Life Cycle Celebrations in Judaism

The course will survey Jewish life-cycle celebrations relating to birth, education, marriage, and death, as the individual moves through various social phases and identities. The ritualization of these passages will be examined as they appear in textual sources and as they have been recorded and analyzed by ethnographers. The readings and class materials will reflect changes in these celebrations that have taken place over time, as well as how they fit into Jewish life in different parts of the world, including recent developments in the contemporary USA and Israel. Discussions will also show how celebrations are linked to communal institutions and to other practices such as pilgrimages. There will also be a consideration of the growing place of women in life-cycle rituals, and the emergence of the individual in Jewish consciousness.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (to be completed on dates outlined in Calendar, below)

An ethnographic exercise (15%)
A mid-term examination on basic concepts (25%)
An analytic paper (30%)
A final essay - due on the last day of class (30%)

REQUIRED READINGS


*Articles and chapters from books:* these items are on electronic reserve- *Ares* [they may appear in Ares in a different alphabetical order from the list below]

Abramovitch, Henry. "The Jerusalem Funeral as a Microcosm of the `Mismeeting' Between Religious and Secular Israelis," in *Tradition, Innovation, Continuity: Judaism and Jewishness in*


Goldberg, Harvey E. “Coming of Age in Jewish Studies, or Anthropology Is Counted in the Minyan,” Jewish Social Studies (n.s.) 4:29-64, 1998.

______. Ethnography of Ritual Hebrew (See Ares)

______. “Marriage” (excerpt from Jewish Passages) (See Ares).


Website: Jewish Encyclopedia (published 100 years ago in New York) - www.jewishencyclopedia.com See article on Circumcision - http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=514&letter=C&search=circumcision#3
CALENDAR, TOPICS, AND READINGS

Jan. 8-10 (1) Introduction: Anthropology and the Study of Jewish Culture; Marcus, pp. 3-29; H. Goldberg, “Ethnography.”

Jan. 15-17 (2) Circumcision: the Biblical Period and Comparison; Jewish Encyclopedia (website), Marcus, pp. 30-59.

Jan. 22-24 (3) Circumcision, naming, and related ceremonies: Rabbinic and Recent developments; Marcus, pp. 59-68; Horowitz, Liefer and Liefer

Jan. 29-31 (4) Rituals of Childhood: Medieval Ashkenaz; Marcus, pp. 68-81; Bilu. Lecture by Ruth Behar Jan 29-4:00 PM-Ulster Hall; 1st assignment due on Jan 31.

Feb. 5-7 (5) Valuing knowledge of Torah; Marcus, pp.82-123; Zborowski.


Feb. 19-21 (7) Marriage: ancient and medieval aspects; Marcus, pp. 124-156; H. Goldberg. “Marriage”.


Mar. 4-6 (9) Pilgrimage: traditional patterns; Storper and Goldberg; Cohen.


Mar. 25-27 (11) Commemorations: Marcus, pp. 221-248; Abramovitch; Gamiliel.


Apr. 8-10 (13) Communities in the making: Schoenfeld.

Apr. 15-17 (14) Review – Guidance on Papers Marcus, pp.249-253; Goldberg, “Coming of age”

Apr. 22 Final Essay due