

HIST 2349: Latina/o Jewish History

University of Houston

Tuesday/Thursday 2:30-4

Science Building 207

Section 25910

Spring 2022

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Office Hours: Virtual only, Mondays, 12-2,
or by appointment



Course Description:

This course explores the history of understudied communities of Jewish Latinxs, linking U.S. and Latin American history, Jewish Studies, and Latinx Studies. Students will use Jewish Latinx history as a window into larger questions about diaspora and identity in the United States and about race, ethnicity, and how we think about American history. We will examine the impact of the Spanish Inquisition and Jewish expulsion from Iberia and follow Jewish refugees to the Americas in the 20th century. We will study Jewish identity and community in American places and trace Latinx Jewish migrations, settlement, and culture in the United States. This course employs co-curricular engagement, and we will work with Holocaust Museum Houston (HMH) on an oral-history project centered on Sephardic Latin American immigration. Students will record interviews with community members and build an exhibit held at HMH.



Course Objectives:

1. Students will develop effective analytical skills through close readings and discussions of primary and secondary sources to understand Jewish Latinx history.
2. Students will hone their written and oral communication skills by developing an oral-history project, answering interpretive questions, and writing a reflection paper.
3. Students will cultivate teamwork skills by working in teams to conduct oral history interviews and build a museum exhibit.
4. Students will enhance their cultural competency skills by engaging with local communities, learning how to uncover a multitude of Jewish and Latinx historical experiences, and studying and analyzing Latinx Jewish histories.

Required Readings

There are three required books for this course. Donald Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, is available **online** through the UH Library. I have also placed Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, and Behar, *Traveling Heavy*, on reserve at MD Anderson Library for short-term checkout. The three books are available at the UH bookstore or any online book outlet.

- Ruth Behar, *Traveling Heavy: A Memoir In Between Journeys* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013)
- Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 3rd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) **[[ebook](#) available at the UH Library using your Cougarnet account]**
- Ilan Stavans and Steve Sheinkin, *El Iluminado: A Graphic Novel* (New York: Basic Books, 2012)

Many of the assigned readings are on MS Teams, marked in the syllabus with (MST). You are not required to print them; however, if you do not print them, please be sure to bring notes or a laptop/device with electronic copies so that you can discuss them in class.

Grades

Response Papers	(25%)	Due 1/27, 2/3, 2/10, 2/17, 2/24
Oral History Interviews	(15%)	March, uploaded by Tues., Apr. 5
Abstracts	(10%)	Due Tues., Apr. 12
Exhibit Poster	(15%)	Due Thurs., Apr. 21
Final Reflection Paper	(20%)	Due Thurs., May 5
Attendance/class participation	(15%)	Based on regular attendance and participation in class

Attendance and Class Participation (15%):

The study of history is a conversation among scholars. We are in a moment of uncertainty, but we will persevere and learn from each other. This course will work best with the completion of daily readings and active participation in class. Other than contributing to class discussion, active and regular participation will help you learn the course material and prepare for your papers and oral history project. Some days I may require you to prepare something written before or during class. This will count towards your participation grade.

This class will confront difficult topics, as we explore the historical roots of our society. This work requires an openness to new perspectives and considering different ways of thinking and seeing, often different than our own. Some discussions may elicit tension, which can be productive. I encourage you to come to class with an eagerness to learn from each other, to listen fully, and to agree and disagree respectfully. We bring diverse backgrounds, viewpoints, and interests to this learning community, giving us an amazing opportunity to learn from one another as we share.

In addition, we will be working with a community partner, Holocaust Museum Houston, and local community members. Please be present (literally and figuratively) and ready to engage professionally, as you represent the university and the UH student community.

You are allowed **three (3)** unexcused absences. You may get an absence excused with proper documentation (i.e., jury summons). I recognize that because of the pandemic, our schedules are often changing in unpredictable ways. Please do not hesitate to contact me if something unexpected comes up that affects your attendance. Communication is **key**.

Excused Absence Policy: Regular class attendance, participation, and engagement in coursework are important contributors to student success. Absences may be excused as provided in the University of Houston **Undergraduate Excused Absence Policy** and **Graduate Excused Absence Policy** for reasons including: medical illness of student or close relative, death of a close family member, legal or government proceeding that a student is obligated to attend, recognized professional and educational activities where the student is presenting, and University-sponsored activity or athletic competition. Under these policies, students with excused absences will be provided with an opportunity to make up any quiz, exam or other work that contributes to the course grade or a satisfactory alternative. Please read the full policy for details regarding reasons for excused absences, the approval process, and extended absences. Additional policies address absences related to **military service, religious holy days, pregnancy and related conditions**, and **disability**.

Response Papers (25%):

In the syllabus, I've included weekly questions for various weeks during the semester. These questions serve two purposes: 1) they will help you prepare for each class meeting; 2) they serve as short writing assignments. Beginning in **Week 2 (Jan. 25 and 27)**, you will answer **one (1)** of the weekly questions in **200-300 words** for **Weeks 2, 3, 4, 5, 6**. You will **submit these papers via Blackboard by class time Thursday of that week**.

Oral History Interviews (15%):

Much of the work in this class centers on the oral history interviews you will be conducting with Latinx Jewish community members and presenting in our project with Holocaust Museum Houston. You will be working in teams for the interviews, which will occur in person, on Zoom, or by telephone, depending on the interviewee's preference. The individual interviews should last about 60 minutes and follow the instructions outlined in our readings and discussions on oral history. Please be sure to request photographs from interviewees. The oral history grade includes preparatory work and the actual interview. **Audio and video files of the interviews should be added to your folder in MS Teams within seven days of completion. All interview recordings and photographs must be on MS Teams by Tues., Apr. 5.**

Abstracts (10%):

Abstracts and keywords are essential components for archived oral histories. As a team, you will complete an abstract with keywords for each interview. We will discuss the format during the semester. **Due in Teams folder: Tues., Apr. 12.**

Exhibit Poster (15%):

As HMH develops the website archiving the interviews, each team will make a poster to present at the museum. I will hand out more specific guidelines during the semester. You will work on drafts both in class and at home, and a full digital draft is due in class on Tues., Apr. 19. Final draft is **due in class: Thurs., Apr. 21.**

Final Reflection Paper (20%):

In 1,200-1,800 words, you will write a critical reflection paper describing what you have learned from conducting the oral histories. I will hand out more specific guidelines for the essay during the semester. All papers must be double-spaced with standard one-inch margins.

Due on Blackboard, 11:59 p.m. Thurs., May 5.

Course Information and Policies

University policies and resource information are listed after the course calendar below.

Email. Please check your email regularly. I'm only able to reach the email you have registered with the university, so be sure to update that email address and check it regularly. It is the main way we will communicate. To reach me, email me at my regular UH email address (magoldberg@uh.edu). Please **do not** contact me through Blackboard or MS Teams chat; I don't receive those emails and notices regularly.

Microsoft Teams. MS Teams will be the main platform used for class. During the "soft opening," we will hold some class meetings on Teams. You will also use Teams to access course materials, such as readings, and to upload all interview-related files: the recorded interviews, photographs, and abstracts. Please note that Response Papers and the Final Reflection Paper will NOT be submitted via MS Teams.

Blackboard. We will only use Blackboard to submit paper assignments: Response Papers and the Final Reflection Paper.

Soft Opening. During the soft opening, we must meet virtually one day and in-person one day to satisfy UH requirements. I will be recording the in-person meetings on MS Teams for those who are sick. As of the beginning of the semester, the soft opening is in effect during the first two weeks of the semester. Here is our schedule:

Week 1

Tues., Jan. 18	Virtual
Thurs., Jan. 20	In person

Week 2

Tues., Jan. 25	In person
Thurs., Jan. 27	Virtual

If UH extends the soft opening, I will update you on our meeting plans in class and via email. Throughout the semester, if you are not feeling well, please do not come to class.

Important Dates

- **Tuesday, January 25th:** The last day to add a class for regular session courses.
- **Wednesday, February 2nd:** Official Reporting Day (ORD), the last day to drop a course without a grade.
- **Tuesday, Wednesday, April 20th:** Last day to drop a class or withdraw with a “W.”

Reasonable Academic Adjustments/Auxiliary Aids. The University of Houston complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids for disabled students. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines, UH strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them. If you believe that you have a disability requiring an academic adjustments/auxiliary aid, please contact [the Justin Dart Jr. Student Accessibility Center](#) (formerly the Justin Dart, Jr. Center for Students with DisABILITIES).

Recording of Class. Students **may not** record all or part of class, livestream all or part of class, or make/distribute screen captures, without advanced written consent of the instructor. If you have or think you may have a disability such that you need to record class-related activities, please contact the Student Accessibility Center. If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Classes may be recorded by the instructor. Students may use instructor’s recordings for their own studying and notetaking. Instructor’s recordings are not authorized to be shared with *anyone* without the prior written approval of the instructor. Failure to comply with requirements regarding recordings will result in a disciplinary referral to the Dean of Students Office and may result in disciplinary action.

Syllabus Changes. Due to the changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, please note that I may need to make modifications to the course syllabus and may do so at any time. Notice of such changes will be announced as quickly as possible through email.

Face Covering Policy. To reduce the spread of COVID-19, the University strongly encourages everyone (vaccinated or not) to wear face coverings indoors on campus including classrooms for both faculty and students.

Presence in Class Your presence in class each session means that you:

- Are NOT exhibiting any **Coronavirus Symptoms** that makes you think that you may have COVID-19
- Have NOT tested positive or been diagnosed for COVID-19
- Have NOT knowingly been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or suspected/presumed COVID-19

If you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms that are not clearly related to a pre-existing medical condition, do not come to class. Please see **Student Protocols** for what to do if you experience symptoms and **Potential Exposure to Coronavirus** for what to do if you have

potentially been exposed to COVID-19. Consult the (select: [Undergraduate Excused Absence Policy](#) or [Graduate Excused Absence Policy](#)) for information regarding excused absences due to medical reasons.

One Final Note. We are living in an unprecedented situation, which is clearly affecting education. I am committed to your success, and I'm going to do everything I can to optimize your learning experience. Please bear with me as we move through the course. I appreciate your patience. There will likely be technical difficulties, and I will do my best to address them swiftly.

My office hours are on Mondays from 12-2pm on Microsoft Teams or by appointment. If you have a schedule conflict during my office hours, I am happy to schedule an appointment with you to meet at a different time. Please feel free to stop by to ask me any questions you may have from lectures, readings, or assignments, or even if you just want to talk about history. The best way to reach me is by email, **not** through Blackboard or MS Teams chat, but using my regular UH email address (magoldberg@uh.edu). Please let me know if you have any concerns or if you are having any problems with the course. I hope to make this class instructive, and I'm committed to your success in class.

Calendar and Assignments

Reading assignments are to be completed by class time on the day under which they are listed. This schedule is subject to change.

Under Reading, (MST) refers to the readings and other materials located in the Readings folder on Teams. Some materials are also hyperlinked from the syllabus.

Week 1

Tues., Jan. 18 Introduction

Thurs., Jan. 20 What Is Latinx Jewish History?

Reading: Limonic, "[Growing Up Latina and Jewish, I Was A Contradiction](#)," 1-5 (MST)
Behar, *Traveling Heavy*, 3-12
Telushkin, "Ashkenazim and Sephardim," 214-216 (MST)

Weekly questions: Define Askenazim and Sephardim in one sentence (each). What do Limonic and Behar say about being Jewish and Latina? How do their stories reflect what you know about Latinx identity and history? Jewish identity and history? How are they different?

Crypto Jews: Past and Present

Week 2

Tues., Jan. 25 Crypto Jewish History: An Overview

Reading: Hordes, "Preface," xv-xviii (MST)
Israel, "Jews and Crypto-Jews in the Atlantic World Systems, 1500-1800," 3-17 (MST)
Stavans and Sheinkin, *El Iluminado* (start reading)

Thurs., Jan. 27 Crypto Jewish Memories: Discussion: *El Iluminado*

Reading: Stavans and Sheinkin, *El Iluminado* (finish)

Questions: What was the impact of the Spanish Inquisition on Jews in Spanish America? How is this history relevant in the 20th and 21st centuries? What do you think about the *El Iluminado* graphic novel as a medium for historical storytelling – what are its strengths and weaknesses?

Documenting 20th-Century Migrations

Week 3

Tues., Feb. 1

Film: *Un Beso A Esta Tierra*

Reading: Elkin, "How America Was Made," 125-148 (MST)

Thurs., Feb. 3

Mexico and the Modern Sephardi Diaspora

Reading: D. Mays, "'They Are Entirely Equal to the Spanish,'" 138-179 (MST)

Questions: Scholars argue that Jewish-Latin Americans asserted their distinctiveness as Jews while also asserting that they were "typical" Latin Americans. How is this portrayed in the film and readings? What were some of the challenges Sephardi migrants faced in Mexico? How did they respond? In what ways is the story in the Mays article similar to the story told in the film, and in what ways is it different?

Week 4

Tues., Feb. 8

Jewishness in Latin America

Reading: Lesser, "How the Jews Became Japanese," 41-54 (MST)
Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, Introduction & Appendix 1

Thurs., Feb. 10

Argentina and the Modern Sephardi Diaspora

Reading: Brodsky, "The Battle against Guefilte Fish," 181-206 (MST)

Questions: What stood out to you from the oral history best practices in Ritchie, Appendix 1? According to Lesser, what's the relationship between ethnicity and nationality in Latin America? Also, why do ethnic groups' "origin stories" matter? What can food tell us about Sephardi experiences in Argentina?

Week 5

Tues., Feb. 15

Cuban Migrations

Reading: Bettinger-López, "From Jewish Cubans to Cuban-Jews," 3-35 (MST)
Mitchell, "New Worlds, New Homes," 145-153 (MST)
Schindler, "A Cold Day in Miami," 20-21 (MST)

Thurs., Feb. 17

Traveling Heavy

Listen: Dr. Goldberg interviews Sara Esquenazi (MST)
Reading: Behar, *Traveling Heavy*, 13-45, 73-78, 117-141

Questions: What does the author Bettinger-López mean by the chapter title "From Jewish Cubans to Cuban-Jews"? What were some of the challenges Cuban Jewish migrants faced in Miami, and how did they respond? Thinking about oral history and Behar's *Traveling Heavy*, what can interviews and memoirs tell us about a community's experience – are they simply about the individual interviewees or authors, or can they help us understand, in this case, Latinx Jewish history beyond the individual?

Week 6

Tues., Feb. 22

Hebraica: A Houston Story

Listen: Dr. Goldberg interviews Enrique Kuperman (MST)
Reading: Ritchie, Chapter 1

Thurs., Feb. 24

Conducting Interviews, Oral Evidence and Theory

Reading: Ritchie, Chapter 3 & Chapter 4 (**FOR CH. 4, ONLY 110-129**)

Questions: What influenced the formation of Hebraica Houston? What role did it play for its members? What is the difference between a journalist interview and oral history? When interpreting an oral history interview, what role does memory play? What do you think is more reliable, a written source or an oral history interview? What do you think I could have done differently in my interview with Enrique Kuperman?

Week 7

Tues., Mar. 1	Writing Questions Interviewee Assignments
Thurs., Mar. 3	In-Class Research & Writing Questions Reading: Selected readings based on your interviewee assignment

Week 8

Tues., Mar. 8	Practice Interviews in Class Reading: Ritchie, Chapter 5, 137-148
Thurs., Mar. 10	Practice Interviews in Class

****INTERVIEWS WILL OCCUR IN THE NEXT THREE WEEKS. DURING THE INTERVIEWING PROCESS, WE WILL DISCUSS OUR EXPERIENCES IN CLASS****

Week 9

Tues., Mar. 15	SPRING BREAK
Thurs., Mar. 17	SPRING BREAK

Week 10

Tues., Mar. 22	Interviews, discussion
Thurs., Mar. 24	Interviews, discussion

Week 11

Tues., Mar. 29	Interviews, discussion
Thurs., Mar. 31	Interviews, discussion

Week 12

Tues., Apr. 5 Abstracts and Keywords

*****ALL INTERVIEW RECORDINGS & PHOTOGRAPHS MUST BE UPLOADED ON MS TEAMS BY THIS DATE*****

Reading: Halpern and Phalen, "Writing an Effective Abstract" (MST)
Baum, "Indexing," 96-101, 111 (MST)

Thurs., Apr. 7 Presenting Oral History – begin drafting posters in class

Reading: Ritchie, Chapter 8
[Purdue Online Writing Lab, "Research Posters"](#)

Question: How is oral history significant to community history? How will you convey your interviewee's story in your research poster?

Week 13

Tues. Apr. 12 Oral History, Museums, and Memory

*****DUE: Abstracts, uploaded to MS Teams by class time*****

Reading: Loza, "From Ephemeral to Enduring," 23-41 (MST)
Romano, "Beyond 'Self-Congratulatory Celebration,'" 29-32 (MST)
West, "Fifty Years Forward," 1-3 (MST)

Question: What are some of the challenges museums have faced when building historical exhibits? How have museums confronted controversial and/or misunderstood histories, and how have they approached retelling stories that, for a long time, have been told a certain way? How is this relevant to your research poster?

Thurs., Apr. 14 Exhibit – Edit Posters

Week 14

Tues., Apr. 19 Exhibit – Edit Posters

*****DUE IN CLASS: Complete draft of your poster in digital form.*****

Thurs., Apr. 21 Exhibit – Discuss Museum Event
*****DUE IN CLASS: Research Posters*****

Week 15

*****MONDAY, APRIL 25, 6PM HOLOCAUST MUSEUM HOUSTON EVENT*****

Tues., Apr. 26 **NO CLASS**

Thurs., Apr. 28 Wrap Up

Reading: Behar, *Traveling Heavy*, 157-187, 197-225

Question: In the last section of Ruth Behar's *Traveling Heavy*, the author highlights complexities of being Jewish and Latinx in the present day—give two examples. How does this compare to your interviewees' stories?

*****THURSDAY, MAY 5 FINAL REFLECTION PAPER DUE by 11:59pm*****

University Resources and Policies

COVID-19 Information: Students are encouraged to visit the University's **COVID-19** website for important information including on-campus testing, vaccines, diagnosis and symptom protocols, campus cleaning and safety practices, report forms, and positive cases on campus. Please check the website throughout the semester for updates.

Vaccinations: Data suggests that vaccination remains the best intervention for reliable protection against COVID-19. Students are asked to familiarize themselves with pertinent **vaccine information**, consult with their health care provider. The University strongly encourages all students, faculty and staff to be vaccinated.

Helpful Information

COVID-19 Updates: <https://uh.edu/covid-19/>

Coogs Care: <https://www.uh.edu/dsaes/coogscare/>

Laptop Checkout Requests: <https://www.uh.edu/infotech/about/planning/off-campus/index.php#do-you-need-a-laptop>

Health FAQs: <https://uh.edu/covid-19/faq/health-wellness-prevention-faqs/>

Student Health Center: <https://uh.edu/class/english/lcc/current-students/student-health-center/index.php>

Counseling and Psychological Services: Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)—www.uh.edu/caps—are available for students having difficulties managing stress, adjusting to college, or feeling sad and hopeless. You can reach CAPS by calling 713-743-5454 during and after business hours for routine appointments or if you or somebody you know is in crisis. The “Let’s Talk” program provides a drop-in consultation service at convenient locations and hours around campus. <https://uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets-talk/index.php#hours>

Academic Honesty: To cultivate an environment of academic integrity, the University of Houston expects students to abide by the University’s Undergraduate Academic Honesty Policy, found in the Undergraduate Catalog. <http://www.uh.edu/academic-honesty-undergraduate>

Student Conduct Policy: CLASS students are expected to abide by the University of Houston’s Code of Student Conduct: <http://www.uh.edu/dos/behavior-conduct/student-code-of-conduct/>

Sexual Misconduct Policy: Per the UHS Sexual Misconduct Policy, your instructor is a “responsible employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and state law and must report incidents of sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual intimidation, intimate partner violence, or stalking)

about which they become aware to the Title IX office. Please know there are places on campus where you can make a report in confidence. You can find more information on the Title IX website at <https://uh.edu/equal-opportunity/title-ix-sexual-misconduct/resources/>.