



Topics for the Study of the American Jewish Experience

The list of topics below is by no means complete, but rather is to provide ideas and suggestions:

People

- Specific Individuals or Families
- Ethnic Heritage
- Women
- Genealogy

Places

- Where people emigrated from (i.e. Lithuania, Germany, Poland)
- Where people immigrated to (i.e. Cincinnati, San Francisco, New Orleans)
- Important Immigration sites (i.e. Charleston, New York, Galveston)
- Jews in the West, South, Midwest, North, & Northeast
- When and why did people immigrate to specific cities or areas of the United States?

Organizations/Institutions

- B'nai B'rith
- Anti-Defamation League
- American Jewish Committee
- Seminaries: Hebrew Union College, Jewish Theological Seminary
- How & why did Jewish organizations flourish (or not) in America

Politics

- The Jewish people in the political milieu
- Individual politicians
- Jews in the Military
- US politics and how it has affected the Jewish population in America

Business & Commerce

- The Jewish peddler
- Jews and the Department Stores
- Jewish merchants in the West (or other areas of the U.S.)

Religion

- Different denominations of Judaism: Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative, Orthodox, Humanistic
- Religious practice in America (including holidays, life-cycle events, and observance)
- How did Judaism change and develop in America?

Arts & Culture

- Individuals who have been prominent in American arts and culture
- Jewish representation in American society (i.e. bagels, songs, “Jewish words and phrases (i.e. mitzvah, mensch etc.)
- Poems, paintings, writings of Jewish Americans

Civil Rights in America

- Jews and Civil Rights – How American Jews have contributed and participated in Civil rights for themselves and other minorities
- Anti-Semitism in America
- Blacks & Jews

Israel

- America’s role in the founding of Israel
- America’s response to Israel – in the past and today
- Zionism and Anti-Zionism in America

Another approach to topics is through the “Periodization” of American Judaism. This is one example from, *American Jewish History, A Primary Source Reader*, by Gary P. Zola and Marc Dollinger:

The Colonial Period – 1654-1776

The Revolutionary & Early National Period – 1776-1820

Jews in the Antebellum Period – 1820-1860

American Jews During the Civil War and Reconstruction – 1861-1879

The Gilded Age and the Progressive Era: 1880-1918

American Jews between the World Wars: 1918-1941

World War II & the Shoah: 1941-1945

American Jewish Life Post WWII: 1945-1965

Turning Inward – Jews and American Life: 1965-1980

Contemporary Jewish Life: 1980 - Present