

**HIST 4435.001 Jewish American Experience:**

Jewish American Cultural History

Fall 2020

Meeting: MWF 10:00-10:50

Room: Life Sciences Building A117

**Instructor:** Dr. Kerry Goldmann

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**Office:** WH 241

**Office hours:** MW 11:30-1:30. \*Zoom preferred (email me to schedule an appointment)

“In the modern world, after all, to broach the idea of Jewish identity is to invoke not one crisis but many. Religion or ethnicity? Theology or ethics? Culture or ideology? Brooklyn or Tel Aviv?”

--A.O. Scott

**Course Description/Course Goals**

This course examines the Jewish experience in America from the colonial period to the present with a particular emphasis on culture. How did culture contribute to Jewish Americanization and the formation of a modern identity? In what ways did Americans use their majority culture as a mode of oppression? How did Jewish cultural practices serve as a form of resistance to this oppression, and how did they evolve over time?

We will attempt to answer these questions by investigating the experience of Jews as participants, influencers, and creators within popular American cultural mediums, such as comic books and film. Topics that will be explored in this course include ethnicity, race, community, cultural responsibility, individual vs. national identity, anti-Semitism, acculturation, immigration and migration, artistic and social performance, and youth culture.

By the end of the semester, students should possess not only a broad familiarity with the experiences and culture of Jewish Americans during the time period but should also possess a more sophisticated understanding of how to interpret both primary sources and historiographical texts.

**Student Learning Objectives:** Upon successful completion of this course:

1. Students will be able to form substantive and evidence-driven arguments to propose solutions to problems or explain phenomena.
2. Student communication will follow conventions of grammar and syntax appropriate to the audience, purpose and message.
3. Students will demonstrate awareness of societal and/or civic issues.
4. Students will be able to understand their role in their own education.

**Class Format**

Though this class will be a hybrid of in-person and online formats, the ethos of the class will be participatory and collaborative. My role as an instructor is to guide you through the process of gathering and analyzing information, not merely to dispense historical data and ask you to memorize it. Students are expected to come to class having read the material and ready to listen actively and to participate in discussions. The class will consist of lectures, readings, source analysis, discussions, and film screenings.

### **Required Texts**

1. Hasa Diner's *The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000*; Edition: 2004 (ISBN: 978-0520248489)
2. Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster's *Action Comics #1* [<https://www.amazon.com/Action-Comics-50th-Anniversary-Reprint/dp/B000JGTJUW>]
3. Art Spiegelman's *The Complete Maus*, (combined edition of volumes 1 and 2) (ISBN: 978-0679406419) [<https://www.amazon.com/Complete-Maus-Art-Spiegelman/dp/0679406417>]
4. Carla Jablonski's *Resistance: Book 1* (ISBN: 978-1596432918) [<https://www.amazon.com/Resistance-Book-1-Carla-Jablonski/dp/1596432918>]
5. Will Eisner's *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories* (ISBN: 978-0393328042) [[https://www.amazon.com/Contract-God-Will-Eisner/dp/039332804X/ref=tmm\\_pap\\_swatch\\_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=](https://www.amazon.com/Contract-God-Will-Eisner/dp/039332804X/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=)]
6. \*\*All Films will be digitized for this course and available to stream through Canvas, except for *Inglorious Bastards*, which is available for \$1.99 on Amazon Prime.

**Supplies and Technology:** The UNT fall schedule requires this course to have fully remote instruction beginning November 28th. Additional remote instruction may be necessary if community health conditions change or you need to self-isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19. For in-person meetings, feel free to take notes as you prefer (computer or paper). Completing the online/remote components of this course will require internet access and a computer or tablet through which you can access Canvas. If you have any trouble procuring any of the technology listed, please do not hesitate to get in contact with me. I will make sure that every student has everything they need to perform well in this course.

**Masks REQUIRED:** Face coverings are required in all UNT facilities. Students are expected to wear face coverings during this class—covering their mouth and nose. Masks should also not be pulled down and worn on your chin. If you are unable to wear a face covering due to a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Access to request an official accommodation. UNT face covering requirements are subject to change due to community health guidelines. Any changes will be communicated via the instructor.

**Note about Class Recordings:** Class recordings are the intellectual property of the university or instructor and are reserved for use only by students in this class and only for educational purposes. Students may not post or otherwise share the recordings outside the class, or outside the Canvas Learning Management System, in any form. Failing to follow this restriction is a violation of the UNT Code of Student Conduct and could lead to disciplinary action.

**Communication:** I want to be as accessible to you as I can be. I will hold regular office hours for at least two hours per week on a first-come, first-served basis. I prefer Zoom meetings to adhere to social distancing as much as possible but will be happy to meet with you in person if need be. Either way, I encourage you to come to my office or meet with me over Zoom to discuss any aspect of this course or whatever else is on your mind. I have an open-door policy and want to be a resource and support for you in any way possible. If you can't visit during office hours, please call or email me. I will do my best to respond immediately.

**Emergency Notification & Procedures:** UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

**Attendance:** Attendance for the in-person component of this class is encouraged but not required. If you are feeling even the least bit sick, I implore you to stay home. I will take attendance each day we meet, but please know this is only for purpose of aiding the university’s contract tracing efforts. Whether you are able to make it to the in-person class or not, it is still your responsibility to keep up with all materials in each week’s modules.

\*COVID-19 impact on attendance: While attendance is expected as outlined above, it is important for all of us to be mindful of the health and safety of everyone in our community, especially given concerns about COVID-19. Please contact me if you are unable to attend class because you are ill, or unable to attend class due to COVID-19 including symptoms, potential exposure, pending or positive test results, or if you have been given specific instructions to isolate or quarantine from a health care provider or a local authority. It is important that you communicate with me prior to being absent so I may make a decision about accommodating your request to be excused from class. If you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or askSHWC@unt.edu) or your health care provider PRIOR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Hotline at 844-366-5892 or COVID@unt.edu for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure. While attendance is an important part of succeeding in this class, your own health, and those of others in the community, is more important.

**Assignments and Grading:**

Every assignment (papers, exams, etc.) will be submitted on Canvas. No hardcopies or email submissions accepted. Submission pages will be concluded in weekly Canvas modules that correspond with the due date specified in the schedule below.

**List of Assignments:**

Discussions	15
Short Reaction Paper (Comics)	15
Short Reaction Paper (Film)	15
Midterm Exam	25
Final Project	30
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>100</b>

**Grade Breakdown:**

- A - 90-100
- B - 80-89
- C - 70-79
- D - 60-69
- F - below 60

**Midterm Examination:** A review will be posted the week of the midterm and we will discuss the review before the exam.

**Final Project:** This course attempts to reflect the diversity of careers in history through differentiated assessment. Students will be encouraged to select the final assessment that is most relevant to their professional ambitions, whether it is a historical research paper, oral history, teaching portfolio, or creative project. More details will be provided in class.

**Missed Assignments:** Late assignments will lose points each day they are not turned in. If you are aware you are going to miss the Midterm, please do not wait until the day of or after to tell me. If you let me know beforehand I will be able to accommodate you for extenuating circumstances.

**Expectations:** The attached class schedule lists weekly reading assignments, which you should complete before the first lecture of that week. Whether or not you can complete reading assignments before I deliver the corresponding lectures, I do expect you to keep up with the readings. Your grade depends in part upon your ability to participate meaningfully in discussions. The practice of history is about making and supporting arguments, but I do expect you to remain civil and respect the opinions of your classmates during these dialogues.

**Withdrawal Policy:** If you are unable to complete the course, you must withdraw by the **12<sup>th</sup> University class day for a refund**. A student wishing to withdraw from a course before the end of the semester must initiate the process by filling out the official withdrawal form, which can be found on the University's website or at the Registrar's office.

**Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences.** The University of North Texas promotes the integrity of learning and embraces the core values of trust and honesty. Academic integrity is based on educational principles and procedures that protect the rights of all participants in the educational process and validate the legitimacy of degrees awarded by the University. In the investigation and resolution of allegations of student academic dishonesty, the University's actions are intended to be corrective, educationally sound, fundamentally fair, and based on reliable evidence. Students should be aware that "acts of dishonesty" include cheating, plagiarism, furnishing misleading information, and forgery. We will uphold the policies and regulations of the University.

The American Historical Association's "Statement on Professional Conduct" defines plagiarism in the following way:

"The word *plagiarism* derives from Latin roots: *plagiarius*, an abductor, and *plagiare*, to steal. **The expropriation of another author's work, and the presentation of it as one's own, constitutes plagiarism and is a serious violation of the ethics of scholarship.** It seriously undermines the credibility of the plagiarist, and can do irreparable harm to a historian's career. In addition to the harm that plagiarism does to the pursuit of truth, it can also be an offense against the literary rights of the original author and the property rights of the copyright owner... **The real penalty for plagiarism is the abhorrence of the community of scholars.** No matter what the context, the best professional practice for avoiding a charge of plagiarism is always to be explicit, thorough, and generous in acknowledging one's intellectual debts."

(See: <http://www.historians.org/pubs/free/professionalstandards.cfm#Plagiarism>)

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism while you are in the process of writing your final paper, see me. More information on academic integrity can be found in the Undergraduate Catalog.

### **Course-Related Academic Adjustments with the Americans with Disabilities Act**

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

## Weekly Schedule

*Please note: This schedule is subject to change. You are expected to keep up with all materials and assignments, attend class regularly (if healthy), and to be aware of any changes that may be made. We will often not hold class on Fridays so that you can complete assigned readings and film screenings. Every assignment will be submitted on Canvas—no hardcopies or email submissions.*

### **Week 1: I. Introduction**

August 24— Class Introduction

August 26— Lecture: What is Cultural History?

August 28—

### **Week 2: II. The History of Jews in America up to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

August 31— Lecture: Jews in America, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries

September 2— Lecture: Jews in America, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries

September 4— Lecture: Jews in America, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries cont'd.

### **Week 3: III. Culture in Print—Introduction to Comics**

September 7— NO CLASS

September 9— Lecture: How to read/analyze Comics

September 11— Lecture: The “Funnies” in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Assignment: Read Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster’s *Action Comics* #1 for next week and come to class with at least two discussion questions.

### **Week 4: IV. Culture in Print— Comics and Graphic Novels**

September 14— Lecture: Supermensches

September 16— Discussion: *Action Comics* #1

September 18— No Class. Assignment: Read *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories* for next week and come to class with at least two discussion questions.

### **Week 5: V. Culture in Print— Comics and Graphic Novels Cont'd.**

September 21— Lecture: From Comics to Graphic Novels

September 23— Discussion: Will Eisner’s *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories*

September 25— No Class. Assignment: Read *Maus* (volumes 1 & 2) and *Resistance* for next week and come to class with at least two discussion questions.

### **Week 6: VI. Culture in Print—Comics and Graphic Novels Cont'd.**

September 28— Lecture: Illustrating Trauma and Survival

September 30— Discussion: Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* (volumes 1 & 2) and *Resistance*

October 2— No Class. **DUE: Short Reaction Paper #1 (submit on Canvas by Sunday, October 4, 11:59 pm)**

### **Week 7: \*\*MIDTERM\*\***

October 5—Discussion: Review for Midterm

October 7— **DUE: Midterm Exam (submit on Canvas by 11:59 pm)**

October 9— No Class.

### **Week 8: Culture in Performance—Theatre**

October 12— Lecture: Jewish Roots in the American Stage

October 14— Lecture: Performing Identity

October 16— Lecture: Performing Identity, continued

Assignment: Watch the Marx Brothers’ *Duck Soup* for next week.

**Week 9: VIII. Culture in Performance—Film**

October 19— Lecture: Jews and the Birth of Hollywood

October 21— Discussion: The Marx Brothers' *Duck Soup*

October 23— NO Class—**DUE: Final Project Description on Canvas by 11:59 PM.**

Assignment: Watch *The Great Dictator* for next week.

**Week 10: IX. Culture in Performance—Film Cont'd.**

October 26— Lecture: Nazism, the War, and Film

October 28— Discussion: *The Great Dictator*

October 30— No Class. Assignment: Watch *Gentleman's Agreement*

**Week 11: X. Culture in Performance—Film Cont'd.**

November 2— Lecture: The Post-War Era, Antisemitism, and Film

November 4— Discussion: *Gentleman's Agreement*

November 6— No Class. Assignment: Watch *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Inglorious Bastards*

**Week 12: XI. Culture in Performance—Film Cont'd.**

November 9— Lecture: Historical Nostalgia and Historical Fantasy in Jewish Films

November 11— Discussion: *Fiddler on the Roof*

November 13— Discussion: *Inglorious Bastards* **DUE: Short Reaction Paper #2 (submit on Canvas by Sunday, November 15, 11:59 pm)**

**Week 13: Final Project Virtual Meetings**

November 16—Individually-scheduled Zoom meetings with professor to discuss final projects

November 18—Individually-scheduled Zoom meetings with professor to discuss final projects

November 20—Individually-scheduled Zoom meetings with professor to discuss final projects

**Week 14: Thanksgiving Week**

November 23-27— NO CLASS (work on final projects)—Thanksgiving Break

**Week 15: Concluding**

November 30—Zoom Presentations of projects

December 2— Zoom Presentations of projects

December 4— No other assignments—finalize final projects.

**Final Exam:**

**Monday, December 7<sup>th</sup>: Turn in Final Papers by 11:59 pm.**