

CS 562: Jewish Social Research: Trends and Analysis

HUC-JIR School of Jewish Communal Service

Spring 2010

Tuesdays, 9-11:20am

Room 104

Instructor: Sarah Bunin Benor

Course Description:

This class is designed to expose students to social science research on contemporary American Jewish identities, communities, and institutions. Students are expected to:

- 1) become critical consumers of such research
- 2) obtain the skills and experience to conduct their own research and
- 3) learn about trends and issues among contemporary American Jews.

Students will be introduced to the capstone project requirement and will have an opportunity to begin their research.

Required Texts:

Creswell, John W. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pomson, Alex and Randal F. Schnoor. 2008. *Back to School: Jewish Day School in the Lives of Adult Jews*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

Other readings, available on Sakai: <http://huc.cle.rsmart.com> and other websites.

Recommended Text:

Turabian, Kate L. 1996. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 6th edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Assignments:

1. 1-page proposal of research topic.
- 2-7. Six brief exercises in various research methods (website analysis, interview, participant observation, survey design, data analysis, thesis review), preferably related to the student's potential capstone project topic (see details below).
8. Final paper: Proposal of the student's capstone project/thesis (or a comparable hypothetical research project) with details of methodology and preliminary bibliography for literature review (total suggested length: 10-14 pages)

Note: Some assignments are due on non-class days. Please note them in your calendars. Assignments are due via e-mail, unless otherwise noted.

Grading:

Because this class is driven by discussion, it is crucial that students complete all reading assignments and participate actively in class.

Class participation: 30%:

- Quantity (Is the student's participation frequent enough?)
- Quality (Do the student's comments show understanding of and engagement with the material?)

- Evidence of preparation (Has the student completed the readings in a thorough and thoughtful manner?)
- Overall contribution to the class (Does the student contribute positively to the class vibe in a way that is not overbearing and not distracted?)

Assignments 2-7: 30% (5% each)

Assignment 8: 40%

Contact Info:

Best way to reach me: e-mail: sbenor@huc.edu.

Office #8 in the basement. Office phone: 213-765-2124.

Office hours: by appointment after class or Wednesday or Thursday (don't be shy!).

Schedule

INTRODUCTION

Jan. 12

Introduction to the class: Types of research topics; types of methods; SJCS theses/projects.

Jan. 19: Research approaches

Prell, Riv-Ellen. 2000. "Developmental Judaism: Challenging the Study of American Jewish Identity in the Social Sciences." *Contemporary Jewry* 21. 33-53.

<http://www.bjpa.org/Publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=2884>

Kugelmass, Jack. 1988. Part of "Introduction." In *Between Two Worlds: Ethnographic Essays on American Jewry*. Jack Kugelmass, ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 13-26.

Creswell, John W. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 13-23.

Thurs, Jan 21: Assignment #1 due (proposal)

QUALITATIVE METHODS

Analysis of documents and other cultural products, interviews, ethnographic observation

Jan. 26: Commodifying Jewishness

Shandler, Jeffrey. 2006. Absolut Tchotchke. In *Adventures in Yiddishland: Postvernacular Language and Culture*. Berkeley: U.C. Press. Chapter 4: 155-176.

Steinberg, Kerri P. 2002. "Contesting Identities in Jewish Philanthropy." In *Diasporas and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity*. Howard Wettstein, ed. Berkeley: University of California Press. 253-278.

Sun. Jan. 31: Assignment #2 due (website analysis)

Feb. 2: GLBTQ Jews

Weiss, Robert S. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press. 73-89, 111-118.

Schnoor, Randall. 2006. "Being Gay and Jewish: Negotiating Intersecting Identities." *Sociology of Religion* 67/1. 43-60.

By now you should have scheduled your interview between Feb. 11 and Feb. 28 and your observation between Feb. 17 and Mar. 2.

Feb. 9: The sovereign self

Cohen, Steven M. and Arnold M. Eisen. 2000. *The Jew Within: Self, Family, and Community in America*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. Chapter 1. 1-12.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1-16.

Assignment #3a due (interview guide)

Feb. 16: Immigration and diverse modes of Jewish observance

Markowitz, Fran. 2001. "A Bat Mitzvah among Russian Jews in America." In *The Life of Judaism*. Harvey E. Goldberg, ed. Berkeley: U.C. Press. 121-135.

Cernea, Ruth Fredman. 1988. "Flaming Prayers: *Hillula* in a New Home." In *Between Two Worlds: Ethnographic Essays on American Jewry*. Jack Kugelmass, ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 162-190.

Schwartz, Anita. 1988. "The Secular Seder: Continuity and Change among Left-Wing Jews." In Kugelmass. 105-126.

QUANTITATIVE METHODS

Designing, administering, analyzing, and interpreting surveys; analyzing existing data

Feb. 23: Quantitative analysis

Scheuren, Fritz. 2004. "What Is a Survey?" National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago. 27-50, 63-68. <http://client.norc.org/whatisasurvey/download.htm>.

Pyrzczak, Fred. 2002. *Success at Statistics: A Worktext with Humor*. 2nd edition. Los Angeles: Pyrczak Publishing. Selections (about 30 pages).

Sunday, Feb. 28: Assignment #3b due (interview summary)

Mar. 2: Counting American Jews

Kadushin, Charles, Benjamin T. Phillips, and Leonard Saxe. 2005. "National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01: A Guide for the Perplexed." *Contemporary Jewry* 25. 1-32.

<https://www.policyarchive.org/bitstream/handle/10207/10837/National%20Jewish%20Population%20Survey%202000-01.pdf?sequence=1>.

Mayer, Egon, Barry Kosmin, and Ariela Keysar. 2001. "American Jewish Identity Survey." Reissued in 2003 by the Center for Cultural Judaism. 8-16.

<http://www.culturaljudaism.org/pdf/ajisbook.pdf>.

Thurs. Mar. 4: Assignment #4 due (observation)

Mar. 9: Religion vs. ethnicity

Cohen, Steven M. 1998. "Religious Stability and Ethnic Decline: Emerging Patterns of Jewish Identity In the United States." New York: JCCA. 2-9, 38-52.

<https://www.policyarchive.org/bitstream/handle/10207/9709/Religious%20Stability%20and%20Ethnic%20Decline.pdf?sequence=1>

Phillips, Bruce. 2009. "Accounting for Jewish Secularism: Is a New Cultural Identity Emerging?" *Contemporary Jewry* online. October 2009. 1-23.

Mar. 16: no class – USC spring break

Mar. 23: Jews in their 20s and 30s

Ukeles, J. B., Miller, R. and Beck, P. (2006). *Young Jewish adults in the United States today*. New York: American Jewish Committee. Start with pp. 94-97 (research questions), then read 1-11, 51-78. http://www.ajc.org/atf/cf/%7B42D75369-D582-4380-8395-D25925B85EAF%7D/YoungJewishAdultsUS_102006.pdf

Thurs, Mar. 25: Assignment #5 due (survey design)

Mar. 30, Apr. 6: No class (Passover)

Thurs, Apr. 8: Assignment #6 due (data analysis)

Apr. 13: Israel Connections

Kadushin, Charles, Leonard Saxe, and Theodore Sasson. 2008. "American Jewish Attachment to Israel: An Assessment of the 'Distancing' Hypothesis." Steinhardt Social Research Institute and the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies.

<http://dcoll.brandeis.edu/bitstream/handle/10192/23015/IsraelAttach.030308.22.pdf?sequence=1>

Saxe, Leonard, Benjamin Phillips, Graham Wright, Matthew Boxer, Shahar Hecht, and Theodore Sasson. 2008. "Taglit-Birthright Israel Evaluation: 2007-2008 North American Cohorts." Steinhardt Social Research Institute and the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies. Focus on 1-6, 23-37.

<http://dcoll.brandeis.edu/bitstream/handle/10192/23131/BRI1617.07.28.09.revised.2.pdf?sequence=6>

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH

Literature review, writing, bringing it all together

Apr. 20: Literature search, writing

Creswell, John W. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 27-62, 73-118.

Apr. 27: Jewish education

Pomson, Alex and Randal F. Schnoor. 2008. *Back to School: Jewish Day School in the Lives of Adult Jews*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. Everyone reads 1-36, 132-167; we'll divide up the rest.

May 4: The capstone requirement

A SJCS masters thesis of your choice. All theses are on reserve in the library (cannot be checked out), and most are also in the stacks (can be checked out).

Assignment #7 due – in-class presentation of thesis review

Thurs, May 6: Assignment #8 due (proposal)

Guide for Assignments

1. 1-page proposal of research topic (expecting that your topic may change significantly during and/or after the course):
 - a. Working title
 - b. Discussion of topic, research questions
 - c. Why you chose this topic (briefly)
 - d. Ideas for methods you might use and how they will help you answer your research questions
 - e. How you plan to complete assignments 2-6 using this topic. If your topic is strictly qualitative or quantitative, choose a related topic for the other assignments.

2. Analysis of a Jewish agency's website (1-2 pages). Select a real-world Jewish agency (local or national, religious or secular, must also exist outside of cyberspace, preferably one relevant to your research topic) and analyze its website. Consider these questions:
 - a. Audience: Who do you think is the intended audience(s)? How do you know? What prior knowledge is needed to appreciate the website content? How is the website identified as Jewish?
 - b. Goals: What are the goals of the website? To advertise the agency? To give Jews access to non-agency information? To enable Jews to connect with other Jews?
 - c. Evaluation: To what extent do you think the website meets its goals? Is it easy to navigate? How might it be improved?

3. Interview
 - a. Interview guide (1 page): brief statement of who you plan to interview, your goals for the interview and how they relate to your research questions, and some questions you expect to ask in the interview.
 - b. Interview summary (at least 2 pages): what you learned from the interview about your project and about interviewing as a research method, including an evaluation of your own interviewing skills.

4. Fieldnotes from mini-observation at your research site (2-3 pages). Writing need not be polished here, but please type it and make it comprehensible. Components (not necessarily in this order):
 - a. Research question(s) for this observation
 - b. Description of physical surroundings
 - c. Description of characters
 - d. Discussion of interactions
 - e. Other details relevant to your research topic
 - f. Analysis, incl. what you learned from your observation about your research topic, how this observation helped you answer your research question(s)

5. Survey design (2-6 pages + online questionnaire administered to your classmates)

- a. Research population: describe who they are, # of people
 - b. Sampling strategy: will you distribute the survey to your entire research population? If not, how will you determine who is in your sample (i.e., who is invited to complete the survey)? How will you make sure that various populations (social variables) are represented? If you don't get the sample you need, how will you change your plan?
 - c. Questionnaire (at least 15 items): Posted on SurveyMonkey.com (login info to be distributed in class)
 - d. Hypotheses about responses/correlations. Every question should be mentioned at least once here. If you have no hypotheses about a question, it probably does not need to be in the survey.
6. Data analysis (1 page). Your classmates will participate in your survey (pretending they are part of your research population). Then you will test 2 hypotheses from your survey using the SurveyMonkey data analysis tools or data analysis software (SPSS, SAS, JMP, etc.). Present your analysis in prose form, including at least one table or bar graph and discussion of the results.
- Examples of hypotheses you might test (from my survey on language and identity):
- a. Reform Jews are more likely to say “temple,” and Conservative Jews are more likely to say “synagogue.”
 - b. Younger Jews are more likely than older Jews to use Israeli Hebrew words.
 - c. New Yorkers are more likely than non-New Yorkers to use Yiddish-influenced syntax, like “I don't know from that” and “She has what to say.”
7. SJCS thesis review (presented orally in class). Read a past thesis, preferably one relevant to your research topic, and evaluate it.
- a. Summary: Research questions, methods, results.
 - b. Evaluation: Are the research questions clearly articulated? Are the methods appropriate to answer them? Is the writing engaging, concise, and error-free? Is the topic useful for the field of Jewish Communal Service? Is the literature review relevant to the topic and well integrated into the thesis?
8. Final paper: a 10-14 page **proposal** of your masters thesis or project (or a similar research project). Components:
- a. Introduction: statement of research questions, why this topic is important, why you chose it.
 - b. Literature review: discussion of the previous literature on this subject, including at least 10 relevant articles, books, or chapters (websites do not count as part of these 10 but are allowed as primary sources), how your research fits in and fills gaps in the literature. The lit review might be incorporated into the introduction. It should not be a list of books with a paragraph about each.
 - c. Proposed methods: how you plan to research this topic, details and goals of each method you plan to use, how they relate to your research questions.
 - d. Expected results: based on pilot studies you did in this class, previous literature, and your own prior knowledge.

- e. Practical applications: what you and the field of Jewish Communal Service might be able to do with the results.
- f. Timeline: for conducting your study, reviewing the relevant literature, analyzing data, and writing up your findings (should fit within the SJCS project/thesis timeline).
- g. Funding: whether you need money to finance the study, how you might get it.
- h. Outline: brief outline of what you expect your final project/thesis to look like.
- i. Access and ethical issues: how you plan to gain access to the community, ethical issues you expect may arise and how you plan to deal with them.
- j. Bibliography: choose a format for citations (see Turabian 1996 for examples), and list all bibliographic references at the end of your paper (using any accepted format, such as the reading lists above). Use within-text parenthetical citations (e.g., Cohen 1998:17), rather than footnotes.

How the proposals will be evaluated:

1. good idea for a research project
2. clear articulation of your research questions
3. appropriate proposed use of method(s), good sense of how the method(s) will help you attain your research goals
4. good, concise literature review well integrated into your proposal
5. clear and concise writing

Suggested Regular Reading

As Jewish communal leaders, you will be better able to serve your constituencies by keeping up with academic and popular writings about them. In addition to your local Jewish newspaper and publications in your field of specialty (e.g., social work, business, etc.), I recommend the following, both for your student research and for projects throughout your career:

Forward
Sh'ma
Journal of Jewish Communal Service
Jerusalem Post
Contemporary Jewry
American Jewish Year Book
Moment

Online resources

Berman Jewish Policy Archive: Amazing treasure trove of articles of interest to Jewish professionals: <http://www.bjpa.org/>

National Jewish Population Survey, reports available on the UJC website:
http://www.ujc.org/content_display.html?ArticleID=60346

North American Jewish Databank, <http://www.jewishdatabank.org/>, including local Jewish population studies and the American Jewish Identity Survey (2001).

These lists of innovative projects may be helpful.

The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies Slingshot Fund's list of 50 "of the next generation's responses to Jewish identity and community"

<http://www.2164.net/slingshot.html>

Reboot – A Network for Jewish Innovation

<http://www.rebooters.net/>

Bikkurim – An Incubator for New Jewish Ideas

<http://www.bikkurim.org/>

Some other books that might be useful

Aviv, Caryn and David Shneer, eds. 2002. *Queer Jews*. New York: Routledge.

Aviv, Caryn and David Shneer. 2005. *New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora*. New York: NYU Press.

Bronznick, Shifra and Didi Goldenhar. 2008. *Visioning Justice and the American Jewish Community*. New York: Nathan Cummings Foundation.

Bubis, Gerald. 2001. *Growing Jews: Selected Writings*. Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion.

Bubis, Gerald and Steven Windmueller. 2005. *From Predictability to Chaos: How Jewish Leaders Re-Invented Their National Communal System*. Center for Jewish Community Studies.

Cohen, Steven M. and Charles S. Liebman. 1987. *The Quality of American Jewish Life: Two Views*. New York: American Jewish Committee.

Cohen, Steven M., Shifra Bronznick, Didi Goldenhar, Sherry Israel, and Shaul Kelner. 2004. *Creating gender equity and organizational effectiveness in the Jewish federation system: A research-and-action project*. New York: United Jewish Communities.

Diner, Hasia R. 2004. *The Jews in the United States, 1654 to 2000*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Farber, Roberta Rosenberg and Chaim I. Waxman, eds. 1999. *Jews in America: A Contemporary Reader*. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press.

Fishman, Sylvia Barack. 2004. *Double or Nothing: Jewish Families and Mixed Marriage*. Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press.

Fishman, Sylvia Barack. 2000. *Jewish Life and American Culture*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Goldscheider, Calvin. 1986. *Jewish Continuity and Change: Emerging Patterns in America*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Goldscheider, Calvin. 2004. *Studying the Jewish Future* (Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies). Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Horowitz, Bethamie. 2000. *Connections and Journeys: Assessing Critical Opportunities for Enhancing Jewish Identity*. New York: UJA Federation.

Putnam, Robert D. and Lewis M. Feldstein. 2003. *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Sarna, Jonathan. 2004. *American Judaism: A History*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Sales, Amy L. and Leonard Saxe. 2004. "How Goodly Are Thy Tents": Summer Camps as Jewish Socializing Experiences. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

Smith, Tom. 2005. *Jewish Distinctiveness in America: A Statistical Portrait*. New York: The American Jewish Committee.

Wertheimer, Jack. 1993. *A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America*. New York: Basic Books.

Wertheimer, Jack. 2005. *Linking the Silos: How to Accelerate the Momentum in Jewish Education Today*. New York: Avi Chai Foundation.

Wertheimer, Jack, ed. 2007. *Family Matters: Jewish Education in an Age of Choice*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.