

Blacks and Jews in America

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Course Description: This course offers a constructive, interdisciplinary approach to examining the competing and overlapping ways Blacks and Jews in America imagine, cultivate and perform their religious and cultural identities. Although the groups emerge in the American context with unique histories and traditions, there is an overwhelming popular belief that Blacks and Jews share, at least historically, a special relationship. Drawing on primary, secondary, visual and material resources, students will investigate the nature of this relationship and examine how Blacks and Jews retrieve religion, tradition and ethics to interrogate, explore and, in some cases, expand definitions of democracy, political liberalism, freedom, citizenship and community. Please note that this is a Doyle Engaging Difference Seminar, a campus-wide curricular initiative that is designed to deepen student learning about diversity and difference through enhanced research opportunities, interaction with thought leaders, and dialogue with the Georgetown community and beyond.

Course Requirements and Guidelines: (1) Students are required to facilitate at least one classroom discussion, which will involve an oral presentation that offers a discussion (not a summary) of the assigned readings. This discussion will shed light on the major arguments at hand as well as offer critical insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the readings. (2) Classroom attendance and participation are mandatory. Three absences will result in a zero for the classroom participation grade. (3) Students are required to visit the United States Holocaust Museum <http://www.ushmm.org/> and the National Museum of African Art <http://africa.si.edu/> (4) Students will submit a 15-20 page critical reflection paper at the end of the course. (5) Students are expected in each class to articulate their concerns with the assigned texts as well as share their critical opinions of the ongoing classroom debates. Indeed, this course is designed to stimulate rigorous reflection and debate, and at times classroom discussions may become

contentious. Classroom discussions will aim to protect students from gratuitous insult and verbal injury and strive to respect and protect those at the center of the conversation. However, students may be offended by so-called liberal, conservative, religious and/or secular commitments, values and ideas that emerge in the discussions. It is the goal of the instructor that students will bracket familiar epistemic terrain, if only momentarily, in order to weigh what is unfamiliar and uncomfortable. (7) Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If students borrow ideas and lift sentences without proper citation, they will receive an automatic F in the course. (8) The use of laptops, cellular/smart phones and electronic devices are prohibited in class unless approved by the instructor. (9)The instructor may modify the standards and requirements set forth in this syllabus at any given time in the semester.

Grading Distribution:

Classroom Participation: 20 percent

Draft of Final Paper: 20 percent

Final Paper: 60 percent

Books for Purchase:

Art Spiegelman
The Complete Maus

Michael Staub
Torn at the Roots

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*

Clayborne Carson
In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s

Introduction

I. Slavery

Public reason, Affected Ignorance and Cultural Inheritance

James Baldwin, *Negroes Are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-White*

<https://www.nytimes.com/books/98/03/29/specials/baldwin-antisem.html>

Norman Podhoretz, "My Negro Problem – And Ours"

<http://www.bernardavishai.info/Podhoretz>

Alice Walker's *Democracy Now Interview*,

http://www.democracynow.org/2012/9/28/palestine_conditions_more_brutal_than_in

Daniel Mannix, "The Middle Passage"

Sankofa: Traces of the Trade

II. Holocaust

Art Spiegelman, *Maus*, volume 1

Spiegelman, *Maus*, volume 2

Spiegelman, *Maus*

Cynthia Ozick, "The Shawl", Wendy Zierler, "My Holocaust is not Your

Holocaust"

*****Visit the United States Holocaust Museum and watch Schindler's List

III. Minstrelsy and Representation

Eric Lott, "Love and Theft" and Ethnic Notions (in class)

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Exhibiting Jews," in *Destination Culture*, 79-128; Jenna Weissman-Joselit, "Best in Show," in *Imagining the American Jewish Community*, 141-155

IV. Race

Karen Brodtkin, "How Jews Became White Folks," 25-52

Matthew Frye Jacobson, "Whiteness of a Different Color," 1-14, 171-199

Jane Anna Gordon, "What Should Blacks Think When Jews Choose

Whiteness: An Ode to

Baldwin "http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/journals/critical
_philosophy_of_race/v003/3.2.gordon.pdf

Charles Mills, "Dark Ontologies: Blacks, Jews, and White Supremacy" in
Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race

"Conversations: African and African American Artworks in Dialogue" at the
Smithsonian National Museum of African Art

***** **One or Two-paragraph Thesis Statement and Bibliography Are Due**

V. Biblical Narratives and Black Jews

Al Raboteau, "African Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel"
Jon Levenson, "Liberation Theology and the Exodus," in Jews, Christians,
and the Theology of Hebrew Scripture

Nathaniel Deutsch and Yvonne Chireau, Black Zion: African American
Religious Encounters with Judaism, 15-54
Blackjews.org

VI. Diaspora, Sacred Space, Zionism

Arnold Eisen, *The Chosen People in America*, 25-52
Charles Long, *Significations*, 173-184

VII. Lynching

James Baldwin, Going to Meet the Man
Amy Wood, "The Spectator has a Picture in his Mind"
"The Lynching of Leo Frank"
Leo Frank on CNN

IX. Civil Rights

Michael Staub, Torn at the Roots, Introduction and Chapters 2 and 3

Staub, Chapters 4, 5, 7

Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle*

Research Paper Outline is Due

Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle*

Nathan Glazer, "What Happened to the Grand Alliance," and Clayborne Carson, "Blacks and Jews in the Civil Rights Movement," in *Jews in Black Perspectives* PBS Movie (The Jewish Americans) (in class)

Research Day

Student Presentations

Research Paper Draft is Due (10 pages)

X. Ethics and the Problems of Whiteness and Blackness

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*

Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*