INTERFAITH, INTERETHNIC, INTERRACIAL AMERICA
AMST 123b Fall 2017
Tu/Th Block N 2:00-3:20 p.m.
Shiffman Humanities Center 216
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E Pluribus Unum (Out of many, one)

COURSE NARRATIVE

This course focuses on how religion, ethnicity, & race contributed to maintaining group separatism at some early points in American history & intersected to create a unified national identity at others. It will also explore the relationship between group continuity & individual identity development. Romantic relationships & marriage between people with different ethnoreligious backgrounds will be the main vehicle for examining religion, race, & ethnicity. Love & marriage between between people of different faith traditions, between whites & people of color, & between people with different ethnic backgrounds will be explored.

The course incorporates popular culture by considering how interfaith, interethnic, & interracial relationships were portrayed on television & in films during the rising ethos of individualism in America. The course is designed to explain how large social issues such as antisemitism, racism, segregation, sexism & identity politics influence life on both national & personal levels. How contextual factors such as immigration trends, World Wars, & the civil rights, feminist, & fatherhood movements, influenced the meaning of love across religious, ethnic, & racial lines will be considered. Analyzing recent political shifts & rhetoric will be included.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understanding the similarities & differences between models of citizenry from the “melting pot” to the “mosaic” & prompting students to define their own interpretations;
- Developing appreciation for the role of intermarriage in forming a “more perfect union” by connecting the personal with the political;
- Cultivating students’ critical reading, viewing, research & writing;
- Inspiring class participation by relating family history to issues raised in the course;
- Strengthening students’ appreciation for the inherent complexities of being a nation of immigrants.

REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

Regular attendance, active participation in discussions, co-leading at least one class discussion, & presenting your research topic are required (30%). More than two absences from class without a note from Health Care Services or the equivalent will affect your grade.

Writing assignments include 2 short (5-6 pages for each paper) essays that react to the reading & viewing assignments by answering a question distributed in advance (15% each) & one long (10-12 pages) research paper (40%), which will substitute for a final examination. No extensions will be granted on any paper after a deadline. Late response essays will be downgraded a fraction of a grade for every day late.
Discussions & written work are expected to be in accordance with the Brandeis Academic Integrity guidelines: [https://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/srcs/academicintegrity/index.html](https://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/srcs/academicintegrity/index.html).

**Special Needs:** If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis & wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in the class, please see me immediately.

**READING:**


Items indicated with * below are materials available on LATTE or distributed in class.

**FILMS:**

*Birth of a Nation* (1915)

*Gentleman’s Agreement* (1947)

*Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?* (1967)

*Keeping the Faith* (2000)

**SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS & ASSIGNMENTS**

Class time will consist of two weekly meetings that combine lecture & discussions on Tuesdays & Thursdays. Sign-up sheets will be distributed in advance for students to co-lead discussions. Co-leading discussions involves devising three original questions about the reading for that day, posting to all class members, & facilitating dialogue between fellow students with the professor’s support. All students should come to class prepared to discuss the reading assignments, lectures, & films for that week.

**Week 1**

**August 31**

**Course Description & Introduction**

Activity: Creating safe space together; two truths & a lie; expectations.
I. FIGHTING TO BECOME AMERICANS

Week 2

Sept. 5 The Melting Pot?: Models & Methods

Reading:
Fuchs, Preface, Introduction & Ch.1 “’True Americanism:’ The Foundations of Civic Culture” (pp. xv-34);

Sept. 7 Nativism & its Discontents (Movie clip: “Gangs of New York”)

Reading:
*Alba, Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America (pp. 1-30);
*Sollors, “Americans All” (Parts 1-6);
*Waters, “Multiple Ethnic Identity Choices,” in Beyond Pluralism (pp. 28-46).

Week 3

Sept. 12 Anti-Radicalism & Progressive Womanhood

Reading: McGinity, “Immigrant Jewesses Who Married ‘Out’” in Still Jewish (Intro. & Ch. 1)

Sept. 14 Interracial Sex, Love, & Boxing (Video clip “Dear White People”)


Week 4

Sept. 19 The Miscegenous Body & the National Body

Reading:
*Moore, “Sex, Miscegenation, & the Intermarriage Debate,” newvoices (Nov. 1997), p. 4;
Fuchs, “Outside the Civic Culture: The Coercive Pluralisms,” (Section Two, Ch. 4-6, pp. 77-127).

Sept. 21 NO CLASS (Rosh Hashanah)

II. ONE NATION UNDER GOD?

Week 5

Sept. 26 A “Cure” for Antisemitism? (Standup by Vanessa Hidary)

Film: Start Gentleman’s Agreement

Reading:
McGinity, “Interrmarriage in an Age of Domesticity,” in Still Jewish (Ch. 2);
Suro, “Children of the Future,” in Strangers (Ch. 1-2 pp. 3-30)

Sept. 28 FIRST ESSAY DUE at the beginning of class
Film: Finish Gentleman’s Agreement & discuss

Reading: McGinity, “Interrace marriage was A-Changin’” in Still Jewish (Ch. 3).

Week 6

Oct. 3 Brandeis “Thursday”: A Film History of Interfaith Marriage

Reading: *Greenblum, “Does Hollywood Still Glorify Jewish Intermarriage? The Case of The Jazz Singer,” American Jewish History vol. 83, no. 4 (December 1995): 445-469; Fuchs, (Section Two con’t., Ch. 7, pp. 128-145) & “The Outsiders Move In: The Triumph of Civic Culture,” (Section Three, Ch. 8-10, pp. 149-205).

Oct. 5 NO CLASS (Yom Kippur)

Week 7

Oct. 10 Library Research Instruction Session


Oct. 11 Brandeis “Thursday”: Abolishing Segregation in the Schools

Reading: Walker, Black, White & Jewish (pp. 1-99)

Oct. 12 NO CLASS (Shemini Atzeret)

III. BRIDGING THE ETHNO-RACIAL DIVIDE

Week 8

Oct. 17 Loving v. Virginia

Reading: Walker, Black, White & Jewish (pp. 100-205)

Oct. 19 Consequences of Liberalism & Ecumenism

Film: Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner? (1967)

Reading: Fuchs, “The Outsiders Move In: The Triumph of Civic Culture,” (Section Three con’t., ch. 11-13, pp. 206-271); Suro, “Los Angeles” in Strangers (Ch. 13-15, pp. 204-264)

Week 9

Oct. 24 Jewish Feminism


Oct. 26 Prime Time Intermarriage (BBC Interview w/ Muhammad Ali)
Reading: Walker, *Black, White & Jewish* (pp. 100-205)

Reading: *“The United States: Feminism Meets Multiculturalism”* in *Citizenship, Faith, & Feminism: Jewish & Muslim Women Reclaim Their Rights* (pp. 153-200); Fuchs, *“To Get Beyond Racism: Political Access & Economic Opportunity,”* (ch. 23, pp. 425-457).

**Week 10**

**Oct. 31**  
**Multiculturalism & the “New Ethnicity”**

**Reading:** Walker, *Black, White & Jewish* (206-307)

**Nov. 2**  
**Identity Politics**

**SECOND ESSAY DUE at the beginning of class**

**Reading:**  
*McGinity, “Gender Matters: Jewish Identity, Intermarriage, & Parenthood”* in *Contact: Steinhardt Journal*;  

**Week 11**

**Nov. 7**  
**Jewish Men, Sex & Money**

**Reading:**  
Fuchs, *“The American Kaleidoscope: The Ethnic Landscape, 1970-1989”* (Section Four con’t. ch. 17-19, pp. 326-371);  
Suro, *“Closing the Doors,”* in *Strangers* (Ch. 16, p. 265-284).

**Nov. 9**  
**Persistence of the Breadwinner Ethic**

**Reading:** Fuchs, *“The American Kaleidoscope: The Ethnic Landscape, 1970-1989”* (Section Four con’t., ch. 20, pp. 372-380) & Fuchs, *“Pluralism, Public Policy, & the Civic Culture, 1970-1989”* (Section Five, ch. 21-22, pp 381-424).

**IV. FROM CRISIS TO COMMITMENT**

**Week 12**

**Nov. 14**  
**Pro Life, Pro Choice, Pro American**

**Reading:**  

**Nov. 16**  
**September 11**

**Reading:**  
Salins, *“The Assimilation Contract: Endangered But Still Holding”* in *Reinventing* (pp. 99-109);  
Barone, *“New Americans After September 11”* in *Reinventing* (pp. 261-269);  
Shteingart, *“The New Two-Way Street”* in *Reinventing* (pp. 285-292);  
Week 13  Nov. 21  Jewpanese

RESEARCH TOPIC & PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Film:  Keeping the Faith (2000)

Reading:  Huang, Fresh Off the Boat (p. 1-133)

Nov. 23  NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

Week 14  Nov. 28  The December Dilemma

Reading:  Huang, Fresh Off the Boat (p. 134-276)

Nov. 30  The 2016 Presidential Campaign, Election, & Aftermath


Week 15  Dec. 5  Student Paper Presentations

Dec. 7  Student Paper Presentations

Week 16  Dec. 12  FINAL RESEARCH PAPERS DUE!

******************HAVE A WONDERFUL WINTER BREAK!******************