

Prof. Lillian Guerra
Tues 10:40-11:30
Thur 10:40-12:35
Matherly 113

Office: 307 Grinter
Office Hours: Tu 1:00-3:00
lillian.guerra@ufl.edu

LAH 3931, Section 2196

JST 3930, Section 0942

The Jewish Diaspora of Latin America

This course explores the causes, culture and experience of Jewish immigrants and exiles in the Caribbean and Latin America from the colonial era to the present. In particular, this class relates the evolving identity and place of Jews in Latin American societies to broader themes of social conflict and debates over the relationship between race, religion and nation-formation. Beginning with the expulsion of Sephardic Jews from Spain in 1492 and the establishment of both open and "cryptic" settlements of Jews in the New World, this class questions how Jewish identity evolved as some Jews chose to adapt to their changing circumstances in multiple ways.

Because the majority of Jews arrived in Latin America as a result of increasing persecution in Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this course takes a lateral view of events across the Atlantic even after the fall of Iberian colonialism. The class seeks to illuminate the impact of events in Europe and their relationship to ideological debates and struggles among Latin American ruling elites and the laboring classes. *Topics for the course include the religiosity and place of "crypto-Jews" in Spanish colonies; the role of Jews in smuggling networks and the African slave trade of the Caribbean; Brazil, the Dominican Republic and Argentina's projects for "whitening" their countries as a prerequisite to "modernization"; the legacies of the Holocaust in Bolivia; the persecution of Jews in Argentina's "Dirty War"; and the struggles of Cuban Jews with the Cuban Revolution, both in Miami and Havana.*

At different points in this history, *while Jews consistently faced multiple, legal and de facto forms of discrimination, they also became convenient allies and unexpected proxies for highly oppressive and otherwise self-serving state projects.* Examples include 18th-century imperial powers seeking colonists in developing sugar colonies in America (such as the Dutch) and 20th-century dictators like the Dominican Republic's Rafael Trujillo and Brazil's Gétulio Vargas. *How Jews fared in these relationships and the degree to which they reproduced or deflected the political and economic values of their political patrons are central questions of this course.* In posing and seeking to answer them, students undermine myths about the moral exceptionalism of Jews while also recognizing how a frequent lack of alternatives made them vulnerable to manipulation and forms of representation which they would never have supported or legitimated on their own.

In addition, *as knowledge of the persecution of Jews has expanded in recent years, so has the incidence of individuals (and in some cases, whole communities) claiming a Jewish lineage and identity based on a variety of historical (and sometimes quite flimsy) foundations.* Claims to a Jewish past in places like New Mexico, Chile,

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Ecuador and Cuba are now increasingly the stuff of great debate, anxiety and tensions among many long-standing Jewish communities who remember a time when being Jewish was far from "acceptable" to mainstream society and who reject the "new Jews" as pragmatic, confused or simply, financially driven gold-diggers hoping to cash in on the opportunity to emigrate to Israel or charitable support from synagogues in the United States. This class examines these claims as well as the controversy surrounding them in order to understand the challenges facing contemporary Jewish communities in Latin America where they are still highly "invisible" and marginalized as well as in locations such as Cuba and New Mexico where being Jewish has recently become fashionable, exotic and to certain degree, profitable.

In short, this course asks how the study of a religious, cultural and ethnic minority opens windows onto the inner-workings of Latin American societies:

- *What does the study of Jewish Latin Americans reveal about the relationship between economic development and the construction of social identities?*
- *When did Jewish identity become politicized and what advantages or disadvantages did this provide?*
- *How can the study of Jews help us to understand the dynamics of race, class and gender in specific Latin American contexts?*
- *How have Latin American Jews fought mainstream societies' efforts to demonize them and to what degree have they engaged or inadvertently reproduced stereotypes about themselves in the course of fighting?*
- *On what historical foundations are claims to a "recovered" Jewish identity being made in today's Latin America? Do they matter? Why?*

In order for students to learn, students must participate in a process that combines **community-based analytical exchanges through discussion sections and a more individual dialogue with their instructors**. The following assignments and requirements for this course reflect this pedagogical approach.

Course Requirements:

In-class discussion of readings and films/ participation: 20%

Two analytical papers (5-6 pages each) on readings: 30%

In-class midterm exam: 20%

Final exam: 30%

*As with all history classes, **this class should be relevant** to explaining the events, culture, distribution of power and popular ideas of the present day. What you learn in the class should be **surprising, enjoyable, challenging and not easily forgotten.***

1. Class Attendance, In-Class Presentations and Lectures as Part of the

Participation Grade: Attendance is (obviously) mandatory since most of the information, analysis and building-blocks for the class are acquired live and in person. Responding to the presentations and queries of your peers is as important as responding to those made by the professor.

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- **Lectures are particularly important for two reasons:** first, because they provide the framework for understanding the chronology and historical struggles at play; and second, because students should learn how to write good papers and make strong arguments from listening to good lectures.
- **Because students have different styles of learning, Professor Guerra uses a variety of teaching methods and materials** that will serve the strengths of some students one day and those of other students another.

2. Discussions of Readings and Presentations as part of the Participation Grade:

Much of the success of this class meetings will depend on the willingness of students to engage issues raised in the readings, film presentations as well as each others' perspectives in the time allocated for collective reflection on complex or politically challenging subjects.

Professor Guerra's **evaluation of student participation in discussion, however, will depend less on the quantity of each student's intervention and more on their quality.** On the other hand, while "chattiness" will not guarantee you an A for participation, silence will definitely not serve you (after all, how can Prof. G know that you have even read that week's assignment if you don't speak?).

Once in the semester, each student will be assigned to write up questions and initiate our weekly discussions on the readings assigned with a short (5-minute) presentation. Depending on class enrollment numbers, students may be asked to work with/consult with a partner in order to make up questions that are not redundant. These questions should be typed up and distributed in hard copy to all members of the class. The presentation should not be purely a "summary" of the reading but, rather, a commentary on its relevance, lessons, shortcomings, etc.

3. Short papers. The purpose of the papers is to help you reflect on and process the assigned readings. Students are required to provide evidence from the readings to support an argument made in a paper; while lectures are appropriate as well, readings must represent the principal sources from which to draw examples and specific points of fact that substantiate a thesis.

- **FIRST PAPER DUE MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18TH BY 4:00 PM.**
- **SECOND PAPER DUE FRIDAY, MONDAY, APRIL 8TH BY 4:00 PM.**
 - *Papers must be 5 pages long, double-spaced and typed in 12-point font.*
 - **Each paper will respond to one or two questions provided at least one week in advance of their due date.**
 - **Your essay should be analytical in style:** that is, it must present an argument substantiated by evidence drawn from the assigned reading and directly cited.
 - You are **required to underline your thesis statement** so that there will be no problem identifying an argument.

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- All papers must be handed to Professor Guerra in **hard copy form**. Emailed papers are only accepted in an emergency; a hard copy version must be handed to the professor later.
- **Late papers** will be penalized by half a grade for every day they are overdue, unless an extension has been requested in advance and granted.

4. Midterm and final exam: Midterm and final exams will follow the same format, although the former will obviously be much shorter than the latter. Each exam will consist of a identifications (to be explained in greater length as we approach the midterm) and one to three questions to be answered in essay form.

5. Course Materials: Books for this course are available at the UF Bookstore. Unless otherwise indicated, other essays, documents and articles assigned for this course are available in scanned form through electronic reserves on SAKAI or, when possible, through reserves at Library West.

Grading Scale:

93-100	A	89-87	B+	79-77	C+	69-67	D+	Below 60	Failing
92-90	A-	86-83	B	76-73	C	66-63	D		
		82-80	B-	72-70	C-	62-60	D-		

Letter Grade with GPA equivalent:

A	4.0
A-	3.67
B+	3.33
B	3.0
B-	2.67
C+	2.33
C	2.0
C-	1.67
D+	1.33
D	1.0
D-	0.67
E	0

Attendance is a must, as students who do not attend lectures will fail to comprehend the individual histories of each country studied or the chronological order of events that drives the process of change connecting these countries as a region. Students who have an unexcused absence and do not attend discussions on Thursday (when attendance is taken at the beginning of class) will receive a failing grade for that week's participation. **Consistent with the policy of the UF College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, repeated**

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absences from the course may result in Professor Guerra preventing a student from attending the class or dropping the student from the course with a failing grade.

Note-taking is also a must. Knowledge of key events, locations, historical figures, organizations and movements is the basis of all historical analysis. History in this course (as in any course offered by UF's history department) is **not** the study of generalizations but contingences: ***being able to explain why something happened is as important as explaining what happened. One cannot be achieved without the other.***

Excused Absences: Students who will not be able to take an exam at the scheduled time, need an extension of the due date for a paper or were unable to attend class due to illness **must** provide medical documentation of their condition at the time. Students who have other conflicts that will prevent them from being able to complete an assignment on time must notify Professor Guerra in advance and discuss whether or not the extension or make-up exam is merited. Students must also notify Professor Guerra if they will incur absences due to UF-sanctioned activities (such as participation in UF teams, etc.).

Academic Honesty: Violations of academic honesty standards include but are not limited to cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of another's work as one's own, bribery, conspiracy and fabrication. The criteria for assessing whether student behavior meets one or more of these violations as well as the sanctions imposed may be reviewed at the website: <http://www.aa.ufl.edu/aa/Rules/4017.htm>

Students with disabilities: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to Professor Guerra when requesting accommodation. Contact the Disability Resource Center through their website: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

Make-up Policy and Extra Credit: There is no extra credit. There is no way to make-up for missing discussions of the weekly reading assignment. These will normally take place before or after lecture on Thursdays, unless otherwise noted below in the course schedule. Unexcused absences from discussion will result in a participation grade of zero for that week. Evaluation of oral participation in discussion is based on the criteria described immediately below this section.

Other Course Policies: All cell phones must be turned to vibrate at the beginning of class. ***Internet websurfing, texting, checking of email, or other tasks unrelated to note-taking during lecture, discussion or other classroom activities is not permitted.*** Professor Guerra will confiscate the cell phone or laptop of any student found engaging in these activities during class and s/he may be asked to leave the classroom. A second violation will result in disciplinary sanction.

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Lectures, Readings and Discussion Schedule

Tu Jan 8th Lecture 1: Why Study Jewish Latin America? An Introduction

Reading assignment for Thursday discussion Jan 10th: Marjorie Agosin, ed. Memory, Oblivion and Jewish Culture in Latin America (University of Texas Press, 2005), Introduction, pp. 1-33; 61-73; pp. 91-112; 221-238. [required book]

Th Jan 10th Lecture 2: Jew, Christians and *Conversos* in Spain: The Road to 1492
Discussion of sections assigned above from Memory, Oblivion and Jewish Culture.

Tu Jan 15th Lecture 3: 1492: The Process and Legacies of Jews' Expulsion from Spain
Reading assignment for Thursday discussion Jan 17: Stuart Schwarz, All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World (Yale University Press, 2008), 17-92. [scanned and accessible through SAKAI]

Th Jan 17th Lecture 4: Crafting a Crypto-Jewish Culture in Iberia: Secrecy, Resistance, Self-Deceit and Survival. *Discussion of above assigned sections from Schwartz.*

Tu Jan 22nd Lecture 5: Victims & Agents of Empire, Part 1: Jewish, Converso and Crypto-Jewish Identities in the Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Atlantic World
Reading assignment for Thursday discussion Jan 24: Stanley M. Hordes, To the End of the Earth: A History of the Crypto-Jews of New Mexico (Columbia University Press, 2005), Introduction (p. 1-12), pp. 30-103; 133-165. [required book]

Th Jan 24th Lecture 6: Victims & Agents of Empire, Part 2: Dogmatista Martyrs and Other Jewish Rebels of 17th- and 18th-Century Colonial America. *Discussion of Hordes.*

Tu Jan 29th Lecture 7: Spanish American Transitions and the Road to Revolution
Reading assignment for Document Workshop on Thursday Jan 31: Lee M. Penyak and Walter J. Petry, eds. Religion in Latin America: A Documentary History (Orbis Books, 2006), pp. 131-151 (documents #60-#64). [scanned and accessible through SAKAI]

Th Jan 31st Lecture 8: The New Latin American Republics: Liberalism, Secularism and the Relative Whiteness of European Jews. *Document Workshop* based on Penyak & Petry assigned above.

Tu Feb 5th Lecture 9: Inventing Argentina: "The Conquest of the Desert" and Jewish Salvation on the Pampas, 1850s-1900. **Reading assignment for Thursday discussion February 7:** Alberto Gerchunoff, The Jewish Gauchos of the Pampas (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998).

Th Feb 7th No Lecture. Film for viewing and discussion in class: "Yiddishe Gauchos" (USA, 2000). *Discussion of Gerchunoff.*

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Tu Feb 12th Lecture 10: Immigrant Argentina: Sex, Danger & the Labor Struggle in Buenos Aires, 1900-1920s. **Reading assignment for Thursday discussion February 14th:** Sandra McGee Deutsch, Crossing Borders, Claiming a Nation: A History of Argentine Jewish Women, 1880-1955 (Duke University Press, 2010), 42-72; 105-171. **[required book].**

Th Feb 14th Lecture 11: Paradoxical Argentina: Peronismo, Perón and the Consolidation of Anti-Semitism, 1930s-1950s. **Discussion of Deutsch.**

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Tu Feb 19th Lecture 12: Caught Between Dictators and Despots, Part 1: Sosúa and the Case of the Dominican Republic under Trujillo. **Reading assignment for Thursday discussion February 21st:** Deutsch, Crossing Borders, Claiming a Nation, pp. 172-248.

Th Feb 21st Lecture 13: Caught Between Dictators and Despots, Part 2: Vargas' Brazil and the "Jewish Question". **Discussion of Deutsch. NOTE: Reading is assigned for discussion on Tuesday and Thursday. See below for assignment.**

Tu Feb 26th No lecture. Reading assigned for discussion today: Jeffrey Lesser, Welcoming the Undesirables: Brazil and the Jewish Question. University of California Press, 1995, pp. 1-22; 46-116 (Introduction and Chapters 2-3). **[required book]**

Th Feb 28th No lecture. Reading assigned for discussion today: Lesser, Welcoming the Undesirables, pp. 117-178 (Chapters 4-6 and Epilogue). **[required book]**

SPRING BREAK, MARCH 2ND-9TH. NOTE THAT MIDTERM EXAM IS SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 14TH, THURSDAY, IN CLASS.

Tu Mar 12th Lecture 14: A Haven for Jews & Nazis: Peronismo without Perón and the Origins of the Dirty War in Argentina, 1950s-1970s. **No reading for Thursday. In-class midterm.**

Th Mar 14th IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAMINATION.

Tu Mar 19th Lecture 15: Explaining Argentina's "Process of National Reorganization" in the Context of the Cold War, 1976-1983. **No reading for Thursday. In-class film viewing and discussion.**

Th Mar 21st In-class film viewing and discussion: "Broken Silence: Some Who Lived" (Universal, 2004).

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Tu Mar 26th Lecture 16: Tropical Diaspora: Jewish Cuba before 1959. **Reading assignment for Thursday discussion March 28th:** Marguerite Feitlowitz, A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture (Oxford University Press, 1993) pp. 3-109; 149-192. **[required book]**

Th Mar 28th. No lecture. Discussion of Feitlowitz.

Tu April 2nd. Lecture: Double Diaspora in Miami and the Struggle to Remain Jewish on the Island: The Cuban Revolution to the Present. **Reading assignment for Thursday discussion April 4th:** Caroline Bettinger-López, Cuban-Jewish Journeys: Searching for Identity, Home and Heritage in Miami (University of Tennessee Press, 2000), pp. 36-141; 161-189 (Chapters 2-3, Chapter 5). **[scanned and accessible through SAKAI]**

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Th Apr 4th In-class film viewing and discussion: “Jewish Cuba: Abraham and Eugenia” (Bonnie Burt, 2001). *Discussion of Bettinger-López.*

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Tu April 9th Lecture: The Movement to Reclaim Jewish Identities in Latin America and the Crypto-Jewish Frontier: Prospects and Problems. *No reading for Thursday. In-class film viewing and discussion.* **NOTE: A whole book is assigned for discussion in class on Tuesday, April 16th. Please be sure to start the reading early. The book assigned is Jeff Wheelwright's The Wandering Gene and the Indian Princess.**

Th April 11th In-class film viewing and discussion: “The Longing: The Forgotten Jews of South America” (Filmmakers Library, 2007). **Reading assignment for Tuesday discussion April 16:** Jeff Wheelwright, The Wandering Gene and the Indian Princess: Race, Religion and DNA (WW Norton & Co., 2012). **[required book]**

Tu April 16th Discussion of Wheelwright.

Th April 18th In-class film viewing and discussion: "El Brindis" (Chile, 2011).

Tu April 23 Final Lecture: Jewish Latin Americans and Latin American Jews: Lessons of This Course

FINAL EXAM SCHEDULED FOR MAY 2ND, 7:30-9:30 AM. LOCATION TBA

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