

Approaches to Jewish Studies: Teaching a Methods Class

Leah Hochman
University of Florida

Appendix—Abbreviated Syllabus

Approaches to Jewish Studies **Spring Semester**

Designed for advanced students in Jewish studies, this course focuses on the nature, development, and enactment of the field of Jewish studies. We will look at the process of creating and critiquing Jewish studies as a way of determining the methodological foundations of the field. We will ask several critical questions: what is Jewish studies, what are its political and/or ideological underpinnings, how has it evolved, what constitutes the field as a major field concentration, what are the challenges involved, and how have those challenges changed over time? As part of this inquiry into the varieties of Jewish studies, scholars and teachers from a variety of disciplines will join the class to lecture and lead discussion. This critical engagement will lead us to the incorporation and implementation of Jewish studies at this university. Special projects will help formulate critical methods to create both an ideal and a feasible concentration in Jewish studies. By focusing on the teaching and studying of Jewish studies, the class will consider, analyze, and evaluate the field itself and your own concentration in it.

Course objectives:

- To understand the development of Jewish studies as an academic field
- To study the historical conversation surrounding Jewish studies in Europe and the US
- To eavesdrop on and participate in that conversation
- To learn and engage in interdisciplinary methods of studying and teaching Jewish studies
- To evaluate Jewish studies in the American academy
- To develop a systematic approach to Jewish studies.

Weekly readings and discussions:

Tues., Jan. 7: Introduction

Thurs., Jan. 9: Myers, "The ideology of Wissenschaft des Judentums"
"Wissenschaft des Judentums," *Encyclopedia Judaica*

Getting Started: Voices, Missions, Proposals

Tues., Jan. 14: Glatzer, "The Beginnings of Modern Jewish Studies"

Schorsch, "Breakthrough into the Past: The Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden"

Zunz, "On Rabbinic Literature"
List, "A Society for the Preservation of the Jewish People"
"Statutes," The Society for the Culture and Science of the
Jews
Gans, "A Society to Further Jewish Integration"

Thurs., Jan. 16: Library Tour (mandatory). Please meet in the
front lobby of the Judaica Library.
Lerner, "New Technologies and Old Methodologies: Jewish
Studies Research in the Digital Age"
*Recommended: Berlin, Library Resources for Jewish Studies
in the United States*

Tues., Jan. 21: Wolf, "On the Concept of a Science of
(Judaism" first article)
Zunz, "On Rabbinic Literature"
Geiger, "Jewish Scholarship and Religious Reform"
Hirsch, "A Sermon on the Science of Judaism"
Wolf, "On the Concept of a Science of Judaism" (second
article)
Geiger, "The Developing Idea of Judaism"

The Rise of Jewish History

Thurs., Jan. 23: Meyer, "The Emergence of Modern Jewish
Historiography: Motives and Motifs"
Baird, "Boys of the *Wissenschaft*"

Tues., Jan. 28: Graetz, "Judaism Can Be Understood Only Through
its History" and other selections
Krochmal, "A Philosophy of Jewish History"
Dubnow, "Jewish History: An Essay in the Philosophy of
History"
Strauss, "Jewish History: A Discussion"

Thurs., Jan. 30: Class cancelled

The Making and Founding of Institutions

Tues., Feb. 4: Shazar, "Baron David Günzberg and His Academy"
Elbogen, "A Century of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*"
Sperling, "Chapter Two: American Beginnings"
Neuman, "The Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate
Learning: Basic Principles and Objectives"
Rubenstein, *The Early Years: 1908-1919, The Dropsie College
for Hebrew and Cognate Learning.*

Thurs., Feb. 6: Brinner, "The Origins of Modern Jewish Studies
and the Founding of the Hebrew University"
Mosse, "Central European Intellectuals in Palestine"
Myers, "A New Scholarly Colony in Jerusalem: The Early
History of Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University"

Tues., Feb. 11: Zeitlin, "Seventy-Five Years of the *Jewish Quarterly Review*"
Levy, "The Making of the *Encyclopedia Judaica* and *The Jewish Encyclopedia*"
Rubin Schwartz, *A Jewish Encyclopedia*, "History, Biography, Sociology, and Anthropology"

Thurs., Feb. 13: Ritterband and Wechsler, "The Quest for Recognition at Harvard"
Fox, "Jewishness and Judaism at Brandeis University"
Sachar, "The Jewish Component of Brandeis University"

Criticism, Critique, Quandaries

Tues., Feb. 18: Scholem, "Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies (1944)"
Scholem, "The Science of Judaism—Then and Now"
Altmann, "Jewish Studies: Their Scope and Meaning Today"

Thurs., Feb. 20: Baron, "Newer Emphases in Jewish History"

Contemporary Developments and Comparisons

Tues., Feb. 25: Band, "Jewish Studies in American Liberal-Arts Colleges and Universities"
Ritterband and Wechsler, "Tragedy, Triumph, and Jewish Scholarship: Post-War Curricular Developments"
Schorsch, "The Place of Jewish Studies in Contemporary Scholarship"
Sidorsky, "Remembering the Answers: Jewish Studies in the Contemporary Academy"

Thurs., Feb. 27: "In Comparative Contexts" (multiple authors)

Tues., March 4: Cutter, "Jewish Studies as Self-Definition: A Review Essay"
Zipperstein, "Home Again?"
Pinsker, "Queens College and the Souring of Ethnic Studies"
Group Projects Due

Thurs., March 6: **Group Projects Due**

Tues. & Thurs., March 11-13: Spring Break

Jewish Studies Here

Tues., March 18: Guest Speaker from Political Science

Thurs., March 20: Guest Speaker from Religion
Paper #2 Due

Tues., March 25: Guest Speaker from Germanic and Slavic Studies
Guest Speaker from Hebrew Literature

Thurs., March 27: Kirschenblatt-Gimlett, "Kitchen Judaism"

Tues., April 1: Guest Speaker from Religion

Thurs., April 3: Zenner and Belcove-Shalin, "The Cultural Anthropology of American Jewry"

Heschel, "Jewish Studies as Counterhistory"

Baskin, "Integrating Gender Analysis into Jewish Studies Teaching"

Tues., April 8: Vernoff, "The Contemporary Study of Religion and the Academic Teaching of Judaism"

Eisen, "Jewish Studies and the Academic Teaching of Religion"

Plaskow, "Jewish Theology in Feminist Perspective"

Thurs., April 10: Tirosh-Rothschild, "'Dare to Know': Feminism and the Discipline of Jewish Philosophy"

Tues., April 15: In-class Project

Thurs., April 17: Passover

Tues., April 22: **Presentations**