

Monday/Wednesday 2:00-3:20  
Miller Hall 116

Prof. Adam S. Ferziger  
adam.ferziger@biu.ac.il

### MINI-COURSE: MODERN JEWISH RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

The central focus of this course is on the ideological developments and the cultivation of group identities among the four main Jewish religious denominations in contemporary United States: Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist Judaism and some of their offshoots. The course will explore the historical roots of these movements and their main theological principles and their attitudes toward Jewish law, as well as their respective engagements with critical contemporary issues such as gender and Jewish peoplehood. Various "post-denominational" alternatives that have emerged in the twenty-first century will be addressed as well.

#### **Required Texts:**

There is no textbook for this course. Readings listed below + 1-2 page primary sources to be prepared before in-class discussion will be posted online. Unless page numbers are specified, please read the entire article.

**Final Grade** will be determined as follows:

- i. Attendance and Participation: 30%
- ii. Exam: 40%
- iii. Paper/Essay: 30%

**The essay** will be up to 8 pages long (12 point font, 1.5 space), and will compare two academic articles that address a topic related to Jewish denominationalism from different methodological perspectives and/or offer alternative interpretations. **Essay topics must be submitted for approval via email by Thursday March 31<sup>st</sup> at 12 Noon. They are due on Wednesday, April 20<sup>th</sup> at 12 midnight.**

#### **Class Participation**

- Throughout the semester you will have many opportunities to demonstrate your engagement with the assigned reading material. In class, you should raise questions or express concern, debate with fellow students, and reflect on the material. It is your responsibility to stay up to date with the readings assigned so that you can adequately participate in these in-class activities. Your *informed* participation will be graded.
- When assessing your participation in this course, I will use the following rubric:
  - A: You contribute to every class session. Your comments are the products of excellent preparation and demonstrate respect for your peers. You participate productively in the in-class activities, and your short writing exercises and mini quizzes demonstrate that you completed reading assignments fully.
  - B: You often contribute, and you are well-prepared. You often build and improve the quality of discussion. You mostly participate well in the class activities, and your quizzes and writing exercises demonstrate your adequate preparation.

- C: You occasionally contribute, and your comments reflect some preparation. You also sometimes contribute without any preparation. You sometimes participate in class activities and group work. Your writing exercises and quizzes show that you often do not prepare ahead of class.
- D: You rarely contribute, and you are unprepared for class. This is clear in your writing exercises and quizzes as well.
- F: You do not show up to class.

Please bring the readings assigned on that day to class, either as a print-out or on a device.

My office hours are Monday: 11:00-12:00.

# MODERN JEWISH RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

## SYLLABUS

### Module 1: Introduction - Tradition, Modernity, and Denominationalism

Monday 3/7. Tradition and Modernity

1. Katz, "Traditional Jewish Society and Modern Society."
2. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, introduction, pp. 1-24

Wednesday 3/9. Modern Judaism and Denominationalism

1. Ferziger, "Between 'Ashkenazi' and Sepharad: An Early Modern German Rabbinic Response to Religious Pluralism in the Spanish-Portuguese Community."
2. Ferziger, "Abraham Geiger and the Denominational Approach to Jewish Religious Life."

### Module 2: Religious Encounters in Modern Europe

Monday 3/14. European Reform

1. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*: chapter 1, pp. 10-19, 53-61; chapter 2, pp. 89-99; chapter 3, pp. 131-142.

Wednesday 3/16. The Positive Historical School

1. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, chapter 2, pp. 84-89.
2. Braemer, "The Dilemmas of Moderate Reform: Some Reflections of the Development of Conservative Judaism, 1840-1880."

Monday 3/21. Orthodox Responses

1. Katz, "Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective."
2. Silber, "The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy: The Invention of a Tradition."
3. Rosman, "Hasidism – Traditional Modernization."
4. Brown, "Jewish Political Theology: The Doctrine of Daat Torah as a Case Study"

### Module 3: Reform Judaism in America

Wednesday 3/23. American Judaism and Classical Reform

1. Sarna, *American Judaism*, introduction, xiii-xxx.
2. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, chapter 6, 235-250; chapter 7, 264-270, 286 (bottom) – 295.
3. Prell, "The Vision of Women in Classical Reform Judaism."

Monday 3/28. American Reform in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

1. Dana Evan Kaplan, *The New Reform Judaism*, introduction.
2. Jack Wertheimer, *The New American Judaism*, chapter 4, 103-121.

#### **Module 4: Conservative Judaism and Reconstructionism**

Wednesday 3/30. The Rise of Conservative Judaism and Reconstructionism

1. Dorff, *Modern Conservative Judaism*, introduction, 1-18.
2. Wertheimer, "The Conservative Synagogue Revisited."
2. Eisen, "Mordecai Kaplan's Judaism as a Civilization at 70: Setting the Stage for Reappraisal."

Monday 4/4. The Synagogue-Center and Beyond

1. Dash Moore, "A Synagogue Center Grows in Brooklyn."
2. Wertheimer, "The Perplexities of Conservative Judaism."

#### **Module 5: American Orthodoxy: Divisions and Realignment**

Wednesday 6/4. Modern Orthodoxy and Haredi Orthodoxy

1. Ferziger, "The Lookstein Legacy: An American Orthodox Rabbinical Dynasty."
2. Haym Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy."

Monday 4/11. Beyond Sectarianism

1. Waxman, "From Institutional Decay to Primary Day: American Orthodox Jewry Since World War Two."
2. Ferziger, "Church-Sect Theory and Orthodoxy Reconsidered"
3. Ferziger, "From Demonic Deviant to Drowning Brother: Reform Judaism in the eyes of American Orthodoxy."

#### **Module 6: Jewish Denominationalism through the Lens of Gender and Sexual Identity**

Wednesday 4/13. Women, Synagogue, and the Rabbinate

1. Nadell, "Ordaining Women Rabbis."
2. Raucher, "Yoatzot Halacha: Ruling the Internet, One Question at a Time."
3. Ferziger, "Female Clergy in Male Space: The Sacralization of the Orthodox Rabbinate."

Monday 4/18. GLBTQ Jews, Synagogue, and Marriage.

1. Irshai, "Homosexuality and the 'Aqedah Theology': A Comparison of Modern Orthodoxy and the Conservative Movement."
2. Krutsch, "The Changing Jewish Family: Jewish Communal Responses to Interfaith and Same-Sex Marriage."

## Module 7: Denominationalism and Jewish Peoplehood

Wednesday 4/20.

1. Fishman, "Fathers of the Faith? Three Decades of Patrilineal Descent in American Reform Judaism."
2. Keer Munro, "What are THEY doing on the Bimah?: How Inter-marriage Changes Jewish Ritual"
3. Kaplan, "Can a Rabbi Marry Someone of Another Religion? Debates of the American Reform Movement whether Inter-married Rabbis Can Lead Reform Congregations."
4. Shain, *The Israeli Century*, introduction.
5. Ferziger, "Israelization and Lived Religion: Conflicting Accounts of Contemporary Judaism"

## Module 8: Beyond Denominationalism

Wednesday 4/27 Emergent Communities, Chabad, and Digital Religion

1. Wertheimer, *The New American Judaism*, 254-272
2. Lieber, "Networked individuals: The Virtual Reality of the Sabbath in Twenty-First Century American Judaism"
4. Ferziger, "From Lubavitch to Lakewood."

Monday 5/2 Concluding Meeting

### Bibliography

- Braemer, A. "The Dilemmas of Moderate Reform: Some Reflections of the Development of Conservative Judaism, 1840-1880," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 10 (2003): 73-87.
- Brown, B. "Jewish Political Theology: The Doctrine of Daat Torah as a Case Study" *Harvard Theological Review* 107, 3 (July 2014): 255 – 289.
- Dash Moore, D. "A Synagogue Center Grows in Brooklyn," *The American Synagogue a Sanctuary Transformed*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
- Dorff, E. *Modern Conservative Judaism* (Philadelphia: JPS/University of Nebraska, 2018).
- Eisen, Arnold. "Mordecai Kaplan's 'Judaism as a Civilization' at 70: Setting the Stage for Reappraisal." *Jewish Social* 12, 2 (2006): 1–16.
- Ferziger, "Between "Ashkenaz?" and Sepharad: An Early Modern German Rabbinic Response to Religious Pluralism in the Spanish-Portuguese Community" *Studia Rosenthaliana* 35, 1 (Spring 2001): 7-22.
- Abraham Geiger and the Denominational Approach to Jewish Religious Life," in Christian Wiese (ed.), *Jüdische Existenz in de Moderne: Abraham Geiger und die Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2013), 179-192.
- "Church/Sect Theory and American Orthodoxy Reconsidered," in Stuart Cohen and Bernard Susser (eds.), *Ambivalent Jew* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 2007), 107-124.
- "From Lubavitch to Lakewood: The 'Chabadization' of American Orthodoxy," *Modern Judaism* 33, 2 (2013): 101-124.
- "From Demonic Deviant to Drowning Brother: Reform Judaism in the Eyes of Orthodoxy (1983-2007)," *Jewish Social Studies* 15, 3 (Spring/Summer 2009): 56-88.
- "Female Clergy in Male Space: The Sacralization of the Orthodox Rabbi," *The Journal of Religion*

- 98:4 (October 2018): 490-516.
- "The Lookstein Legacy: An American Orthodox Rabbinical Dynasty," *Jewish History* 13, 1 (Spring 1999): 127-149.
- "Israelization and Lived Religion: Conflicting Accounts of Contemporary Judaism," *Contemporary Jewry* 40, 3 (Sept. 2020): 403-430.
- Fishman, S.B. "Fathers of the Faith? Three Decades of Patrilineal Descent in American Reform Judaism." *Jewish People Policy Institute* (2013).
- Irshai, R. "Homosexuality and the 'Aqedah Theology': A Comparison of Modern Orthodoxy and the Conservative Movement." *Journal of Jewish Ethics* 4, 1 (2018): 19-46.
- Kaplan, D.E. "Can a Rabbi Marry Someone of Another Religion? Debates of the American Reform Movement whether Intermarried Rabbis Can Lead Reform Congregations," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 32,1 (2017): 15-31.
- *The New Reform Judaism* (Lincoln: JPS/University of Nebraska Press, 2013).
- Katz, J. "Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 2 (1986): 3-17.
- "Traditional Jewish Society and Modern Society," *Jews among Muslims*, eds. Shlomo Deshen and Walter P. Zenner (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 25-34.
- Krutzsch B. and Mehta, S.K., "The Changing Jewish Family: Jewish Communal Responses to Interfaith and Same-Sex Marriage." *American Jewish History* 104, 4 (2020): 553-577.
- Lieber, A. "Networked Individuals: The Virtual Reality of the Sabbath in Twenty-First Century American Judaism, *Religion in the Age of Digitalization* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2020), 14 pages.
- Meyer, M. *Response to Modernity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995).
- Munro, P.K. "What are THEY doing on the Bimah?: How Inter marriage Changes Jewish Ritual." *Journal of Jewish Identities* 8, 1 (2015): 95-111.
- Nadell, P.S. "Ordaining Women Rabbis," *Religions of the United States in Practice*, Vol. 2, ed. Colleen McDannell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 389-417.
- Prell, R.E. "The Vision of Women in Classical Reform Judaism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50, 4 (December 1982): 575-589.
- Raucher, M. "'Yoatzot Halacha' : Ruling the Internet, One Question at a Time," *Digital Judaism: Jewish Negotiations with Digital Media and Culture*, ed. Heidi A. Campbell (New York: Routledge, 2015).
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- Sarna, J. *American Judaism* (New Haven: Yale, 2004).
- Shain, Y. *The Israeli Century* (New York: Wicked Son, 2021).
- Silber, M. "The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy: The Invention of a Tradition" *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York: Jewish Theological Seminar, 1992), 23-84.
- Soloveitchik, H. "Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy," *Tradition* 28, 4 (Summer 1994), 64-130.
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- Wertheimer, J. "The Conservative Synagogue Revisited." *American Jewish History* 74, 2 (1984): 118-132.
- "The Perplexities of Conservative Judaism." *Commentary* 124, 2 (Sept, 2007): 38-44.
- *The New American Judaism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).