

Orthodox Judaism in the United States

Sample Syllabus

Week 1: What is “Orthodoxy?”

“Orthodox Judaism” before “Reform?”

PRIMARY READING: Jacob Rader Marcus, *American Jewry: Documents*, 184-92.

SECONDARY READING: Jacob R. Marcus, “The American Colonial Jew: A Study in Acculturation,” *Tradition and Change in Jewish Experience*, 75-88; Jacob Katz, “Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective,” *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 3-17; and Hyman B. Grinstein, “The American Synagogue and Laxity of Religious Observance, 1750-1850” (MA Thesis: Columbia University, 1936).

What Hath Reform Wrought?

PRIMARY READING: Zev Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 3-11.

SECONDARY READING: Gary Phillip Zola, *Isaac Harby of Charleston, 1788-1828: Jewish Reformer and Intellectual*, 112-49; and Emily Bingham, *Mordecai: An Early American Family*, 147-53.

Week 2: Isaac Leeser and the New Orthodox Agenda

A “Hazzan” in Philadelphia

PRIMARY READING: Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 12-18.

SECONDARY READING: Lance J. Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Jewry*, 80-130.

Traditional Jewish Life at Mid-Century

PRIMARY READING: Josh Bloch, “Rosa Mordecai’s ‘Recollections of the First Hebrew Sunday School,’” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 42 (June 1953): 397-406.

SECONDARY READING: Bertram W. Korn, “American Jewish Life a Century Ago,” *Central Conference of American Rabbis* 60 (1949): 273-302; and Dianne Ashton, *Rebecca Gratz: Women and Judaism in Antebellum America*, 93-148.

Week 3: The Nineteenth Century Orthodox Rabbinate

Abraham Rice, Morris Raphall, and Bernard Illowy

PRIMARY READING: Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 28-39.

SECONDARY READING: David Ellenson, "A Jewish Legal Decision by Rabbi Bernard Illowy of New Orleans and Its Discussion in Nineteenth Century Europe," *American Jewish History* 69 (December 1979): 174-95; Israel Tabak, "Rabbi Abraham Rice of Baltimore: Pioneer of Orthodox Judaism in America," *Tradition* 7 (Summer 1965): 100-20; and Moshe Sherman, "Struggle for Legitimacy: The Orthodox Rabbinate in Mid-Nineteenth Century America," *Jewish History* 10 (Spring 1996): 63-74.

Sabato Morais and the "Orthodox" Jewish Theological Seminary

PRIMARY READING: Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 63-73.

SECONDARY READING: Arthur Kiron, "Heralds of Duty: The Sephardic Italian Jewish Theological Seminary of Sabato Morais," *JQR* 105 (Spring 2015): 206-49; Robert E. Fierstein, *A Different Spirit: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1886-1902*, 17-61.

Week 4: The Great Migration from Eastern Europe

Chief Rabbi Jacob Joseph

PRIMARY READING: Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 79-86.

SECONDARY READING: Menahem Blondheim, "Divine Comedy: the Jewish Orthodox Sermon in America, 1881-1939," in *Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature*, 191-214; Abraham J. Karp, "New York Chooses a Chief Rabbi." *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 44 (September 1954-June 1955): 129-98; Jeffrey S. Gurock, "How 'Frum' was Rabbi Jacob Joseph's Court?: Americanization within the Lower East Side's Orthodox Elite, 1886-1902," *Jewish History* 8 (1994): 255-68; Zev Eleff, "A Far-Flung Fraternity in a Fertile Desert: The Emergence of Rabbinic Scholarship in America, 1887-1926," *Modern Judaism* 34 (October 2014): 353-369; and Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870-1914*, 34-47.

The Rabbi, the Hazzan and the Butcher

PRIMARY READING: Jonathan Sarna, *People Walk on Their Heads: Moses Weinberger's Jews and Judaism in New York*, 46-50, 98-106.

SECONDARY READING: Kimmy Caplan, "In God We Trust: Salaries and Income of American Orthodox Rabbis, 1881-1924," *American Jewish History* 86 (March 1998): 77-106; Jeffrey Shandler, "The Sanctification of the Brand Name: The Marketing of Cantor Yossele Rosenblatt," in *Chosen Capital: The Jewish Encounter with American Capitalism*, 255-71.

Week 5: Institutionalizing Orthodox Judaism

Agudath Ha-Rabbonim

PRIMARY READING: Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 92-94.

SECONDARY READING: Jeffrey S. Gurock, "Resistors and Accommodators: Varieties of Orthodox Rabbis in America, 1886-1983," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 35 (November

1983): 100-87; Jeffrey S. Gurock, "American Orthodox Organizations in Support of Zionism, 1880-1930," in *Zionism and Religion*, 219-34;

Orthodox Union and the Everyday Traditional Jew

PRIMARY READING: Harry Fischel, *Forty Years of Struggle for a Principle*, 14-22; Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 103-9.

SECONDARY READING: Shulamith Berger, "The Early History of Young Israel;" Jeffrey S. Gurock, "From Exception to Role Model: Bernard Drachman and the Evolution of Jewish Religious Life in America, 1880-1920," *American Jewish History* 76 (June 1987): 456-84; and Moshe Sherman, "Uniting Orthodoxy: Origins of the Orthodox Union One Hundred Years Ago," *Jewish Action* (Summer 1998): 18-24.

Week 6: Trailblazers

Bernard Revel

PRIMARY READING: Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 111-24.

SECONDARY READING: Zev Eleff, "Jewish Immigrants, Liberal Higher Education and the Quest for a Torah u-Madda Curriculum at Yeshiva College," *Tradition* 44 (Summer 2011): 19-34; Zev Eleff, "American Orthodoxy's Lukewarm Embrace of the Hirschian Legacy, 1850-1939," *Tradition* 45 (Fall 2012): 35-53; and Jeffrey S. Gurock, *The Men and Women of Yeshiva*, 43-66.

Chicago's Orthodox Option

PRIMARY READING: H. Miller, "The Problem of the American Orthodox Jew and It's Peculiar Solution," *Ohel Moed: A Volume of Essays in Jewish Studies issued by the Hebrew Theological College of Chicago*, 18-25.

SECONDARY READING: Oscar Z. Fasman, "A Proud Tower of Jewish Strength: Hebrew Theological College of Chicago," *100 Years of Chicago Jewry*, 70-71; and Oscar Z. Fasman, "After Fifty Years, an Optimist," *American Jewish History* 69 (December 1979): 159-73.

Week 7: Interwar Orthodox Judaism

The Americanization of the Orthodox Rabbinate

PRIMARY READING: Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 144-51.

SECONDARY READING: Adam Mintz, "Is Coca-Cola Kosher? Rabbi Tobias Geffen and the History of American Orthodoxy," in *Rav Chesed: Essays in Honor of Rabbi Dr. Haskel Lookstein*, 75-90; Jenna Weissman Joselit, *New York's Jewish Jews: The Orthodox Community in the Interwar Years*, 54-84; Seth Farber, "Reproach, Recognition and Respect: Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Orthodoxy's Mid-Century Attitude Toward Non-Orthodox Denominations," *American Jewish History* 89 (June 2001): 193-214.

The Americanized Laity

PRIMARY READING: Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 88-92.

SECONDARY READING: Jenna Weissman Joselit, "The Jewish Priestess and Ritual: The Sacred Life of American Orthodox Women," *American Jewish Women's History*, 153-74; Jeffrey S. Gurock, "The Ramaz Version of American Orthodoxy," in *Ramaz: School, Community, Scholarship and Orthodoxy*, 40-82; and Jeffrey S. Gurock, "Twentieth-Century American Orthodoxy's Era of Non-Observance, 1900-1960," *Torah u-Madda Journal* 9 (2000): 87-107.

Week 8: The Parting of the Ways of Orthodox and Conservative Judaism

Difficult to Discern

PRIMARY READING: Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 152-64.

SECONDARY READING: Jeffrey S. Gurock, *From Fluidity to Rigidity: The Religious Worlds of Conservative and Orthodox Jews in Twentieth-Century America*.

Two Separate Movements

PRIMARY READING: Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 164-66.

SECONDARY READING: Michael R. Cohen, *The Birth of Conservative Judaism: Solomon Schechter's Disciples and the Creation of an American Religious Movement*, 101-37; and Marc B. Shapiro, *Saul Lieberman and the Orthodox*, 1-51.

Week 9: The Holocaust and the Uneven Postwar Era

The Holocaust and the Suburbs

PRIMARY READING: Eliezer Silver, *Address Delivered at the Opening of the Special Conference of Agudas Israel*; Dave Horowitz, "The Propagation of Our Eternal Light," *The Scroll* (1955).

SECONDARY READING: Zev Eleff, "From Teacher to Scholar to Pastor: The Evolving Postwar Modern Orthodox Rabbinate," *American Jewish History* 98 (October 2014): 289-313; Lawrence Grossman, "American Orthodoxy in the 1950s: The Lean Years," in *Rav Chesed: Essays in Honor of Rabbi Dr. Haskel Lookstein*, 251-69; Haym Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy," *Tradition* 28 (Summer 1994): 64-130; and Albert I. Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia*, 85-127.

Rabbi Aharon Kotler and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

PRIMARY READING: Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 163-64, 274-75.

SECONDARY READING: Yoel Finkelman, "Haredi Isolation in Changing Environments: A Case Study in Yeshiva Immigration," *Modern Judaism* 22 (February 2002): 61-82; Yoel

Finkelman, "An Ideology for American Yeshiva Students: The Sermons of R. Aharon Kotler, 1942-1962," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 58 (Autumn 2007): 314-32; and William B. Helmreich, *The World of the Yeshiva: An Intimate Portrait*, 37-45.

Week 10: An Orthodox Revival

The Rav and the Rebbe

PRIMARY READING: Jonathan D. Sarna and David G. Dalin, *Religion and State in the American Jewish Experience*, 288-300; Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 154-57, 219-24.

SECONDARY READING: Tovah Lichtenstein, "Reflections on the Influence of the Rov on the American Jewish Religious Community," *Tradition* 44 (Winter 2011): 7-16; Gerald J. Blidstein, "Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's Letters on Public Affairs," *Torah u-Madda Journal* 15 (2008-2009): 1-23; and Sue Fishkoff, *The Rebbe's Army: Inside the World of Chabad-Lubavitch*, 46-87

A Golden Age for a New Orthodox Jew

PRIMARY READING: Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 172-94.

SECONDARY READING: Etan Diamond, *And I Will Dwell in their Midst: Orthodox Jews in Suburbia*, 55-110; Zev Eleff, "'Viva Yeshiva!': The Tale of the Mighty Mites and the College Bowl," *American Jewish History* 96 (December 2010): 287-305; Lawrence Grossman, "The Kippah Comes to America," *Continuity and Change: A Festschrift in Honor of Irving (Yitz) Greenberg's 75th Birthday*, 129-49; David Singer, "Debating Modern Orthodoxy at Yeshiva College: The Greenberg-Lichtenstein Exchange of 1966," *Modern Judaism* 26 (May 2006): 113-126.

Week 11: Hassidim and the Ba'al Teshuva Movement

The Satmar Community and its Isolationism

PRIMARY READING: "Satmar Chosed Acquitted On Beard Cutting Charge," *Jewish Press* (June 1, 1984): 3.

SECONDARY READING: Jerome R. Mintz, *Hasidic People: A Place in the New World*, 21-42, 84-91, 126-38, 154-75; and Lis Harris, "Holy Days," *New Yorker* (three installments in 1985) (skim)

Orthodox Outreach

PRIMARY READING: 245-47; and Shlomo Carlebach, "The Heart of Tomorrow," *Midstream* 16 (May 1970): 66-67.

SECONDARY READING: Edward Abramson, *Circle in the Square: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin Reinvents the Synagogue*, 79-126; Yaakov Ariel, "Hasidism in the Age of Aquarius: The House of Love and Prayer in San Francisco, 1967-1977," *Religion and American Culture* 13 (Summer 2003): 139-165; and Adam S. Ferziger, "Between Outreach and 'Inreach': Redrawing the Lines of the American Orthodox Rabbinate," *Modern Judaism* 25 (January 2005): 237-63.

Week 12: The Liberal Declension, Soviet Jewry and “Schisms”

The Liberal Declension

PRIMARY READING: Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 296-302, 375-95.

SECONDARY READING: Samuel C. Heilman, “Sounds of Modern Orthodoxy: The Language of Talmud Study,” in *Never Say Die!: A Thousand Years of Yiddish in Jewish Life and Letters*, 227-53, Adam S. Ferziger, “‘Outside the Shul:’ The American Soviet Jewry Movement and the Rise of Solidarity Orthodoxy, 1964-1986,” *Religion and American Culture* 22 (Winter 2012): 83-130.

Who’s on Top?

PRIMARY READING: Reuven P. Bulka, *The Coming Cataclysm*, 101-23.

SECONDARY READING: Adam S. Ferziger, “From Demonic Deviant to Drowning Brother: Reform Judaism in the Eyes of American Orthodoxy,” *Jewish Social Studies* 15 (Spring/Summer 2009): 56-88; Moshe Samet, “Who is a Jew? (1978-1985),” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 37 (1986): 109-39

Week 13: Orthodox Judaism: “Open” and “Closed”

Sliding to the Right

PRIMARY READING: Gil Perl and Yaakov Weinstein, *Parent's Guide to Orthodox Assimilation*; and Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 364-75.

SECONDARY READING: Samuel C. Heilman, *Sliding to the Right: The Contest for the Future of American Jewish Orthodoxy*, 78-126; and David Berger, *The Rebbe, The Messiah and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference*, Introduction.

Sliding to the Left

PRIMARY READING: Eleff, *Modern Orthodox Judaism*, 409-23.

SECONDARY READING: Yehuda Turetsky and Chaim I. Waxman, “Sliding to the Left?: Contemporary American Modern Orthodoxy,” *Modern Judaism* 31 (May 2011): 119-41.