

Spring 2012

Judaism(s) in San Antonio

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Project: Judaism(s) in San Antonio (2012)

Logistics

- Paper Due at 8:00 PM on April 13th ([Upload Here](#))
- Colloquium day and time TBD (sometime during last two weeks of class)

Overview of Project

This project has two parts:

- 1) Each student is responsible for writing a **6-8 page essay** about one synagogue community in San Antonio. The essay will combine data gathered through reading secondary literature about Jewish denominations, literature published by the national denomination and field-work.
- 2) We will have a colloquium where the different San Antonio Jewish communities will be presented and discussed in light of Michael Satlow's method for studying Judaism.

Field Work

There are two parts to your field work:

1. You need to attend a Sabbath service for your Jewish community to gather material about their worship practices and to observe members of the community as they participate in Jewish activities. Your job is to carefully observe everything that happens including the order of events, participants' reactions, overall mood, etiquette, style of art and music, gender, race, age and social class of the participants. **You will not be able to take notes during the service**, so you will have to pay close attention and be prepared to write down your thoughts after the service is over (in your car? This is where going to the service with classmates writing about the same community would be helpful; you can discuss what each of you observed, sharing details.). You can also collect programs and flyers from the service if they are available (usually on a table outside of the sanctuary). Be a participant as much as possible in readings, singing, standing/sitting. Be sensitive to how you fit in: wear modest respectful clothing, notice whether there is separation of men and women, special seating, head covering, etc. If you're not sure, unobtrusively tell someone that you're a visitor and ask them for advice. Remember, the goal of your visit is to gather data about your community's Sabbath activities.
2. You need to speak to a leader of your community (e.g. Rabbi, Cantor, synagogue leader) to learn about the community's version of Judaism, but more importantly to learn about what the community members actually do. You will learn about the official denominational stance on issues by looking at their websites and other official literature (and articles/books about the denominations). Your discussion/interview with the community leader should therefore focus on questions about their particular community based on what you have read in the secondary literature. To organize your discussion you will want to focus on Satlow's mapping categories (self-identification, discursive traditions, and practices).

Essay (6-8 pages)

Each student is required to write an essay about your particular community with Satlow's categories in mind. Remember that you are not describing the denomination in general, but the San Antonio Jewish community in particular. Therefore, if you are writing about Temple Beth El, you should write about the Jewish people that affiliate with Temple Beth El, not some theoretical group called Reform Jews. The combination of secondary literature, websites and pamphlets, attending a worship service and interviewing a synagogue leader should provide you with plenty of data to create a good picture of your community in terms of Satlow's categories. In your essay you may want to discuss the realities of the community vs. the ideals of the community as presented

in the secondary literature and official documents (e.g. the synagogue leaders/denomination guidelines promote *kashrut* but most of the members do not keep kosher). We will discuss more about how to use the various types of sources during the organizational meeting on February 15th.

Colloquium

At the end of the semester we will have a colloquium about Jews living in San Antonio in 2012. The colloquium will begin with brief introductions to each of the communities the class has investigated. Therefore, you will want to get together with the other students who have worked on the same community and discuss how you want to organize the introduction. Each student should briefly discuss a different aspect of the community (e.g. demographic data, worship practices, important texts, etc.). After the brief introductions we will discuss a number of topics related to your research, including: the similarities and differences between the communities; similarities and differences between the ideals of the community and the realities; the effectiveness of Michael Satlow's methodology for doing your research and comparing the communities; how do these communities compare to the Jewish communities we have discussed over the course of the semester?

Resources

There is a resource page on TLearn that will be helpful as you write up your paper. It includes:

1. Addresses and worship times for the Jewish communities
2. Articles/books about particular denominations
3. Links to official community websites
4. A link to a study about the San Antonio Jewish Community that was done in 2007 and includes important demographic data