations.

3. explain both the formal and informal ways in which Jews have conformed to and challenged the dominant culture, as well as their own traditions.
Methods of Evaluation:
Research essay (12-15 pages): TBA 45%
Critiques (2 critiques at 2 pages each): TBA 30%
Seminar presentation: TBA 15%
Participation/Attendance: 10%

Seminar Presentation
You will sign up for a presentation date beginning in Week 5. On your selected date, you (possibly along with one other) will present one of the scheduled articles. In your presentation, address and critique your article’s thesis, main arguments, biases, and sources, and situate your article in the larger historiography. As well, discuss your related essay topic in the context of your reading. Stimulate class discussion by asking questions and fielding comments. You must meaningfully incorporate audio-visual aids such as Power Point. You will be graded on the content of your presentation (it should be substantial and thought-provoking), on your presentation style (it should be polished and professional), and on your facilitation of the seminar discussion (it should convey knowledge and enthusiasm). As you may be “sharing” your presentation date with a classmate, and in order to prevent overlap in discussion topics, arrange with them which topics/reads that each one of you will present. Your presentation will last 30 minutes.

To facilitate the research of your essay, the subject of your essay will coincide with the general seminar topic of your selected presentation date. **Your essay in electronic format will be due on that same day in class.**

Essay
Your essay should be 12-15 pages. It must include a thesis statement that advances a clear argument and maps the discussion points of the paper. In addition to offering a meaningful examination, your essay must include an introduction, conclusion, endnotes or footnotes, and a bibliography. Endnotes/footnotes should be in a correct and consistent format. The bibliography should include 12-15 sources, 2/3 of which should be secondary sources (contemporary sources, mostly books, written by scholars) and 1/3 of which should be primary sources (written/spoken by observers during the time period under study). Primary sources can be books, articles, government documents, newspapers, etc., but they must be a stand-alone source/document, not simply an excerpt or quotation retrieved from a secondary source; in other words, you must locate your own primary sources (on the internet (on a credible site) or in a library or archive).

Critiques
Those students not presenting an article and submitting an essay on a given week will be required to do the assigned readings, participate in the seminar discussion, and write an
essay critique. Select two student essays (which will be accessible on OWL) on which you would like to write a critique. Your critique is due in class and must be submitted no later than one week following the submission of the essay about which it is written. Submitted critiques will not be seen by anyone other than me; they will be returned with a mark as soon as possible. Critiques should be two typed pages and double-spaced. They should include a concise thesis statement stating the strengths and weaknesses of the essay; they should then discuss those strengths and weaknesses. They should also have an introduction and conclusion, but they do not require extra research or citations.

When submitting your essay and critiques (as word documents), title the file using your name in upper case letters. For critiques, also include the first name of the student (lower case letters) whose work you are examining and indicate if it is Critique 1 or 2.

**Absences and Late Assignments:**
Students must attend at least half the number of full classes in order to qualify for a passing final grade, regardless of marks received for other assignments.

As your classmates are relying on the timely submission of your essay in order to write their critiques (see below), essays MUST be submitted on your assigned due date. Late research essays will generally not be accepted for grading. If you are facing difficulties, please talk to me.

**Course Materials:**
See the linked and posted articles cited below.
For online primary sources, see the Weldon database *Jewish Life in America, 1654-1954*

**Course Schedule and Readings:**
**JANUARY 10 – Introduction, part 1: Principles of Judaism**

**JANUARY 17 – Introduction, part 2: From Europe to North America**

**JANUARY 24 – “Sensing” North American City Life**


JANUARY 31 – Labour and Union Activism

Daniel Bender, "A Hero... for the Weak": Work, Consumption, and the Enfeebled Jewish Worker, 1881-1924,” *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 56 (Fall 1999): 1-22


FEBRUARY 7 – Assimilation Projects and Alternatives to Orthodoxy (WEEK 5)


FEBRUARY 14 – Upward Mobility and Institution-Building


FEBRUARY 21 – NO CLASS (SPRING READING WEEK)

FEBRUARY 28 – Family Trouble


http://www.jstor.org/stable/27500526


MARCH 6 – Antisemitism in the 1920s and 30s

POSTED


https://www.jstor.org/stable/26554803

MARCH 13 – Responses to the Holocaust

Irving Abella and Harold Troper, “‘The line must be drawn somewhere’: Canada and Jewish Refugees, 1933-1939," in *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s*. Edited by Franca Iacovetta, et al.


Susan A. Glenn, “The Vogue of Jewish Self-Hatred in Post-World War II America,” Jewish Social Studies, 12, 3 (Spring-Summer 2006): 95-136


http://wjudaism.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/wjudaism/article/view/22533

**Additional Statements:**
All work submitted in this course must be your own. You may not make use of generative AI tools like ChatGPT for any assignments in this course.

During all class lectures, discussions, and presentations, the recreational use of lap-tops (web browsing, emailing, etc.), as well as the use of all wireless handheld devices, is discouraged and could adversely affect your participation mark.

Although broadband/connectivity issues may understandably arise, you should make every effort to employ the video function while attending class.

Please review the Department of History’s shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at:
https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.