SYLLABUS
Fall 2003

SYG 3990 WORLD JEWISH COMMUNITIES
SYG 5990 ADVANCED WORLD JEWISH COMMUNITIES

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Florida International University
Biscayne Bay Campus (classroom will be listed on www.fiu.edu)

Dr. Abraham D. Lavender, Professor
ACI-315, Biscayne Bay Campus, 30-919-5923
DM 322B, University Park Campus, 305-348-2247
abelavender@aol.com

Although modeled on a course previously taught by this professor at the University of Maryland and the University of Miami, this is a new course at Florida International University. It can be taken for either undergraduate or graduate credit. Because this is the first time the course is being taught by FIU, and because the number of students enrolled is difficult to predict, some adjustments might be made in the course after the professor knows the size of the class, the numerical mix of undergraduate and graduate students, and the backgrounds of the students. Nevertheless, the overall outline of the course will be as described below.

Purpose of the Course

Jewish communities throughout the world represent a great diversity of patterns of interaction with larger societies, and exemplify a great diversity of sociological principles of interaction ranging from total assimilation to extermination. In addition to obtaining specific sociological knowledge of Jewish communities throughout the world, a knowledge of theoretical approaches to the Jewish Diaspora helps students to understand principles of minority-majority group interactions and to better understand possible future changes in these communities. More attention to world Jewish communities also can help to understand in more depth current events in the Middle East involving Israel and its Arab neighbors, how and why Jewish communities in the Diaspora relate to this conflict, and how other nations in the world relate to the Middle East conflict. The increasing interaction between different parts of the world means that students have a special need to have more in-depth knowledge of different parts of the world as well as theoretical knowledge to better understand interactions between countries and groups.

Outline of the Course

Following is the outline of the course, which will be followed regardless of the above factors.

I. An analysis of Jewish communities throughout the world:
   A. Settlement patterns: brief origins and reasons for settlement
   B. Population sizes, changes over time, and reasons for changes
C. Effects of major events such as the Inquisition, regional changes (trade routes, local wars, etc., the Holocaust, and Israel independence.

II. Comparisons and contrasts between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. Comparisons and contrasts among Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and Liberal Jews. Analysis of different aspects of Jewish identity: religious, cultural, ethnic, national, and genetic.

III. Analysis of the overall relationship between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora

IV. Demographic analysis of selected communities including a brief history, religious identity, social status, political status, gender issues, family structure and intermarriage, position on assimilation-pluralism continuum, and relations with the larger society. The time devoted to each community will vary depending on size, importance to world events, and a goal of including examples from all regions of the world. Special attention will be given to major communities such as Israel, the United States, Argentina, England, France, and the former Soviet Union. Other areas of interest will include the Caribbean, Cuba, Spain and Portugal, England, France, Germany and central Europe, Eastern Europe, Morocco and other North African areas, Turkey, Greece, and other Balkan countries, the Middle East, Iran and Iraq, Indian, China and Japan, and selected areas in Africa.

V. Specific topics of current concern:
   A. Little-known Jewish communities throughout the world
   B. Crypto-Jews, descendants of exiles from Spain and Portugal
   C. Understanding various “Lost Tribes” of Jews, e.g., in India and Africa
   D. Emerging findings and debates on genetic (DNA) approaches to Jewish research as related to social factors, including the “Cohen gene,” the Sephardic Diaspora, and genetic comparisons of Ashkenazim, Sephardim, Kurdish Jews, Palestinians, and other Middle East groups

VI. (For Graduate Students): Expertise in one community. Selection of one Jewish community in the world, with a class presentation covering that community’s background, development, and demographic characteristics, and explaining that community’s current status, minority-majority interaction, and prediction of future development of the community

Books

Students should buy the following books:


