

# AMERICAN JUDAISM

## REL 3932

### Course Description

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Jews have contributed to the United States' religious diversity for over 350 years, starting off as small pockets of communities on the eastern seaboard. By the 1950s, the US became home to the largest, most prosperous, and most secure Jewish community in modern history. This course surveys the history of American Jews from the 18th century to the 21st century. We will explore the following questions: Why did millions of Jews come to the United States? How has life in a liberal political and capitalist economic order shaped the Jewish experience in America? In turn, how have Jews influenced American culture, politics, and society? Topics will include politics, Southern Judaism, Jewish culture, inter-ethnic group relations, gender and sexuality, popular culture, and identity.



The class will include primary source readings and site visits, and feature lectures and classroom visits by two esteemed scholars of American Judaism. The class counts towards the religious studies major and minor, as well as the Jewish Studies minor.

### Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Describe the major events in American Jewish history
2. Compare and contrast the experiences of different Jewish immigrants to America.
3. Analyze primary source documents in relationship to American Jewish history paying attention to the religious, social, political and historical contexts.
4. Apply religious studies methods to site visits.



## About Me

Dr. Brandi Denison

Office: 10/2223

Office hours: T/Th, 1:45-2:45, or by appointment

Email: [b.denison@unf.edu](mailto:b.denison@unf.edu)

I love religious studies and I love introducing students to the field. I've been in religious studies since I was a second year undergraduate. If you are interested to know more about my research, check out my website: [drbrandidenison.com](http://drbrandidenison.com).

In my free-time, I catch as much music as I can (that's a cello up there), and I try to spend as much time outside with my youngsters as possible. I have my PhD from UNC-Chapel Hill. Sorry, Duke fans. Go Heels!

**Email is the best way to reach me.** I'll respond within 24 hours, although since I try to enjoy life on the weekends, I'm unplugged Friday evening through early Monday morning.



Dr. Brandi Denison

## Where & when do we meet?

T/Th, 12:15-1:30 pm, Building 39/3063

**In addition to readings on Canvas, the following texts are available for purchase in the bookstore:**

1. Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism* (Yale University Press, 2004)
2. Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts* (Harvard UP, 2009)
3. Sarah Imhoff, *Masculinity and the Making of American Judaism* (Indiana University Press, 2017)
4. Kimberly Marlowe Hartnett *Carolina Israelite: How Harry Golden Made us Care about Jews, the South, and Civil Rights* (UNC Press, 2015)
5. Solomon, *Judaism, A Very Short Introduction*



## What will we do in class?

This class emphasizes reading, writing, and discussion. Come prepared, having done the readings and the writing assignment.

The class will contain mini-lectures, large and small group discussions, and presentations from students. **There will be two public lectures that are required for you to attend outside of class.**

## Grading

The grading system we will use is called specifications grading, which is based on adult learning theory (andragogy). Research maintains that adults learn best when they have a flexible but challenging learning environment, which we'll create in this course. There will be a variety of assignments **from which each student can choose** how much to do in order to get the grade she or he wishes. This will allow students to direct their learning in this course in the manner that best suits their learning objectives. Specifications grading works like this:

**You have will have the opportunity to choose** how many and which assignments you complete in order to reach your goals for the course. The assignments are directly linked to the course outcomes listed on the first page of the syllabus. Assignments, however, are only graded on a pass/fail basis, which will be determined by the specifications spelled out for each assignment. Low quality submissions that do not meet the assignment specifications will not pass. Each assignment has specifications associated with it; you will find these on Canvas. Each assignment must meet all the criteria in order to pass. There is no partial credit. **Note on grade calculation: If a student attempts to work at a higher level, but fails the assignment, the student will earn the higher grade of the lower level. Example—if a student attempts a B level, but fails, the student will earn a C+ rather than a C.**

Students who decide to earn a F will pass:	4 Reading Responses (RR) 4 Discussion Response (DR) 12 Classes
Students who decide to earn a D will pass:	5 RRs; 5 DBs 14 Classes Primary Source Search 1 exam or 1 take-home essay
Students who decide to earn a C will pass:	7 RRs; 7 DBs 19 Classes 2 Lecture Attendance and Responses 2 exams, or 1 exam and 1 take-home essay Primary Source Search Primary Source Summary and Bibliography 1 site visit
Students who decide to earn a B will pass:	8 RRs; 8 DBs 21 Classes 2 Lecture Attendance and Responses 2 exams and 1 take home essay, or 1 exam and 2 take-home essays Primary Source Search Primary Source Summary and Bibliography Polished Draft of Primary Source Document Analysis (PSDA) & Peer Review 1 site visit
Students who decide to earn an A will pass:	10 RRs; 10 DBs 23 Classes 2 Lecture Attendance and Responses 2 exams and 2 take home essay, or 1 exam and 3 take-home essays Primary Source Search Primary Source Summary and Bibliography Polished Draft of Primary Source Document Analysis (PSDA) & Peer Review Significant Revision of PSDA 2 site visits

ASSIGNMENT	BRIEF EXPLANATION	GRADING
Reading Response 13 Opportunities	Students will be assigned to either the A group or the B group, and will write a 250-350 word response to a prompt engaging the assigned reading. Students will then post them to a discussion board on Canvas.	A: 10 passes B: 8 passes C: 7 passes
Discussion Board 13 Opportunities	On the day that students do not write a response response, they will write a 150-250 word response to one of their classmates's reading responses.	A: 10 passes B: 8 passes C: 7 passes
Class Participation 27 Opportunities	During the first week, the class will set the criteria for passing. Specifications will include tardiness, speaking during discussions, civility, use of technology, preparation for discussion, and bringing class materials.	A: 23 passes B: 21 passes C: 19 passes
Lecture Attendance and Response	We are incredibly lucky to have two scholars visit our class and give a public lecture. Students will attend both lectures and write a one-page response to the lecture.	2 passes required for C and higher.
Site Visits 2 opportunities	Students will attend a Jewish temple, and write a 750 word essay analyzing their experience. Students aiming for an A will attend two separate temples.	A: 2 passes B: 1 pass C: 1 pass
In-class exams 2 opportunities Take-home essays 3 opportunities	The in-class exams will consist of primary source document identification, and an in-class essay. The take-home essay will be a 500-750 argument driven essay in response to prompts given one week in advance.	A: 2 exams & 2 take-home essays, or 1 exam & 3 take-home essays B: 2 exams & 1 take-home essay or 1 exam & one take-home essay C: 2 exams, or 1 exam & 1 take-home essay
Primary Source (PS) Search	Students will conduct a library search in response to a student-driven question, and find two primary sources that addresses their question.	Passes required for D and higher
PS Summary & Bibliography	Students will summarize the primary sources, in 500-750 words, and generate a bibliography of secondary sources that will help contextualize the sources.	Passes required for C and higher
Polished Draft of Primary Source Document Analysis & Peer Review	In a 1000-1250 word paper, students will analyze two primary source documents, submit the paper for peer review, and review a classmate's paper.	Pass required for B and higher
Revised PSDA	In a 1250-1500 word paper, students will submit a significantly revised primary source documentary analysis.	Pass required for A.
<b>Tokens</b>	Each student starts the semester with 3 (virtual) tokens. You may use the tokens to: revise a failing paper; receive an extension; and/or redo a failing or missed exam. <b>Submit your request to use a token via email.</b>	<i>Tokens cannot be used on class participation or RRS/DRs since each have built-in "freebies" for those striving to earn an "A."</i>

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due	Holiday
8/22	Introductions			
8/24	What is Religion? What is Religious Studies? What is "American" about Judaism?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sarna, <i>American Judaism</i>, xiii-30</li> </ul>	Reading Response 1A Discussion Board 1B	
8/29	Judaism 101	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soloman, <i>Judaism: A Very Short Introduction</i>, 1-98</li> </ul>	Reading Response 2B Discussion Board 2A	
8/31	Becoming Citizens: Jews in Colonial and Early America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sarna, 31-61</li> </ul>	Reading Response 3A Discussion Board 3B	
9/5	Becoming Citizens: Jews in Colonial and Early America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sarna, 62-134</li> <li>"The Pittsburg Platform"</li> <li>The Preamble and Constitution of the Jewish Theological Seminary</li> <li>The Orthodox Jewish Congregational Union of America</li> </ul>	Reading Response 4B Discussion Board 4A	
9/7	The Great Eastern European Migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sarna, 135-165</li> <li>Michael Gold, <i>Jews without Money</i>, (1930), 156-173</li> </ul>	Reading Response 5A Discussion Board 5B	
9/12	The Great Eastern European Migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sarna, 166-207</li> </ul>	Reading Response 6B Discussion Board 6A	
9/14	Immigrants in Revolt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tony Michels, <i>A Fire in Their Hearts</i>, 1-60</li> <li>"Strong, Firm, and Correct Propaganda" (1886)</li> </ul>	Reading Response 7A Discussion Board 7B	
9/19		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tony Michels, <i>A Fire in Their Hearts</i>, 60-124</li> <li>Alexander Berkman, "The Attempted Assassination of Henry Clay Frick" (1912)</li> <li>Rose Pastor Stokes, "The Right to Control Birth" (1916)</li> </ul>	Reading Response 8B Discussion Board 8A	

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due	Holiday
9/21	The Yiddish Cultural Renaissance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tony Michels, <i>A Fire in Their Hearts</i>, 125-65</li> <li>Chiam Zhitlovesky, "Our Future in America" (1915)</li> </ul>	Reading Response 9A Discussion Board 9B Site Visit Paper #1	Rosh Hashana
9/26		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tony Michels, <i>A Fire in Their Hearts</i>, 165-216</li> </ul>	Reading Response 10B Discussion Board 10A Primary Source Search	
9/28	Midterm Exam		In class exam	
10/3	Judaism Reconstructed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mordecai Kaplan, "The Reconstruction of Judaism" (1920)</li> <li>Ludwig Lewisohn, "The Fallacies of Assimilation" (1925)</li> </ul>	Reading Response 11A Discussion Board 11B Essay #1 Due	
10/5	At Home in America?	Eric Goldstein, <i>The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity</i> , 138-162  "There is no Jewish Race!" (1910)	Reading Response 12A Discussion Board 12B	Sukkot
10/10	At Home in America?	Goldenstein, <i>The Price of Whiteness</i> , 163-186	Reading Response 13B Discussion Board 13A Primary Source Summary & Bibliography	
10/12	Jewish Masculinity	Sarah Imhoff, <i>Masculinity and the Making of American Judaism</i> , 31-92	Reading Response 14B Discussion Board 14A	Shimini Atzeret
10/17	Jewish Masculinity	Sarah Imhoff, <i>Masculinity and the Making of American Judaism</i> , 93-154	Reading Response 15A Discussion Board 15B	
10/19	Jewish Masculinity	Sarah Imhoff, <i>Masculinity and the Making of American Judaism</i> , select one of chapters 7-9	Reading Response 16B Discussion Board 16A  <b>Lecture: 7 pm</b>	

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due	Holiday
10/24	World War II, the Holocaust, and the State of Israel	Aaron Berman, <i>Nazism, the Jews, and American Zionism</i> , 96-150	Reading Response 17A Discussion Board 17B Lecture Response	
10/26	World War II, the Holocaust, and the State of Israel	Aaron Berman, <i>Nazism, the Jews, and American Zionism</i> , 151-184	Reading Response 18B Discussion Board 18A	
10/31	World War II, the Holocaust, and the State of Israel	Arthur Rosenberg, "The Jewish Problem will be Solved as soon as the Jews Again become a Normal Nation" (1943)  The Case for a Bi-National Palestine (1945)  Bi-Nationalism is Unworkable (1947)  Alexander Bittelman, "The New State of Israel," (1948)  David Ben-Gurion and Jacob Blaustein, "An Exchange of Vows," (1950).	Reading Response 19A Discussion Board 19B	
11/2	Contentment and Its Costs: Jews in Post-War America	Sarna, 272-306  Arther Hertzberg, "American is Galut" (1964)	Reading Response 20B Discussion Board 20A Essay #2	

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due	Holiday
11/7	Contentment	Riv-Ellen Prell, <i>Fight to Become Americans: Jews, Gender, and the Anxiety of Assimilation</i> (Beacon Press, 1999), 142-208  Arlene Peck, "Coming of Age in the South: The Southern Jewish American Princess in the Fabulous Fifties, in <i>The Ethnic American Woman</i> , ed. Edith Blinksilver (1976).	Reading Response 21A Discussion Board 21B PSDA Polished Draft Due	
11/9	Community in Crisis	Michael Staub, <i>Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America</i> , 45-111  Negro-Jewish Relations in America: A Symposium (1966)	Reading Response 22B Discussion Board 22A	
11/14	Community in Crisis	Michael Staub, <i>Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America</i> , 153-193  Aviva Cantor Zuckoff, "Oppression of America's Jews" (1971).	Reading Response 23A Discussion Board 23B Peer Review Due	
11/16			Exam #2	
11/21	Southern Judaism	Kimberly Marlowe Hartnett, <i>Carolina Israelite: How Harry Golden Made us Care about Jews, the South, and Civil Rights</i> , 1-111	Reading Response 24B Discussion Board 24A	
11/23	NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING			



Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due	Holiday
11/28	Southern Judaism	Kimberly Marlowe Hartnett, <i>Carolina Israelite: How Harry Golden Made us Care about Jews, the South, and Civil Rights</i> , 112-188	Reading Response 25A Discussion Board 25B Site Visit #2	
11/30	Southern Judaism	Kimberly Marlowe Hartnett, <i>Carolina Israelite: How Harry Golden Made us Care about Jews, the South, and Civil Rights</i> , 188-267	<b>Lecture: Hartnett</b> Reading Response 26B Discussion Board 26A	
12/7, 1:00 pm	May be submitted earlier!		Lecture Response Essay #3 Primary Source Document Analysis	

# FAQS

## *What is the attendance policy?*

Attendance and participation are not the same thing. In order to pass this class with a "C", you will need to earn at least 19 passes for class participation. We will decide as a class what constitutes acceptable participation.

In general, excused absences are limited to documented illnesses, family emergencies, religious holidays, and university approved extracurricular activities. In order for you to receive an excused absence, I must be notified of the situation *by email or in writing*. Do not simply tell me before or after class. If possible, I should be notified in advance.

## *There are too many PDFs in the class. I don't want to print the readings.*

Hmm. Well. I require that you bring the readings to class. They must either be printed out, or on your tablet/laptop. **(You may not read on your phones)**. The total cost for printing out all the readings required for this class at the library is **\$22.41**. That's the total cost of about 5 fancy Starbucks drinks. If you buy your books used, this brings the total cost of the reading material for this class to **about \$60**. That's a lot of knowledge for a little amount. If I were you, I would load up my phone with podcasts, stock up my Osprey1Card with \$22.41, buy a three-ring binder, and head to the library to print out all the readings at once. In fact, I think that this is so important, that I'm offering a **rare chance for extra credit**. If you print out all the readings, put them in a binder, and bring it to class by the 3rd class session, **you will receive an extra token**.

## *What is the technology policy?*

We will decide as a class.

## *What if I require learning accommodations?*

First, register with the UNF Disability Resource Center (DRC) located in Building 10, Room 1201. The DRC staff determines whether a student qualifies for services with the DRC and if so, the accommodations the student requires will be provided. DRC staff then prepares a letter for the student to provide faculty advising them of approved accommodations. For further information, contact the DRC by phone (904) 620-2769, e-mail [kwebb@unf.edu](mailto:kwebb@unf.edu), or visit the DRC website [www.unf.edu/drc](http://www.unf.edu/drc).

## *My cat ate my assignment; my car wouldn't start; and my computer sucks. In short, what's the late assignment policy?*

RRs are always due 10 pm the day before class meets, and DRS are due at 10 am the day of class, submitted through Canvas. I will not accept any other form of submission and late RRs/DBs will earn a fail. Otherwise, you may consult with me in using one of your tokens in order to turn in a late assignment, or to make up a missed exam. However, you only have 3 tokens and the semester is long. I recommend that you save your tokens.

*What will we do in class? How will I prepare?*

This course is a combination lecture and discussion course. Most days, I will give brief lectures. Most days you will be expected to work on group assignments in class. Expect to spend a minimum of **SIX** hours each week to prepare for class discussion. This time includes reading and thinking about the material and writing a brief response.

*Can I cheat?*

No.

*How do I know what cheating is?*

Plagiarism is the attempt to pass someone else's ideas OR words as your own. ANY sentence that you take from someone else's work needs to be cited (even if it comes from a blog, website, friend, or cereal box). If you copy a phrase or sentence word-for-word from another text (text means a friend's work, a website, a traditional scholarly text, an on-line book review...in other words, anything you did not write), but do not place it in quotes and instead, cite the person in the next sentence, it is still plagiarism. Any ideas that you borrow to understand your project or assignment also need to be cited. Such work will earn an automatic "F" on the assignment. If you EVER have any questions about proper citations, the assignment, or are concerned that you will not be able to complete the assignment in accordance to the guidelines, please speak with me immediately.

All assignments will be submitted through plagiarism detection tools via Canvas.

*I want an A. How do I get it?*

By passing all the requirements for earning an "A." It's your choice.

*What if I'm struggling with this course?*

Come talk to me! I want everyone to succeed in this course, and, dare I say, have everyone earn an "A."