

HIST BC 3658
Fall 2019
W 10:10am-12
Diana 308

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**Jewish Tales from Four Cities:
The Immigrant Experience in New York, Buenos Aires, Paris and London, c.1880-1930**

Although Jewish immigration during the period this seminar covers is casually associated with the U.S. and particularly New York City, it represented an exodus of almost global dimensions involving places from Australia to Algeria and Argentina to Aruba. Dealing with this vast geography, however, will be unwieldy for a seminar. We will focus thus on four of the largest urban concentrations of Jewish immigrants, which still provides a diverse gamut of continents, cultures, and languages.

The goals of the seminar are:

- 1-“De-provincialize” Jewish and immigration history by moving it beyond a U.S.-centered narrative into the realm of world history, or at least that of the Atlantic World.
- 2-Engage in systematic comparisons that will enhance our understanding of the Jewish and the immigrant experience.
- 3-Apply the research methods of urban history and sociology to the study of international migration, residential patterns, and work and social mobility.
- 4-Learn how to evaluate the reliability of historical sources--including primary documents, statistical data, images, and art--and explore the nature of evidence.

READINGS

We will read the following books and articles and a few articles that I will assign later based on the development of the seminar. All the readings will be posted in the class web site.

Nancy L. Green, “Immigrant Jews in Paris, London, and New York: A Comparative Approach,” *Judaism* 49:3 (2000): 280-91.

Nancy L. Green, *The Pletzl of Paris: Jewish Immigrant Workers in the "belle epoque"* (NY: Holmes & Meier, 1986) 270 pgs.

Selma Cantor Berrol, *East Side/East End: Eastern European Jews in London and New York, 1870-1920* (Praeger, 1994) 159 pgs.

Eugene Sofer, *From Pale to Pampa: A Social History of the Jews of Buenos Aires* (NY: Holmes & Meier, 1982) 165 pgs.

José C. Moya, “The Jewish Experience in Argentina in a Diasporic Perspective,” in Adriana Brodsky and Raanan Rein eds., *The New Jewish Argentina* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 7-29.

CLASS SESSIONS

In our weekly meetings we will (1) discuss the assigned readings; (2) watch and discuss films, mostly made before 1930 (both silent and in Yiddish); and (3) present and discuss student's individual research projects (more on that below).

GRADE breakdown is as follows:

Class attendance	10%
Participation in class discussions	10%
Three-page research prospectus & annotated bibliography	10%
Two oral presentations on your research and a draft of the paper	20%
Final 12-15 page reserch paper	50%

Assignments are due on the following dates:

Research prospectus with annotated bibliography (3-4 pages)	Week 3, Sept. 18
Oral presentation of progress report on your research project	Weeks 4 (Sept 25) to 7 (Oct 16)
Draft of research paper	Week 9, Oct 30
Oral presentation of your research project	Weeks 12-14, Nov 20- Dec 4
Research paper due	Wed, Dec. 11

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Week 2, Sept. 11, Nancy Green, "Immigrant Jews in Paris, London, and New York"; José Moya, "The Jewish Experience in Argentina in a Diasporic Perspective."

Week 3. Sept. 18, Selma Berrol, *East Side/East End: Eastern European Jews in London and New York*, pgs. xi-113.

Week 4. Sept. 25, Berrol, *East Side/East End*, pgs. 114-53; 1800s magazine articles on Jews in London

Week 5. Oct. 2, Nancy Green, *The Pletzl of Paris*, pgs. 3-100; 1800s articles on Jews in Paris

Week 6. Oct. 9. Nancy Green, *The Pletzl of Paris*, pgs. 101-214

Week 7. Oct. 16. Sofer, *From Pale to Pampa*, pgs. 1-89

Week 8. Oct. 23. Sofer, *From Pale to Pampa*, pgs. 91-141; Moya

Week 9, Oct. 30, DRAFT OF PAPER DUE. Weekly readings from this point on will consist of one or two articles selected by students.

RESEARCH PAPER

A. SOURCES.

Your paper will be based on both secondary and primary sources.

Secondary sources are books, articles, and documentaries written and produced by professional historians and other scholars.

Primary research includes a wide variety of sources:

1-Older books and articles contemporaneous to the period we are studying (1880s-1930s).

Some of these may have been written by professional scholars and may be used as secondary sources if the information we seek is particularly straightforward. But we can also use them as primary sources of information on contemporary views and perceptions.

Most of these older books and articles are more clearly primary sources, that is written by non-professional scholars, either participants in the process (e.g., prominent members of the immigrant communities, labor militants, and even humbler immigrants who managed to publish their impressions or memoirs) or external contemporary observers (e.g., reformers and social workers, journalists and other professionals).

Some useful examples of this type of source include novels, plays, poetry, traveler's accounts, tourist guides, pamphlets.

2-Published government or private institutions' material such as reports on immigration, urban and social issues (e.g., poverty, health, housing); diplomatic dispatches (either on the host cities or on the areas of origins of the immigrants); censuses; and the publications of immigrant associations.

3-Published periodicals: the mainstream press (e.g. the NY or London *Times*, or the *Brooklyn Eagle*—which are indexed and on electronic form, so you can easily search by subject) for the city you will work on; the immigrant press; and newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets published by labor or political groups (such as garment workers, socialists and anarchists) with a strong Jewish immigrant presence. You should create a list of the contemporary newspapers and magazines available in U.S. libraries, particularly if you will work on the non-U.S. cities

4-Unpublished archival material.

These are manuscripts sources. Some useful types for our purpose include:

- A- Passenger lists, often culled by ship captains or immigration inspectors, have basic information (place of birth, religion, occupation, age, etc.) on each arrival. The Ellis Island Museum has these available on line. A research center in Buenos Aires also has a database with this type of individual-level information <https://cemla.com/buscador/>
- B- Birth, Marriage, and Death certificates. Many of them are available at the Mormon's Family History centers for a large number of countries.
- C- Manuscript Census Returns include information on individuals and are arranged geographically (by city, ward or neighborhood, city block).

- D- Naturalization records.
- E- Membership lists or applications, and meeting minutes of voluntary associations.
- F- Family letters, diaries, recorded interviews, photographs, movie clips held in archives or in homes.

5. Oral interviews

TOPICS FOR RESEARCH PAPER

Using some of the material listed above you can write a paper that concentrates on one of the cities or compares more than one and that focuses on a variety of topics. I list below some of the main themes in migration studies to give you some ideas for the paper but will discuss specifics in our meetings.

1-Old World Origins. Immigrants' histories do not begin after they get off the boat (or deplane at JFK nowadays). They are not tabula rasa ready to be imprinted with their hosts' cultures and ways. Where are they coming from? We know mainly from Eastern Europe. But where specifically? From cities or shtetl? Bessarabia or Moscow? Do the origins vary according to destination? How sizeable are the non-Eastern-European minorities (e.g., Germans, Sephardim, Arab Jews). What difference did these origins make in terms of the adaptation and success of the newcomers? This is a particularly understudied topic in Jewish migration history so findings, however limited, may be a genuine contribution to scholarship.

2.Ghettos? Before it became associated with black neighborhoods, this term habitually referred to Jewish enclaves. But how similar were these vicinities to the almost hermetic late-medieval Jewish quarters that gave birth to the term? How impermeable were these neighborhoods? How segregated were Jews compared to other immigrants?

3.Family and community life. The process of neighborhood formation and local immigrant institutions: associations, synagogues, informal gathering places such as parks and street corners, schools, and the Yiddish theater.

4.Making a Living and Making it. Work, class, and mobility. What were the newcomers' principal occupations? Was this similar in the four cities? Similar to other immigrants? How class-divided were these communities and does memory tend to diminish or augment those divisions? Was economic success and upward mobility as dramatic and as fast as most people—Jews and non-Jews alike—came later to think? If so, why were Jewish immigrants so consistently and dramatically overrepresented in radical working-class movements such as socialism and anarchism?

5.Images. Internal representations, that is those that came from within the community (or different elements of these communities, since those self-representations were usually contested) and the attitudes of others towards Jews, which of course could range from rabid anti-Semitism to Judeophilia. Caricatures, film, songs, and jokes may be particularly useful material for this section.