

History 3808F
Jewish Life in North America Since 1880
Fall 2026

Instructor: **Monda Halpern, Professor**

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Office Hours: in-person and on Zoom,
Thursdays, 10:00AM-11:30AM (EST), and by appointment

This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

Course Description:

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.

Prerequisite(s): Registration in third year or above, any module.

Course Syllabus:

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.

This is a draft outline. 2026-27 version. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

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. 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/readings that each one of you will present. Your presentation will last 30 minutes.

Your essay, in both electronic (email attachment) and hard copy format, will be due on that same day by the start of class. 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. See full policy below in the "PLEASE NOTE" section.

Essay

The subject of your essay will coincide with the general seminar topic/theme of your selected presentation date. 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 Brightspace) 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 indicate if your submission is Critique 1 or 2.

Students must attend more than half the number of full classes in order to qualify for a passing final grade, regardless of marks received for other assignments.

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%

PLEASE NOTE THESE VERY IMPORTANT POINTS:

1. 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.
2. **You must attend at least seven of our twelve seminar meetings** in order to pass this course, regardless of grades received for other assignments.
3. Please be aware that **your class presentation is a Designated Assessment**, meaning it requires formal supporting documentation for absences or academic considerations. In other words, students cannot use an “undocumented absence” to miss or reschedule this assessment.
4. **Essays and critiques MUST be submitted on the assigned due date**; however, if you are facing unexpected difficulties (beyond usual time management and workload demands) and are anticipating that your assignment will be late, please talk to me as soon as possible so that we can arrive at an agreed-upon submission date. Late essays and critiques will not be accepted for grading if you neglect to contact me before the due date.
5. During all class lectures, discussions, and presentations, the **recreational use of laptops (web browsing, texting, etc.), as well as the use of all wireless handheld devices, is discouraged** and could adversely affect your participation mark.

Course Materials:

See the linked articles cited below. No purchase required; most articles can be found on JSTOR. Click on the article link or go to <https://www.jstor.org/> Click on “Log in through your school or library.” Type in Western Ontario and then click on “University of Western Ontario.” This will take you to the “Off-Campus Access” page where you will fill in your username and password. Then search for your article!

For a selection of online primary sources, see the D. B. Weldon Library Database *Jewish Life in America, 1654-1954*

Course Schedule and Readings:

SEPTEMBER 10 – Introduction, part 1: Principles of Judaism

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

SEPTEMBER 24 – “Sensing” North American City Life

Derek Vaillant, “Peddling Noise: Contesting the Civic Soundscape of Chicago, 1890-1913,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 96, 3 (Autumn 2003): 257-287
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/40193997>

Andrea Renner, “A Nation That Bathes Together: New York City's Progressive Era Public Baths,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 67, 4 (December 2008): 504-531

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jsah.2008.67.4.504>

Stephen H. Norwood, “American Jewish Muscle”: Forging a New Masculinity in the Streets and in the Ring, 1890-1940,” *Modern Judaism*, 29, 2 (May 2009): 167-193
<http://mj.oxfordjournals.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/content/29/2/167.full.pdf+html>

OCTOBER 1 – 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

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/27672593>

Richard A. Greenwald, “The Burning Building at 23 Washington Place”: The Triangle Fire, Workers and Reformers in Progressive Era New York,” *New York History*, 83, 1 (Winter 2002): 55-91

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/23183517>

Daniel Sidorick, “The ‘Girl Army’: The Philadelphia Shirtwaist Strike of 1909-1910,” *Pennsylvania History*, 71, 3 (Summer 2004): 323-369

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/27778620>

OCTOBER 8 – Assimilation Projects and Alternatives to Orthodoxy (WEEK 5)

Selma C. Berrol, "In Their Image: German Jews and the Americanization of the Ost Juden in New York City," *New York History*, 63, 4 (October 1982): 417-433
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/23174045>

Elizabeth Rose, "From Sponge Cake to "Hamentashen": Jewish Identity in a Jewish Settlement House, 1885-1952," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 13, 3 (Spring 1994): 3-23
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/27501139>

Theodore H. Friedgut, "Jewish Pioneers on Canada's Prairies: The Lipton Jewish Agricultural Colony," *Jewish History*, 21, 3/4 (2007): 385-411
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/20728556>

OCTOBER 15 – No Class (Fall Reading Week)

OCTOBER 22 – Upward Mobility and Institution-Building

Michael Brown, "Divergent Paths: Early Zionism in Canada and the United States," *Jewish Social Studies*, 44, 2 (Spring 1982): 149-168
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/4467168>

Daniel J. Elazar, "The Development of the American Synagogue," *Modern Judaism*, 4, 3 (October 1984): 255-273
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/1396300>

Mark K. Bauman, "The Emergence of Jewish Social Service Agencies in Atlanta," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 69, 4 (Winter 1985): 488-508
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/40581435>

OCTOBER 29 – Family Trouble

Reena Sigman Friedman, "Send Me My Husband Who Is in New York City": Husband Desertion in the American Jewish Immigrant Community 1900-1926," *Jewish Social Studies*, 44, 1 (Winter 1982): 1-18
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/4467152>

Sydney Stahl Weinberg, "Jewish Mothers and Immigrant Daughters: Positive and Negative Role Models," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 6, 2 (Spring 1987): 39-55
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27500526>

Richard Moss, "Creating a Jewish American Identity in Indianapolis: The Jewish Welfare Federation and the Regulation of Leisure, 1920-1934," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 103, 1 (March 2007): 39-65
<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/27792777>

NOVEMBER 5 – Antisemitism in the 1920s and 30s

Monda Halpern, “The ‘Malestrom’ at Christie Pits: Jewish Masculinity and the Toronto Riot of 1933,” *Canadian Jewish Studies*, 28, 1 (2019): 12-33 [not on JSTOR]

<https://doi.org/10.25071/1916-0925.40141>

Harold Brackman, “The Attack on “Jewish Hollywood”: A Chapter in the History of Modern American Anti-Semitism,” *Modern Judaism*, 20, 1 (February 2000): 1-19

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/1396627>

Sarah Atwood, “‘This List Not Complete’: Minnesota’s Jewish Resistance to the Silver Legion of America, 1936–1940,” *Minnesota History*, 66 (Winter 2018–19): 142-55

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

David Slucki, “A Community of Suffering: Jewish Holocaust Survivor Networks in Postwar America,” *Jewish Social Studies*, 22 (Winter 2017): 116-145

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jewisocistud.22.2.04>

NOVEMBER 12 – Stagnation and Transformation in the 1950s and 1960s

Vincent Brook, “The Americanization of Molly: How Mid-Fifties TV Homogenized ‘The Goldbergs’ (And Got ‘Berg-Iarized’ in the Process),” *Cinema Journal*, 38, 4 (Summer 1999): 45-67

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/1225662>

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://www.jstor.org/stable/4467748>

Monda Halpern, “‘Are You People Jewish?’ The Mistaken Identity of Mary Rosenblatt in the 1952 Harry Lee Murder Case,” *Canadian Jewish Studies*, 23 (2015): 68-91 [not on JSTOR]

<https://doi.org/10.25071/1916-0925.39929>

NOVEMBER 19 – Images in Popular Culture

Anna Petrov Bumble, “The Intellectual Jewish Woman vs The JAP in the Works of American Jewish Women Writers,” *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, 19 (2000): 26-36

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/41205921>

Martha A. Ravits, “The Jewish Mother: Comedy and Controversy in American Popular Culture,” *Melus*, 25, 1 (Spring 2000): 3-31

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/468149>

Dana Kessler, “The Mensch of Steel: ‘Is Superman Circumcised?’ Looks into the Superhero’s Jewish Identity,” *Tablet Magazine* (May 14, 2021) [not on JSTOR]

<https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/community/articles/mensch-of-steel-superman>

NOVEMBER 26 – Continuity in Crisis?

Peter S. Lemish, “Hanukah Bush: The Jewish Experience in America,” *Theory into Practice*, 20, 1 (Winter 1981): 26-34

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/1476610>

Yaakov Ariel, “Jews and New Religious Movements: An Introductory Essay,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, 15, 1 (August 2011): 5-21

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/nr.2011.15.1.5>

Aviva Gordon, “Jewish Inter-marriage in American Society: Literature Review,” *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 1, 2 (Spring 2014): 1-14 [not on JSTOR]

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

DECEMBER 3 - Conclusion**END OF TERM****Additional Statements:*****Classroom behavior:***

This course encourages frank discussion, but any derogatory or hateful speech will not be tolerated.

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.