

# Introduction to Jewish Latin America

Spring 2019

**JS 311 \* LAS 310 \* ANT 310L \* RS**

Unique #s:

39370 \* 39535 \* 31600 \* 42885

**GDC 2.410**

T/Th 11:00am-12:30pm

**Dr. Amelia Rosenberg Weinreb**

Office hours by appointment

[amy.weinreb@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:amy.weinreb@austin.utexas.edu)

Office Phone: [512-232-2204](tel:512-232-2204)

## **I. Course description**

What can we learn about Latin American social worlds when we look at the place of Jews within it? Conversely, what we learn about Jewish social worlds when they unfold in Latin America? This course examines both of these questions. Specifically, we consider the role of Latin America as both a refuge from and a source of anti-Semitism, a hub of immigration, a site of Zionism, and of Jewish success and philanthropy. We also address themes of displacement, longing, belonging, marginalization, prejudice, immigration, community, cultural continuity, and memory, while considering Sephardi and Ashkenazi difference, and inter-generational conflict among Jewish Latin Americans. Overall, through reading, writing exercises, independent research and in-class films, the course is designed to provide students with an understanding of how Jews constructed individual lives and vibrant communities in predominantly Hispanic, Catholic countries of Latin America.

With these themes in mind, the course is divided into four units: 1) **Historical literacy** is a substantive introductory unit, which provides basic context from 1492 until the post-World War II period; 2) **Jewish group identities** in Latin American features readings on Jewish life and cultural forms in select national contexts (e.g. Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Dominican Republic and others); 3) **Memoir and personal narrative** engages students in critical reading of creative non-fiction and ethnography that focuses on individual lives; 4) **Contemporary realities** explores current events, contemporary trends and popular culture in Jewish Latin America. Finally, over the course of the semester, drawing on course motifs, students will produce their own research papers addressing a specific research question in the Latin American national context of their choice. **4) Writers' Workshop:** Unlike many undergraduate courses after which students submit a rushed final paper that they never see again, we will be drafting and revising sections of the final paper during the in-class writing workshops with the goal producing a cohesive, polished, final product. Note that during part IV, there no reading assigned, so students' energies will be directed towards individual research and improving drafts in and out of the classroom.

*Note: This course carries the Global Cultures flag. Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one non-U.S. cultural group, past or present.*

## **II. Required Texts (Available for purchase at the Co-op bookstore):**

The Other 1492: Jewish Settlement in the New World by Norman H. Finkelstein (iUniverse 2001)

The Jews of Latin America by Judith Laikin Elkin (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Scholarly Publishing Office, University of Michigan Library 2011)

Pomegranate Seeds: Latin American Jewish Tales by Nadia Grosser Nagarajan (University of New Mexico Press 2005)

Kosher Feijoada and Other Paradoxes of Jewish Life in São Paulo by Misha Klein (University Press of Florida, 2012)

## **Recommended materials:**

- One clearly labelled notebook dedicated exclusively to taking hand-written notes related for this course.
- A pen that is satisfying to write with, and always easy to locate at the beginning of class.

## **III. Course objectives:**

Upon completion of the course, students will have developed the written, oral and recall skills to be able to:

- Explain when, how, and why Jews arrived to Latin America
- Articulate central themes of the Jewish Latin American experience over time
- Place course themes within in a wider context of anthropological theory
- Converse, with historical and ethnographic sensitivity, about a range of contemporary social issues for Jews in the region
- Gain greater familiarity with specific national contexts through independent research and writing project

## **IV. Course Design and Format**

This course, which will be run in a seminar-style format, is recommended for motivated lower-division undergraduate who are developing an intellectual interest Jewish Studies and/or Latin American Studies. It is run as series of lively, fast-paced, interactive meetings in which students are encouraged to articulate and synthesize ideas with clarity, accuracy and sensitivity, and defend positions through evidence based on a common reading list. Discussion leaders, designated weekly, will raise questions, stimulate debate, and integrate ideas from the readings and course core concepts into our collective analysis. I will be asking for your feedback regularly so there is an open flow of communication and room for improvement during the semester. This course is also unusual in that it was designed in consultation with UT students who are familiar with the tastes, pace and interests of fellow students.

## **The weekly cycle:**

**Tues-** A small team of students, delegated in advance, will facilitate the discussion along with the instructor, raising questions, stimulating debate, and integrating ideas from the readings into the collective analysis.

**Tue-** An instructor-led discussion further establishes the context and background for the readings and outlines their key data, arguments and ideas in the reading.

*A note on attendance, contribution, and classroom vibe:* Regular attendance is not only the key to your own success as a student in this course, but also for the quality of the course as a dynamic whole. Arriving late and leaving early disrupts class flow, so make every effort to arrive to class on time with your materials prepared. Students place their phones on silent and deposit them at the front of classroom when they enter each day, and all course notes are taken by hand in a notebook unless you provide a note from SSD. This is a low-tech, highly interpersonal seminar.

**IMPORTANT NOTE ON ABSENCES: After 3 absences, your final grade will be lowered two percentage points (-2%) for each additional absence after that.**

#### **V. Overview of Requirements:**

- **Overall Participation (10%)** Students will be graded on their regular, active, intellectually rigorous contribution to the seminar component of the course, and evidence of careful reading of assigned texts.
- **Discussion leadership (5%):** A group of students, delegated in advance, facilitate the discussion or an activity along with the instructor, raising questions, stimulating debate, and integrating ideas from the readings into the collective analysis. You will do this **once** during the semester. Participating in class more generally, as a formal leader or otherwise, has a positive influence on your grade. I will generally grade the partners together unless there are individuals who contributed significantly less or more.
- **One memo (5%):** When you lead discussion (with your group), each individual in that group mem that **poses a question, and then answers that question based on the reading for that day**. These memos will help students navigate the course content and prepare for exams. They also provide a low-stakes sneak preview of how I grade writing before your final paper is due.

Memo format:

- a) **State your question clearly in bold font**
- b) **Provide a 200-250 word answer, citing the text**
- c) **Pose 2 discussion questions** designed to be engaging, thought provoking and informative and related to themes in the reading. Come prepared to share your ideas in class.
- d) **Proofread and cite:** Remember, even if the assignment is short, **write clearly and proofread as carefully** as you would for any graded assignment. Include page citations and a literature cited at the bottom of the page

The memo will be graded on its writing quality, **attention to facts, examples and details** that appear in the assigned reading for the day reading, as well your thoughtfulness and insight. Feel free to be creative, and include reflections, reactions, critical commentaries as well as basic answers overviews. The memo is due to me as email attachment (Word or Google doc.) on **Wed. 9pm sharp** the evening before your student group leads discussion. Bring a printed copy for your own reference on the day you lead. I hold these memos papers to the same standards as all papers in the class, including a literature cited.

● **Final paper (30%):** A 5-7 page (12 pt. font, Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins) paper based on a proposal that combines history, theory, and cultural analysis.

● **2 Tests (25% each)** will include the following question format and point values:

15 multiple choice	(2 points each=30 points)
15 fill-in-the blank	(2 points each=30 points)
5 short answer questions	(5 points each=25 points)
1 short essay	(1 essay =15 points)

*Note on test content:* One week prior to the test, I have students post two questions they would like to see appear on the on blackboard, and often draw up to 80% of test content from student suggestions! These suggested questions also prove useful for students when studying and preparing for tests. All tests include 3 points worth of extra credit at the end that allow you to showcase careful reading for details or special attentiveness to class discussion.

## VII. Summary of Course Requirements and Percentage of Final Grade

(Listed here in order of importance to overall grade):

Tests (two in-class examinations, 20% each)	50%
Final Paper	30%
Participation	10%
Discussion leadership	5%
1 Reading Response paper:	5%
	100%

## VIII. Grading Scale

<b>A</b> 94-100%	<u>Excellent</u> grasp of subject matter; explains concepts clearly; provides relevant details and examples; draws clear and interesting connections, exceptionally original, coherent and well-organized; ideas clearly written/stated, outstanding classroom participation.
<b>A-</b> 90-93%	<u>Very good</u> grasp of subject matter; explains concepts clearly; provides relevant details and examples; draws clear connections; ideas clearly written/stated
<b>B+</b> 86-89%	<u>Good</u> grasp of some elements above, others need work
<b>B</b> 83-85%	<u>Satisfactory</u> grasp of some elements above
<b>B-</b> 80-82%	<u>Uneven, spotty</u> grasp of the elements above
<b>C+</b> 76-79 %	<u>Limited</u> grasp of the above
<b>C</b> 73-75%	<u>Poor</u> grasp of the above
<b>C-</b> 70-72%	<u>Very poor</u> grasp of the above
<b>D</b> 60-69%	<u>Little evidence</u> of grasp of material, having done readings, attended class, or completed assignments
<b>F</b> 0-59%	<u>Insignificant</u> evidence of having done readings, attended class, or completing assignments

## IX. Important Notes on Grading Policy and Support for Students:

*Complete written assignments on time:* I am committed to returning assignments to you promptly so you can benefit from my feedback while material is fresh in your mind. I do not grade papers or exams until I have the entire printed set in front of me. For these reasons, **I do not accept late assignments.** Bring a hard copy at the beginning of class on the day it is due. If

you anticipate a problem, or have a history of deadline problems, meet with a consultant at the learning or writing center to help you plan ahead.

The UT Learning Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/>

Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

*Grading policy:* I am very happy to discuss how you may improve your work, and will read early drafts, but **I will not reconsider grades on papers or tests.** I grade all the papers in a set to ensure that I am applying the same standards, and I make every effort to be fair.

*Plagiarism and copying:* Although this course is designed for creative, individual work and synthesis of ideas from various sources, any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit must be the student's own work. Should copying occur from another student, both the student who copied work and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment.

Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action. Here are University statements about plagiarism and the consequences of plagiarizing:

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/faculty/plagiarism/preventing.html>

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism/>

*Using office hours, getting help:* I check email regularly, and will usually reply to emails within 24 hours for basic questions, and no longer than three days for more complicated ones. I have flexible office hours that are available by appointment.

## **X. University Notices and Policies**

### **University of Texas Honor Code**

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

In this course, that means we will all work to ensure that the discussion space is shared relatively equally among the participants, and to maintain an atmosphere of respect for each other's perspectives and arguments, especially when there are strong disagreements.

### **Students with disabilities**

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at (512) 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). Please contact me as early in the semester as possible to let me know if you need anything to participate fully.

### **Religious Holy Days**

By UT Austin policy, students are required to notify me of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will certainly give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

**XII. Course Schedule:** *\*\*This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.*

**KEY DATES AT-A-GLANCE (PLAN AHEAD)**

Tue. 3/5: Exam 1
Thu. 4/18: Exam 2
Thu. 5/9: Final paper due

Date	Topic	Homework– to be completed before class	Evaluation/ Submission Due
<b>UNIT I: HISTORICAL LITERACY</b>			
T 1/22	Introduction to the course		
Th 1/24	FILM screening and refreshments: <i>Expulsion and Memory</i> (60 mins.)	<i>The Other</i> 1492 pp. 1-35	
T 1/29	STUDENT LED: -Finish <i>The Other</i> 1492 pp. 36-93;		Student leader memos due <b>9pm, Wed</b>
Th 1/31	-Jews in the Spanish and Portuguese Dependencies  -Jewish Immigrants 1830-1899	Ch1. Elkin pp. 1-22  Ch. 2 Elkin pp. 3-50	
T 2/5	STUDENT LED: -Mass Migration: 1899-World War I	Ch. 3 Elkin pp. 51-102	Student leader memos due <b>9pm, Wed</b>
Th 2/7	-Completion of the Contemporary Jewish Communities  -Agricultural Communities	Ch. 4 Elkin pp. 72-105  Ch. 5 Elkin pp. 105-131	
T 2/12	STUDENT LED: -The Economics of Jewish Life in Latin America  -“The Jewish Street”	Ch. 6 Elkin pp.131-159  Ch. 7 Elkin pp. 159-191	Student leader memos due <b>9pm, Wed</b>

**UNIT II: JEWISH GROUP IDENTITY**

Th 2/14	<p>-FILM screening and refreshments <i>Yidishe Gauchos</i> (28 mins.)</p> <p>Discuss film</p> <p><b>30 minute Writing workshop:</b> <b>Bring laptops to class</b> -Distribute rubric and discuss final paper, and stages to completion</p>		
T 2/19	STUDENT LED: Latin American–Jewish Demography	Ch. 8 Elkin pp. 191-215	Student leader memos due <b>9pm, Wed</b>
Th 2/21	<p>- Jews North and South</p> <p>- Latin American Jewry and Israel</p>	<p>Ch. 9 Elkin. pp. 215-230</p> <p>Ch. 10 Elkin pp. 230-251</p>	
T 2/26	STUDENT LED: - Jews and non-Jews: Stereotypes in the Latin American Imaginary	Ch. 11 Elkin pp 230-251	Student leader memos due <b>9pm,</b>
Th 2/28	<i>In-Class Review for Exam #1</i>		<p><b>Post on discussion board by 9 pm, Wed:</b> What would <b>you</b> like to see on test #2? Submit 2 sample questions.</p>
T 3/5			<b>IN-CLASS EXAM #1</b>
Th 3/7	FILM screening and refreshments <i>Tijuana Jews</i> (52 mins)		<b>DUE: 120-word Research Proposal (printed)</b>

UNIT III: MEMOIR, PERSONAL NARRATIVE, ETHNOGRAPHY			
T 3/12	Selections from <i>Pomegranate Seeds: Latin American Jewish Tales</i> (by Nadia Grosser Nagarajan) As you read, keep in mind origins, destinations, and routes.	<i>Pomegranate Seeds</i> : preface-intro: pp. 1-8, 16-22; 65-68; 69-76; 77-80; 91-94; 95-100 (note: this is 44 pages total of engaging reading)	Student leader memos due <b>9pm, Wed.</b>
Th 3/14	More Selections from <i>Pomegranate Seeds</i> As you read, keep in mind origins, destinations, and routes	<i>Pomegranate Seeds</i> : pp. 106-110; 111-121; 131-136; 140-144; 145-150; 154-161; 173-180; 187-189. (note: this is 45 pages total of engaging reading)	
T 3/19	Spring break		
Th 3/21	Spring break		
T 3/26	STUDENT LED: <i>Kosher Feijoada and Other Paradoxes of Jewish Life in São Paulo</i> (by Misha Klein)  -“Departures”	<i>Kosher Feijoada</i>  Ch. 1 pp. 1-34	Student leader memos due <b>9pm, Wed.</b>
Th 3/28	-“Braided Lives” -“Kosher Feijoada”	<i>Kosher Feijoada</i>  Ch. 2 pp. 35-68; Ch. 3 99-132	
T 4/2	STUDENT LED: -“The High Cost of Jewish Living” -“Inscribing Jews into the Nation”	<i>Kosher Feijoada</i> Ch. 4 pp. 99-132; Ch. 5 132-163	Student leader memos due <b>9pm, Wed.</b>
Th 4/4	-“Doubly Insecure” -“Cosmopolitans at Home”	<i>Kosher Feijoada</i>  Ch 6 pp. 132-19; Ch 7 pp. 191-209	
T 4/9	Open discussion:  -Contemporary Jewish Latin American issues in the news, multimedia clips		Bring in news article or media clip



Th 4/11	Roundtable on Ethics		<b>Bring in ethical problems and questions that this class has raised.</b>  What would <b>you</b> like to see on test #2? Submit 2 sample questions
T 4/16	Jeopardy game for exam review		
Th 4/18			<b>IN-CLASS EXAM #2: UNIT III</b>
<b>UNIT IV: WRITERS' WORKSHOP</b>			
T 4/23	Outline, Reverse Outline		Bring in outline
Th 4/25	Introductions		Bring in Intro
T 4/30	Conclusions		Bring in Conclusion
Th 5/2	Abstracts		Bring in 120-word abstract
T 5/7	Editing Workshop		Bring in complete draft
Th 5/9	<b>**Final class with festive, Jewish Latin American food**</b>		<b>DUE: FINAL PAPER, Hard copy</b>