

29.344/644 Topics in Jewish History:
American Jewish Women's History

This semester we explore the history of Jewish women in America from the colonial era to the beginning of the twenty-first century. This course uses the prism of gender to refine our understanding of American Jewish history and of United States women's history. Topics include migration, domesticity, economic life, voluntarism, political activism, religion, Zionism, and feminism.

Required texts:

1. Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna, eds. *Women and American Judaism: Historical Perspectives*.
2. Pamela S. Nadell, ed. *American Jewish Women's History*.
3. Paula E. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women*.
4. Laurie Colwin, *Goodbye Without Leaving*. Perennial, ISBN 0060955333.
5. Additional readings appear on Blackboard under Course Documents.

Undergraduate Student responsibilities:

1. Class attendance and participation, 15 percent of final grade.
If you are not in class, you cannot participate. More than 6 absences constitute grounds for failure. If you do not keep up with the readings, your participation grade will reflect this.
2. Reading Prompts, 20 percent of final grade. Guidelines to follow.
3. One book critique and in-class book presentation, 25 percent of final grade. Due date varies by student. See assignment.
4. Research term paper: 10 percent of final grade for process; 30 percent of for final paper and in-class presentation. Papers due April 21st. Presentations: April 28th. See assignment

Graduate Student responsibilities:

All of the above, PLUS two additional book critiques (but not two additional in-class presentations; i.e. a total of three book critiques). Graduate student research papers will also be longer and more deeply researched.

OFFICE HOURS: Battelle-Tompkins 155; Mondays, 11:15-12:45, 2:00-4:00; Thursdays 11:15-12:45, 2:00-3:00.

PHONE and VOICE MAIL: 202-885-2425. **E-mail:** pnadell@american.edu

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements for this course.

General Sources:

“Annotated Bibliography and Guide to Archival Resources on the History of Jewish Women in America,” compiled by Phyllis Holman Weisbard at

<http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/WomensStudies/jewwom/jwmain.htm>

This takes you to the 2004 supplement to Dr. Weisbard’s 1997 bibliography.

The Jewish People in America, 5 volumes published by the American Jewish Historical Society and Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Lilith: The Jewish Women's Magazine

Jacob Marcus, ed. *The American Jewish Woman: A Documentary History*

Jewish Women’s Archive, www.jwa.org — An on-line virtual archive of American Jewish women’s history

Paula Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore, eds., *Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*

“Women in Daily Life Bibliography,” <http://www.cjh.org/academic/women.html>

SYLLABUS

1-10 Introduction

1-13 “An Angle of Vision”¹: Gender as a Category of Analysis in American History and Jewish History

“Introduction,” in *Women and American Judaism*, eds. Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna, 1-14

“Introduction,” in *American Jewish Women’s History*, ed. Pamela S. Nadell, 1-7

Creating a Sense of Place

1-24 *Jewish Women in Colonial America and the Early Republic*

Ellen Smith, “Portraits of a Community: The Image and Experience of Early American Jews,” in *American Jewish Women’s History*, 13-25

Holly Snyder, “Queens of the Household: The Jewish Women of British America,

1700-1800,” in *Women and American Judaism*, 15-43
Aviva Ben-Ur, “The Exceptional and the Mundane: A Biographical Portrait of
Rebecca Machado Phillips (1746-1831),” in *Women and American
Judaism*, 46-80

A new wave of Jewish Immigrants Continue the Project

1-27 A. European Background

Paula Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History*, 1-49

Student Presentation*: Marion Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class:
Women, Family, and Identity, in Imperial Germany*

1-31 B. Jewish Women Claim a Place in the Age of Association

Dianne Ashton, “The Lessons of the Hebrew Sunday School” in *American
Jewish Women’s History*, 26-42

Student Presentation: Dianne Ashton, *Rebecca Gratz: Women and Judaism in
Antebellum America*

C. Jewish Women during the Civil War

Dianne Ashton, “Shifting Veils: Religion, Politics, and Womanhood in the Civil
War Writings of American Jewish Women,” in *Women and American
Judaism*, 81-106

2-3 D. Shaping American Judaism

Karla Goldman, “The Public Religious Lives of Cincinnati’s Jewish Women,” in
Women and American Judaism, 107-27

William Toll, “From Domestic Judaism to Public Ritual: Women and Religious
Identity in the American West,” in *Women and American Judaism*, 127-48

Felicia Herman, “From Priestess to Hostess: Sisterhoods of Personal Service in
New York City, 1887-1936,” in *Women and American Judaism*, 148-81

Student Presentation: Karla Goldman, *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a
Place for Women in American Judaism*

2-7 E. At Home in America at the End of Nineteenth-Century

Eric L. Goldstein, “Between Race and Religion: Jewish Women and Self-
Definition in Late Nineteenth-Century America,” in *Women and American
Judaism*, 182-200

Jonathan D. Sarna, “A Great Awakening: The Transformation That shaped
Twentieth-Century American Judaism,” in *American Jewish Women’s
History*, 43-63

Faith Rogow, “Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women,
1893-1993,” in *American Jewish Women’s History*, 64-74

Student Presentation: Faith Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National*

* “Student Presentation” refers to the reading and presentation required for one student for that class. See
Paer/Presentation Assignment.

Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993.

Worlds of Difference: East European Immigrant Women Make Their Way to America

- 2-10** A. *Der Heym*: The East European Background
Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation*, 50-92
- 2-14** B. Coming to America
In class viewing of the film *Hester Street* (89 minutes); in the Small Media Classroom in the Lower Level of the Library; Film starts at 12:35 (not 12:45)
- 2-17** C. Migration and Settlement
Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation*, 93-133
Shelly Tenenbaum, "Borrowers or Lenders Be: Jewish Immigrant Women's Credit Networks," in *American Jewish Women's History*, 79-90
Student Presentation: Sydney Stahl Weinberg, *The World of Our Mothers: The Lives of Jewish Immigrant Women*
- 2-21** D. Work in the *goldene medinah*
Linda Mack Schloff, "'We Dug More Rocks': Women and Work," in *American Jewish Women's History*, 91-99
Alice Kessler-Harris, "Organizing the Unorganizable: Three Jewish Women and their Union," in *American Jewish Women's History*, 100-15
Student Presentation: Susan A. Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation*
- 2-24** D. Neighborhood Politics and Suffrage
Paula E. Hyman, "Immigrant Women and Consumer Protest: The New York City Kosher Meat Boycott of 1902," in *American Jewish Women's History*, 116-28
- 2-28** E. Turning to Zion
Joyce Antler, "Zion in Our Hearts: Henrietta Szold and the American Jewish Women's Movement," in *American Jewish Women's History*, 129-50
Joan Dash, *Summoned to Jerusalem: The Life of Henrietta Szold*

A Wider World for Immigrant Jewish Women and Their Daughters

- 3-3** A. At Home in American Judaism
Jenna Weissman Joselit, "The Jewish Priestess and Ritual: The Sacred Life of American Orthodox Women," in *American Jewish Women's History*, 153-74
Beth S. Wenger, "Mitzvah and Medicine: Gender, Assimilation, and the Scientific Defense of 'Family Purity'," in *Women and American Judaism*, 201-22
Regina Stein, "The Road to Bat Mizvah," in *Women and American Judaism*, 223-

Student Presentation: Jenna Weissman Joselit, *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture, 1880-1950*

- 3-14** B. Confronting the Great Depression and Antisemitism
 Beth S. Wenger, “Budgets, Boycotts, and Babies: Jewish Women in the Great Depression,” in *American Jewish Women’s History*, 185-200
 Julia L. Foulkes, “Angels ‘Rewolt!’” Jewish Women in Modern Dance in the 1930s,” in *American Jewish Women’s History*, 201-18

- 3-17** C. New Occupations: “My Daughter, the Teacher”
 Ruth Jacknow Markowitz, *My Daughter, the Teacher: Jewish Teachers in New York City Schools*, 1-17, 75-92 (on Blackboard)
 Student Presentation: Ruth Jacknow Markowitz, *My Daughter, the Teacher: Jewish Teachers in New York City Schools*

Fierce Attachments

- 3-21** A. Private Lives and Public Representations
 Joan Jacobs Brumberg, “The >Me= of Me: Voices of Jewish Girls in Adolescent Diaries of the 1920s and 1950s,” in *American Jewish Women’s History*, 223-37
 Riv-Ellen Prell, “Rage and Representation: Jewish Gender Stereotypes in American Culture,” in *American Jewish Women’s History*, 238-55
 Student Presentation: Riv-Ellen Prell, *Fighting to Become Americans: Jews, Gender, and the Anxiety of Assimilation*

- 3-24** B. We Are What We Eat
 Marcie Cohen Ferris, “‘From the Recipe File of Luba Cohen’: A Study of Southern Jewish Foodways and Cultural Identity
In class viewing of Chicken Soup and Gefillte Fish

- 3-28** C. Writing Their Way into Fiction
 Laurie Colwin, *Goodbye Without Leaving*, all

- 4-4** D. Jewish Women as Religious Leaders
 Shuly Rubin Schwartz, “Ambassadors without Portfolio? The Religious Leadership of *Rebbetzins* in Late-Twentieth-Century American Jewish Life,” in *Women and American Judaism*, 235-67
 Pamela S. Nadell, “The Women Who Would Be Rabbis,” in *American Jewish Women’s History*, 175-84
In class viewing of And the Gates Opened: Women in the Rabbinate

- 4-7** E. Political Commitments
 Joyce Antler, “Justine Wise Polier and the Prophetic Tradition,” *Women and American Judaism*, 268-91

Debra L. Schultz, "Going South: Jewish Women in the Civil Rights Movement,"
in *American Jewish Women's History*, 281-96

Student Presentation: Debra L. Schultz, *Going South: Jewish Women in the Civil Rights Movement*

4-11 F. Feminism

Paula E. Hyman, "Jewish Feminism Faces the American Women=s Movement: Convergence and Divergence," in *American Jewish Women's History*, 297-312

Student presentation; Sylvia Barack Fishman, *A Breath of Life: Feminism in the American Jewish Community*

4-14 G. Feminist Judaism

Deborah E. Lipstadt, "Feminism and American Judaism: Looking Back at the Turn of the Century," in *Women and American Judaism*, 291-308

Student Presentation: Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*

Student Presentation: Susannah Heschel, *On Being a Jewish Feminist*

4-18 H. The View from Orthodoxy

Lynn Davidman, *Tradition in a Rootless World: Women Turn to Orthodox Judaism*, 1-25, 136-73 (on Blackboard)

Student Presentation: Stephanie Wellen Levine, *Mystics, Marvericks, and Merrymakers*

4-21 *Papers Due*

G. Jewish Families Today

Sylvia Barack Fishman, "The Changing American Jewish Family Faces the 1990s," in *Jews in America: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Roberta Rosenberg Farber and Chaim I. Waxman, 51-88

Student Presentation: Sylvia Barack Fishman, *Double or Nothing?: Jewish Families and Mixed Marriage*

4-25 No Class — Second day of Passover

4-28 *Paper Presentations* (during exam hour: 11:20-1:50)

¹ Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), xiv.