

Promised Lands: The Jewish Presence in Latin America

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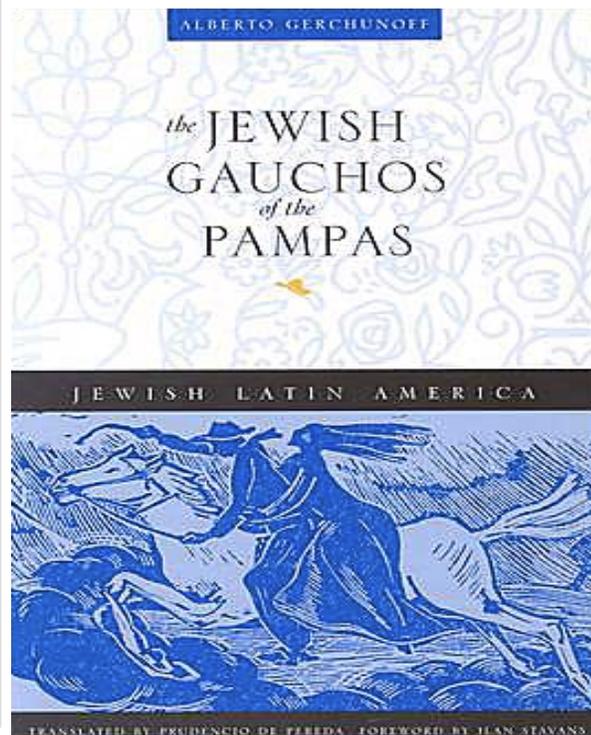
Ronnie Perelis Fall 2011

This course explores Jewish immigration, settlement, cultural production and religious life from the earliest instances of European conquest and colonization of the Americas until the present day. The Americas are not just a geographic space, but they also function as a dreamscape –paradise, savage frontier, land of refuge, or an El Dorado. We will explore the interplay between Jews, Judaism and the realities and mythologies of Latin America. The majority of the material will come from the Spanish and Portuguese zones of Central and South America with attention given to the Jewish communities of the Dutch and English colonies of the Caribbean such as Curaçao and Jamaica. The investigation into the colonial period will focus more heavily on aspects of Sephardic history such as crypto-Judaism, Inquisitorial persecution and the expansion of the western Sephardim to the New World. As the course moves into the modern period, more emphasis will be placed on the experience of Eastern European Jewish immigrants and their descendants. Secondary sources will provide the wider historical context for the wide range of primary texts that will be at the center of the class discussion.



Goals of the course:

- *Develop textual and analytical skills through careful engagement with primary sources
- *Empower the student to think critically, creatively and personally about the texts and their historical context
- *Examine the complexities and ambiguities of culture, society and identity



Please Note: *If you are a student with a documented disability and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.*

Structure of the Course and Grading Policies

Participation	10%
Reaction Papers	10%
Annotated Bibliography	10%
Final Essay Project	70%

The class will meet once a week and consist of interactive lectures, student presentations and group discussions of the texts and historical issues under consideration. Performance will be judged on the basis of participation in class discussions, reaction papers, oral presentations, and the final research project.

Participation (10%): Attendance, knowledge of assigned readings and active participation in class discussions. (You are expected to bring the relevant readings to class.)

The class is designed to allow for a plurality of voices. You will be expected to share your insights and questions with the class on a regular basis. It is your responsibility to come to class with good questions and concerns about the readings; you are not expected to have definitive answers to these questions.

In addition you are required to submit a question or brief comment regarding the readings to the professor by **1pm of the day of class** via ANGEL.

When you must miss class, it is **your** responsibility to find out what you missed as well as the assignment for the next meeting. Please consult a fellow student in the class for this information. If you would like clarification on any point, however, I will be available on email or during office hours.

*Each student will be responsible to introduce one of the primary or secondary texts at some point in the semester.

Reaction Papers (10%):

To help promote meaningful conversations you will be required to write **2** short reaction papers based on your readings. You should focus on one aspect of the reading that you find intriguing. You can also use it as an opportunity to reflect on the connection between different issues that we have previously discussed.

It is essential that your essay **develop** an idea and reflect a **coherent** process of **analysis** and **interpretation** of the text or issue you decide to write about.

You are free to decide when to write a reaction paper but at least one of these papers must be written before November 1.

The essays should be uploaded to the drop box on ANGEL.

Annotated Bibliography (10%): You will prepare an annotated bibliography on a topic of your choosing.

Final Project (70%): Each student will write a research paper dealing with a topic that they have independently researched. At the end of the semester there will be a forum for the students to share their research and ideas.

Readings: Readings: You will be responsible for the primary texts and secondary readings assigned for each week. The reading will enable you to participate in the discussions of both the literary texts and the larger historical issues covered each week.

Required text:

The Fragmented Life of Don Jacobo Lerner, Isaac Goldenberg (ISBN 0671818082)

Multiple copies of this book can be found online at very reasonable prices.

All other text for this course will be available digitally either through ANGEL or E-RES. **Every student is responsible to have an accessible copy of the primary and secondary texts for class either in the form of a hard copy (print-out) or on their personal laptops in class.** We will make ample use of these sources during our class discussions.

September 6: Introduction

Expulsion and Discovery: Old World and New World Intertwined

“I, a Jew?” Jorge Luis Borges

Selections from Columbus’ Diaries

September 13: Session 2

New World Paradise?: the Americas as screen for Old World hopes and fears

*Columbus’ Fourth Voyage (PDF on Angel)

**Noah J. Efron, “Knowledge of Newly Discovered Lands among Jewish Communities of Europe (From 1492 to the Thirty Years War)”, *Jews and Expansion of Europe to the West 1450- 1800* 47- 72.

***Steven Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions* selections

State of the Field:

Raanan Rein, Introduction: New Approaches to Latin American Jewish Studies

Jewish History, Vol. 18, No. 1, Gender, Ethnicity, and Politics: Latin American Jewry

Revisited (2004), pp. 1-5 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20100920>

Edna Aizenberg, “How a Samovar Helped Me Theorize Latin American Jewish Literature”. *Prooftexts*

Vol. 19, No. 2 (MAY 1999), pp. 195-204

Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20689545>

September 20: Session 3

Conversos and Crypto-Jews in New Spain

ARNOLD WIZNITZER. 1961. CRYPTO-JEWS IN MEXICO DURING THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY :INTRODUCTION. *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* (1961-1978) 51, no. 1-4, (September 1): 168. <http://www.proquest.com/>

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF LUIS DE CARVAJAL, THE

YOUNGER :INTRODUCTION. (1965). *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* (1961-1978), 55(1-4), 277. Retrieved August 24, 2011, from AJHS Journal. (Document ID: 465751192).

Optional:

“Some Misconceptions About the Crypto-Jews in Colonial Mexico”

MARTIN A COHEN *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* (1961-1978); Sep 1971-Jun 1972; 61, 1-4; AJHS Journal pg. 277

<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=465756212&sid=2&Fmt=10&clientId=67913&RQT=309&VName=HNP>

September 27: Session 4

Of Conversos, Contraband, and Global Conspiracies: Conversos in South America

J. I. Israel, "Chapter Four: Buenos Aires, Tucumán and the River Plate Route: Portuguese *conversos* and the 'comercial subversion' of the Spanish Indies (1580- 1640)" *Diasporas within a Diaspora* 125- 150.

New Christians and New World Fears in Seventeenth-Century Peru Author(s): Irene Silverblatt Source: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Jul., 2000), pp. 524-546 Published by: Cambridge University Press Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2696644>

Eli Nazareño/Maldonado da Silva: Converso Surgeon/New World Martyr

George Alexander Kohut, "The Trial of Francisco Maldonado de Silva", *PAJHS* Vol. 11, 1903

* 2 elegies for Maldonado da Silva

Marcos Aguinis, **A Marrano on Trial Before the Holy Office of the Inquisition**

Translators Di Giovanni, Norman Thomas. Ashe, Susan,

Hopscotch: A Cultural Review, Volume 1, Number 3, 1999, pp. 102-115

*OPTIONAL: Miriam Bodian, "A Converso Surgeon in the Viceroyalty of Peru", *Dying in the Law of Moses* 117- 152

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/yeshiva/Doc?id=10212565> An electronic book accessible through the World Wide Web; click to view

October 4: Session 5

Tropical Synagogues: Open Judaism in the Dutch Caribbean

Recife: First Open Jewish Community of the Americas

Bruno Feitler, "Jews and New Christians in Dutch Brazil, 1630- 1654", *Atlantic Diasporas* 123- 151

Arnold Wiznitzer, Jewish soldiers in Dutch Brazil 1630- 1654 *PAJHS* Vol. 46, 1956

Succot Break

October 24: Session 6

Amsterdam, New Amsterdam and the expansion of Open Jewish Communities in the Americas

James Homer Williams, "An Atlantic Perspective on the Jewish Struggle for Rights and Opportunities in Brazil, New Netherland, and New York" *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West* pp 369- 393

Meyer Kayserling, "Isaac Aboab, The First Jewish Author in America" Volume 5, 1897

--- “ The Earliest Rabbis and Jewish Writers of America” Volume 3, 1895

November 1: Session 7

Sacred Space: constructing Jewish identity brick by brick

Rachel Frankel “ Antecedents and Remnants of Jodensavanne: The Synagogues and Cemeteries of the First Permanent Plantation Settlement of New World Jews”

In *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West*
394- 438

Laura A. Liebman, “Early American *Mikvaot*”, *Religion in the Age of Enlightenment* Vol. I, 2009 (PDF on Angel)

Aviva Ben Ur, “Still Life: Sephardi, Ashkenazi, and West African Art and Form in Suriname's Jewish Cemeteries”

American Jewish History, Volume 92, Number 1, March 2004, pp. 31-79

Jews and Blacks: Atlantic trade, African slavery and the early modern Sephardic world

Jonathan Schorsch, “Blacks, Jews and the Racial Imagination in the Writings of Sephardim in the Long Seventeenth Century”. *Jewish History*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2005), pp. 109-135 Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20100948>

---Religious Life of Slaves Belonging to Jews: Seventeenth-and –Eighteenth-Century Dutch and British Colonies *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* , pp217-253 Cambridge, 2004.

November 8: Session 8

Polacos y Turcos: Old World Immigration to Latin America

Judith Laiken Elkin, “The Immigration Years”, *The Jews of Latin America*, Rev Ed., Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc. New York 1998 pp 25- 102.

Syncreticisms, mestizaje and the ghosts of memory

Pinkhes Berniker, “Jesús,” short story in *Yiddish South of the Border: An Anthology of Latin American Jewish Writing*, edited by Alan Astro (University of New Mexico Press, 2003): 137-148

Abraham Josef Dubelman, “The Faith Healer,” short story in *Yiddish South of the Border: An Anthology of Latin American Jewish Writing*, edited by Alan Astro (University of New Mexico Press, 2003): 148-153

November 15: Session 9

Gauchos Judíos: Agricultural Settlements and the birth of the “New Jew” in Argentina

*Los Gauchos Judíos/ The Jewish Gauchos of the pampas, Alberto Gerchunoff.

*Edna Aizenberg, “Parricide on the Pampa?”. Iberoamericana: Madrid, 2000. pp. 9- 37.

Alberto Gerchunoff, “A Jewish Gaucho”, *King David's Harp* pp 3-14.

November 22: Follows Thursday, no class

November 29: Session 10

Varieties of the Jewish Immigration experience in Latin America

Jeffrey Lesser and Raanan Rein, "Introduction" and "New Approaches to Ethnicity and Diaspora in Twentieth-Century Latin America pp1-40

Jeffrey Lesser, "How the Jews became Japanese and other Stories of nation and Ethnicity"

Jewish History 18.1 2004 pp7-17

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20100921>

Margalit Bejarano, "The Deproletarianization of Cuban Jewry," in *Judaica Latinoamericana: Estudios Históricos-Sociales*, pp. 57-67.

Margalit Bejarano, "Sephardic Jews in Cuba—From all their Habitations," *Judaism*, winter 2002

Jerry Davila, "Ethnicity, Identity and Nationality in Latin America"

Jewish History 18.1 2004 pp95-113

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20100925>

Optional:

Kemal H. Karpat, "The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914", *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 17 (1985), 175-209.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/163603>

Lesser, Jeff H. "From Pedlars to Proprietors: Lebanese, Syrian and Jewish Immigrants in Brazil." In *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, Albert Hourani & Nadim Shedhadi, eds. London: The Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1992.

Lesser, Jeffrey. "The Immigration and Integration of Polish Jews in Brazil, 1924- 1934." *The Americas* 51:2 (October 1994): 173-91.

December 6:Session 11

**Novia que te vea*. Film by Guita Schyfter, based on the novel by Rosa Nissán (México 1994).

Paulette Kershenovich

[Evoking the Essence of the Divine: The Construction of Identity through Food in the Syrian Jewish Community in Mexico](#) (pp. 105-128)

Nashim No. 5, Fall, 5763/2002

Feeding an Identity: Gender, Food, and Survival

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40326555>

Evelyn Dean-Olmsted

Shamis, halebis and shajatos: Labels and the dynamics of Syrian Jewishness in Mexico City

Language & Communication

Volume 31, Issue 2, May 2011, Pages 130-140

Jewish Languages in the Age of the Internet

Isaac Berliner, "Churches" (Poem illustrated by Diego Rivera), *Yiddish South of the Border* pp156-158

December 13: Session 12

Fractured Lenses

The Fragmented Life of Don Jacobo Lerner, Isaac Goldenberg (ISBN 0671818082)
1- 89

December 20: Session 13

Fractured Lenses (Part II)

The Fragmented Life of Don Jacobo Lerner contd.
90- 186

*Isaac Goldenberg, "Life in Installments" from *King David's Harp* pp. 143- 158

December 27: Session 14

J.L. Borges: Jews and Judaism within Modernity's Labyrinth

"Emma Zunz", "Death and the Compass", "El Aleph", "Ibn-Hakam Al Bokhari, Murdered in his Labyrinth", "In Defense of the Kaballah", "Spinoza"

Erin Graff Zivin (2011): *Semitic Mysteries, Universal Truths: Jewishness and Arabness in Jorge Luis Borges*, *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, 6:2, 121-139
PDF on angel

**Borges y la kabala* <http://youtu.be/N7vvdFB7c5s>

January 3: Session 15

"This is good, but it tasted better in Cuba"

**Adió Kerida*, a film by Ruth Behar

** "While waiting for the ferry to Cuba: Afterthoughts about Adio Kerida"

Ruth Behar *Michigan Quarterly Review*; Fall 2002; 41, 4; Research Library pg. 655

***Marti in Yiddish

http://www.chcuba.org/espanol/vida_comunitaria/interesante/marti%20y%20los%20hebr eos.htm

"Mi tierra", Gloria Estéfan, "El danzón de Moises", Roberto Rodríguez [In class audio recordings]