Jews at the University of Michigan: Ethnicity and Religion in Higher Education

Judaic Studies 417, Section / American Culture 405, Section / Social Work 513, Section 1
Tuesday, 1-4 pm, B770 SSWB, Fall 2013

Course Description:

This seminar provides students with the opportunity to contribute to a developing narrative of Jewish experience at the University of Michigan. At a time when most elite private colleges and universities in the Northeast imposed quotas on the percentage of Jewish students on campus, Michigan became an attractive destination for children of East Coast immigrant families, establishing a long tradition of a strong national Jewish student presence at the University. The University of Michigan has thus served as an important locus of Americanization and for the development of American Jewish culture.

Despite the historic and contemporary significance of Jewish presence at and contributions to the University of Michigan, almost nothing has been written about the Michigan Jewish experience. Class readings and discussions will focus on the history of Jews in American higher education, the history of the University, and the research and presentation tools necessary to begin to gather and share the stories of Jews at the University. Potential research themes include fraternity/sorority life, Hillel, campus activism, faculty and student experience, to what extent U-Michigan attempted to replicate the exclusionary admissions practices of Eastern elite schools, exclusions and quotas in specific departments and professional schools, religious expression, acculturation and assimilation, anti-Semitism, Jewish philanthropy, and the evolution of Judaic Studies, among other subjects. Research projects will draw upon the holdings of the University of Michigan libraries, including the Bentley Historical Library, and other regional archival collections.

Course Objectives:

Completion of this course will result in the ability of students to:

1. Understand how the way that Jews entered American colleges and universities and attempts to exclude or incorporate them shaped higher education in the United States.
2. Develop research skills to gather and analyze primary sources around particular themes in the history of Jews at the University of Michigan.
3. Transform primary source research into historical narratives that will contribute to the beginning of the documentation of the historical experience of Jews at the University of Michigan.

4. Develop shared class knowledge about the narrative of Jews in higher education and its intersection with the history of the University of Michigan.

5. Pose and address significant historical questions through creative research methodologies.

6. Think critically about the ways in which Universities open and restrict access to social and economic opportunity. Address the question of whether and how Universities preserve or challenge societal structures of privilege.

7. Contribute to the history of Jewish experience at the University of Michigan.

**Required Text, available for purchase:**


**Student Responsibilities**

This course will be conducted as a seminar and will require active student participation. Students should come prepared to ask questions, share insight, listen to the instructor and fellow students with full attention, and provide leadership in the classroom, within large and small groups. Specific reading assignments may shift to accommodate the needs and interests of the class and the schedules of guest speakers. Graduate students will be required to submit a longer final paper or one designed to address their particular academic or professional interests in consultation with the instructor.

If there are any special circumstances that I and/or the class should know to allow you to participate fully, please consult with me so that we can make appropriate adaptations.

All students are responsible for the highest level of academic integrity. Students must submit only their own work and cite all sources of ideas and information taken from other sources. Plagiarism will not be tolerated.
Requirements:

Class Participation (20%) The course will depend upon active participation from all students. This includes regular, prompt attendance. Please let me know if you must miss a class – more than three absences may result in a failing grade. Active participants offer informed, thoughtful contributions; listen carefully and respectfully; and ask probing, challenging questions of the instructor and each other. Students may be asked, individually or in small groups, to present material from assigned or optional reading assignments and to speak about completed or prospective written assignments.

Students will be conducting individual research on disparate subjects related to the history of Jews at the University of Michigan. One way to begin to develop a shared narrative will be to share sources. As students begin to conduct research, they should be on the look out for items that relate to our overall class themes or that may be helpful in advancing the research of their classmates.

Assignments for Submission:

Interview Assignment (5%, due September 24):
Interview someone over the age of 70 about their perceptions and/or experiences of higher education. How relevant were questions of exclusion or inclusion of outsider groups (Jewish, Catholic, Black, Latino, Asian, disabilities, etc.) to your narrator? If your narrator went to college, what difference did it make for them? What surprised you in what they shared? How does what they described differ from your own experience or understanding of college life and opportunities? What questions did this conversation raise for you in framing relevant historical approaches or in thinking about your own experience as a student at the University of Michigan or elsewhere?

Primary Source presentation (15%, sign-up for one class session)
At least one student will be responsible during most class sessions for locating and presenting a primary source that is relevant to the topic of that session. Sources may be located at the Bentley Library or other archives or collections, in the Michigan Daily News, the Michiganesian, or in other U-M, Jewish, or general publications. After they have presented in class, students will submit a 3-5 page analysis of the significance of the primary source that they have chosen, due during class the following week.
Research Project: (60%, final project due 5 pm, Tuesday, December 17, 2013)

Each student in this course will be a part of advancing the gathering and recording of the history of Jews at the University of Michigan. Students will have the option of developing their projects for use in the University of Michigan’s Frankel Center for Jewish Studies’ twenty-fifth anniversary celebration focused on the history of Jews and Judaic Studies at U-Michigan.

This project is the centerpiece of our course and will be much more than a quick archives immersion relegated to the end of the semester. Toward this end, we will spend considerable time on the different pieces that go into primary research projects, including the identification of topics and relevant archival collections, compiling a bibliography of secondary sources, thinking about the appropriate presentation format, and testing out research questions and hypotheses, all in consultation with the class and instructor.

Topics may touch on any themes raised within the course. Final projects may take different forms including (but not limited to) research papers (15-20 pages); museum exhibit presentations; conducting, transcribing, and presenting oral histories; or on-line media exhibits.

Archival Collections: We will be taking great advantage of the resources of the BENTLEY HISTORICAL LIBRARY which we will visit as a class on September 17.

Examples of collections within the Bentley that could lead to rich research journeys include: William Haber Papers (professor of economics, Dean of U-M LSA, and Jewish communal leader); I. Leo Scharfman papers (professor of economics, founder of the Menorah Society at Harvard, faculty supporter of Jewish initiatives at Michigan); Institute for Social Research (University of Michigan) records, especially, Research Center for Group Dynamics collection (Kurt Lewin); Vice President for Student Affairs (University of Michigan) records; President (University of Michigan) records (including Harold Shapiro, first Jewish president (1980-1987); Alfred G. Meyer Papers; Ira Smith (Registrar) papers; Office of the Registrar records; Contemporary History Project (The New Left in Ann Arbor, Mich.) transcripts of oral interviews; University of Michigan Hillel records.

Class sessions:

September 3: Introduction: Historical Frameworks and Primary Sources

September 10: Admissions Restrictions and Quotas
http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015005249126;view=1up;seq=297.
(accessible on-line through Mirlyn).

September 17: Bentley Library introduction to archival collections.
Meet at 1150 Beal Ave., North Campus.

September 24: Insiders/Outsiders within Student Life
Peckham, 155-190.

October 1: Anti-Semitism, the 1930s, World War II
Karabel, 166-199 [optional: 200-247]
Peckham, 193-243.
October 8: Faculty and Departments  
Lewis S. Feuer, “The Stages in the Social History of Jewish Professors in American Colleges and Universities,” American Jewish History 71 (June 1982).  
Susanne Klingenstein, Jews in the American Academy, 1900-1940 (1991), excerpts

October 22: Professional Schools  

October 29: Post War 1950s. Hollinger. Svonkin  
Karabel, 248-345.  
Peckham, “Hatcher and the Challenges of the Cold War,” 245-266.

November 5: 1960s and New Left  
James Miller's "Democracy is in the Streets": From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago, Karabel, Chap 12, 349-409.  
Peckham, the 1960s: 267-288.

November 12: Affirmative Action  
Karabel, p. 483-513  
Peckham, 312-354.

November 19: Judaic Studies and Jewish Philanthropy  
Karabel, 514-557.
December 3: Today
Karabel, 536-558.
Peckham, 357-360.

**December 10:** Presentation of Student Work. How have we changed the narrative?