**The American Jewish Experience**

JDST 611 Fall Prof. Jenny Caplan (jcaplan@towson.edu)

This course will introduce students to elements of the specific history and culture of Jews in North America. Focusing primarily on the United States, it will explore the history of the various Jewish immigrations starting with the Spanish Jews of the 1500s and continuing to 21st century migration into (and out of) the U.S. Students will read primary texts associated with the various forms of Judaism practiced in the U.S., and will look closely at critical issues affecting contemporary American Jewry.

**Required Texts:**

*American Judaism* by Jonathan Sarna

*American Jewish History* reader edited by Zola and Dollinger

*Mitzvah Girls* by Ayala Fader

*Rachel Calof’s Story* by Rachel Calof

*Jews on the Frontier* by Shari Rabin

*The Sabbath* by Abraham Joshua Heschel

*The Lonely Man of Faith* by Joseph Soloveitchik

**Grading Breakdown:**

Discussion Leading: 20%

Scholarly Book Reviews: 30% (10% each)

Final Paper Outline and Bibliography: 10%

Final Paper First Submission: 20%

Final Research Paper: 20%

Schedule of Classes (readings in **bold** are scans on Blackboard)

Week 1: Introduction

**Unit One: History and Migration**

Week 2: Early Immigration

Readings: Sarna Ch. 1-2, Zola & Dollinger 1.3, 4, 7, 8, 13, 17, 18, 19, 21; 2.2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 23, 24

Week 3: 19th Century

Readings: Sarna Ch. 3; Z&D 3.2, 4, 5, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17; 4.3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 17, 19, 20, 24, 25

Week 4: Westward Jews

Readings: Rabin

Week 5: A Personal Account

Readings: Rachel Calof

**Book Review #1 (Rabin OR Calof) due**

Week 6: The Big Waves

Readings: Sarna Ch. 4; Z&D 5.1, 2, 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 26, 28, 3233, 35, 36, 37, 38.

**Unit 2: Thoughts and Ideas**

Week 7: The World Wars

Readings: Sarna Ch. 5; Z&D 6.6, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 27, 28, 30, 32, 40, 41; 7.04, 8, 14, 15, 22,

Week 8: The Tide Changes

Readings: Sarna Ch. 6; Z&D 8.5, 7, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 29, 35

Week 9: A Religion Divided

Readings: **Kaplan**

Week 10: Theological Awakenings

Readings: *The Sabbath*

**Final Paper Outline and Bibliography Due**

Week 11: *The Lonely Man of Faith*

**Book Review #2 (Heschel OR Kaplan OR Soloveitchik) due**

**Unit 3: Issues and Divisions**

Week 12: Move Toward The Present

Readings: Sarna Conclusion; Z&D 9.2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 14, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 28

**Final Paper Draft Due**

Week 13: Modern Dissent

Readings: *Mitzvah Girls*

**Book Review #3 (*Mitzvah Girls*) due**

Week 14: Where To Next?

Readings: Z&D 10.1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 29

**Final Paper due on the last day of exams by 5pm**

**Grading:**

Book Reviews (750 words 10% each/30% total) You will be asked to write 3 scholarly book reviews over the course of the semester. A scholarly book review is not a synopsis but is instead a distillation. These reviews are meant to help other scholars know the main arguments of a book and decide whether they need to read it. While these are not research driven and outside sources are not necessary, they are sometimes used (though sparingly—space is limited) so if you use additional material make sure you cite it correctly. Examples will be provided to offer guidance.

Final Paper Outline and Bibliography (2-3 pages 10%)

I want to see your proposed topic and outline, as well as an initial source list. Neither of these will be final or set in stone, but I will be able to help you hone your thinking and bibliography based on your initial lists. The outline should include both proposed word counts for each section, and which sources you expect to use in which section.

Final Paper (3000-4000 words 20% draft, 20% final)

This is a final research paper on a topic of your choice relating to the history and culture of Jews in America. This can include issues of immigration or emigration, but needs to have an American focus at heart. This is the culmination of your semester, and your chance to really explore a topic of your choice in depth. The number of sources will vary, but I would anticipate you working closely with at least 5 scholarly sources, and having a clear and original argument.

**Please note: NO grades will be discussed within the first 24 hours of an assignment being returned. If you wish to discuss a grade take a day (or more) to think about my comments and what you wish to say and then come see me.**

**Grading Scale (XX.5 and above rounds up, XX.4 and below rounds down):**

**A: 94-100**

**A-: 90-93**

**B+: 87-89**

**B: 84-86**

**B-: 80-83**

**C+: 76-79**

**C: 70-75**

**D+: 66-69**

**D: 60-65**

**F: 59 and below**

**Attendance Policy**

I will not be taking attendance, but this is a seminar and you’re expected to be in class every week unless there is an emergency. There is an expectation of support for your classmates leading discussion, so repeated absences will certainly impact your discussion leading grade.

**Due Dates and Late Work**

Stuff is due when it is due. I have 90 other students in my undergraduate classes, and if your things are not turned in on time then my timeline gets thrown off. That being said, we’re all adults and if you need extra time, ask. If you show up to class without an assignment I will still take it late, but there may be a penalty. If you ask me ahead of time I can almost guarantee I will grant an extension. If there is any doubt in your mind about getting an assignment done, talk to me.

**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is of the utmost importance. Plagiarism of any type will result in a report to the Academic Integrity System. Severe infractions will result in a zero for the assignment while “accidental” plagiarism such as not correctly citing a source will result in a minimum 50% deduction of credit. A second violation of any type will result in automatic failure. Direct quotations, indirect quotations, paraphrases, ideas, facts, etc. all must be cited. When in doubt, ASK. This is not a risk you want to take.

**Course Repeat**

Students may not repeat a course more than once without prior permission of the Academic Standards Committee.

**Disability Statement**

This course is in compliance with Towson University policies for students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Disability Support Services (DSS), 7720 York Road, Suite 232, 410-704-2638 (Voice) or 410-704-4423 (TDD). Students who expect that they have a disability but do not have documentation are encouraged to contact DSS for advice on how to obtain appropriate evaluation. A memo from DSS authorizing your accommodation is needed before any accommodation can be made.

**Class Courtesy**

All students are expected to follow simple rules of academic courtesy with respect to fellow students and instructors. Please come to class on time to avoid disrupting the class. Once class begins, you must refrain from personal conversations. You must put away all non-course reading materials (e.g. newspapers). Turn off and put away all cell phones. Refrain from using tablets or computers for any non-course related activities. Please avoid premature preparations to leave class; I will let you know when class is over. Eating and drinking are allowed unless they are a distraction due to noise, smell, or space requirements. You may be asked to leave the class for the day if you do not follow these rules.