

HIST 4435.001 Jewish American Experience:

Jewish American Cultural History

Fall 2019

Meeting: MW 3:30-4:50

Room: Wooten 112

Instructor: Kerry Goldmann

Office: WH 241

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Office hours: MW 9:45-10:45 or by 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 theatre, food, 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

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. Art Spiegelman's *The Complete Maus*, (combined edition of volumes 1 and 2) (ISBN: 978-0679406419)
[\[https://www.amazon.com/Complete-Maus-Art-Spiegelman/dp/0679406417\]](https://www.amazon.com/Complete-Maus-Art-Spiegelman/dp/0679406417)

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, and I will also be happy to schedule an appointment with you at a time outside of regular office hours on which we can both agree. I encourage you to visit me in office hours to discuss any aspect of this course or whatever else is on your mind. 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 like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Assignments:

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|--------------------------------|------------|
| Attendance/In-Class Discussion | 20 |
| Short Reaction Paper | 25 |
| Midterm Exam | 25 |
| Final Project | 30 |
| Total Points | 100 |

Grade Breakdown:

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

Midterm Examination: Details will be distributed later.

Final Assignment: 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: 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 attendance and your ability to participate meaningfully in classroom 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.

Attendance: I do have an attendance policy, and there will be a daily sign-in sheet. You cannot expect to do well in this course if you miss class because you will miss in-class participation and material that will be on quizzes and exams. If you do miss a lecture it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate. I do not share my lecture notes or PowerPoint slides.

Withdrawal Policy: If you are unable to complete the course, you must withdraw by the **12th 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 attend class regularly and to be aware of any changes that may be made. You should pace yourself with reading assignments. Some readings are longer than others and you should begin them well in advance of the day they are due.

Week 1: I. Introduction

August 26—Class Introduction

August 28— Lecture: What is Cultural History?—State of the Field

Week 2: II. The History of Jews in America

September 2— NO Class

September 4— Lecture: Historical Background of Jews in America; Colonial period up to 1900

Week 3: III. Culture in Performance—Theatre

September 9— Lecture: The Origins of Jewish American Theatre: 1880s-1920s

Read: Sholem Asch's *God of Vengeance* (script PDF posted on Canvas). Come to class with at least one discussion question regarding the play.

September 11— Discussion: *God of Vengeance*

Week 4: IV. Culture in Performance—Theatre

September 16— Lecture: The Search for Identity on the Jewish American Stage

Watch: *Fiddler on the Roof* (1971)—Free on Youtube. Come to class with at least one discussion question regarding the play.

September 18— Discussion: *Fiddler on the Roof*

Week 5: V. Culture in Performance—Film

September 23— Lecture: The Birth and Growth of Jewish Hollywood

September 25— **Film Screening**: *The Great Dictator* (1940)

Week 6: VI. Culture in Performance—Film

September 30— **Finish Film**: *The Great Dictator*

Lecture: Post-WWII Film and The Attack on Jewish Hollywood

October 2— **Film Screening**: *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947)

Week 7: VII. Culture in Performance—Film

October 7— **Finish Film**: *Gentleman's Agreement*

Write Film Reaction paper (instructions will be distributed later)

October 9— **Due: Film Reaction Paper**

Discussion: Film Comparison

Week 8: **MIDTERM**

October 14— Review for Midterm

October 16— Midterm Exam

Week 9: VIII. Culture in Print—Comics and Graphic Novels

October 21— Lecture: Jews at the forefront of early comics

Read: *Action Comics #1* (1938). Come to class with at least one discussion question.

October 23—Discussion: Supermensches: Superman

Week 10: IX. Culture in Print—Comics and Graphic Novels

October 28— Lecture: Illustrating Trauma

Read: Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, part 1 and 2. Come to class with at least one discussion question regarding *Maus*.

October 30— Discussion: *Maus*, part 1 and 2

Week 11: X. Culinary Culture—History and Tradition

November 4— Lecture: Historical Overview

November 6— Lecture: Jewish Contributions to American Cuisine

Week 12: XI. Culinary Culture—Melting Pot?

November 11— Lecture: Jewish Culinary Assimilation

November 13—Discussion: Settlement House Cookbooks

Week 13: Final Project Meetings

November 18— Scheduled meetings to discuss final projects

November 20— Scheduled meetings to discuss final projects

Week 14: Thanksgiving Week

November 25— In-Class Presentations of Final Project

November 27— In-Class Presentations of Final Project

Week 15: Concluding

December 2— In-Class Presentations of Final Project

December 4— NO CLASS—work on final projects

Final Exam:

Wednesday, December 11th—1:30pm-3:30pm

DUE: Turn in Final Projects.