

Lifelong Learning



Jewish Studies - Lecture of the Month

A monthly lecture and discussion series devoted to exploration of a wide variety of topics in Jewish history and culture led by distinguished scholars and teachers. Lectures are held via Zoom on Tuesday or Thursday of the first week of each month from 7:00pm - 8:15pm.

Summer 2022

June 2

Pacific Jews: Jewish History and Identity in the American West

Joellyn Zollman, Ph.D.

With California as the template, Dr. Zollman will look at the many reasons American Jews settled in the American West. The New York experience has long served as the template for understanding American Jewish history. Dr. Zollman will show us that there is much to be discovered when we start with a blank slate and consider the impact that regional life and the history of the West has had on the Jewish experience.

Joellyn Zollman holds a Ph.D. in Jewish Studies from Brandeis University, and she is scholar-in-residence for the Melton Travel Seminar's U.S. Jewish Heritage tours. She'll be leading a tour of the Bay Area in September 2022.

July 7

From 1960s Women's Liberation Movement to Jewish Feminism

Clifford Wilcox, Ph.D.

Many Jewish American women played key roles in the women's movement of the 1960s. Among these leaders were Betty Friedan, Bella Abzug, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Gloria Steinem, and Susan Brownmiller. Yet while pushing for societal changes for American women in general, Jewish women activists realized major changes within Judaism were also needed. This lecture will explore the rise of Jewish feminism in the 1960s-1970s and examine the profound changes this movement has driven within contemporary American Judaism.

Cliff Wilcox has Ph.D. in American intellectual history from the University of Michigan and is the Director of Education and Operations at Temple Beth Torah in Ventura, CA.

August 2

Jewish Names Around the World

Sarah Bunin Benor, Ph.D.

What makes a family name Jewish? How do Jews around the world select names for their babies? Did immigrants change their names at Ellis Island? This session answers these and many more questions about Jewish first and last names. Participants will learn about patronymic (father-based) surnames like Abramovitch, Isaacs, and Yaghobian; geographic names like Ashkenazi, Dardashti, and Shapiro; and profession names like Hakim, Melamed, and Fingerhut. They will also be introduced to changes in American Jewish baby names throughout the 20th century and beyond. And they will hear about names Jews select for their dogs, cats, and other pets.

Sarah Bunin Benor holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from Stanford University and is Vice Provost and Professor of Contemporary Jewish History at HUC-JIR, Los Angeles.

September 1

Kosher at Last: Jewish Women Comics in America

Jeffrey Blutinger, Ph.D.

The earliest American Jewish women in comedy, people like Fanny Brice, Belle Barth, Sophie Tucker, and Pearl Williams, were referred to as "unkosher comediennes." In this talk, Dr. Blutinger will trace the struggles of Jewish women to perform as comics on stage. While Jewish women such as Barbra Streisand and Madeline Kahn shone on the silver screen, the situation was quite different for women who wanted to do stand up. Totie Fields and Joan Rivers paved the way for Jewish women to perform as comics on stage and on television.

Jeffrey Blutinger earned his Ph.D. in Jewish Studies from UCLA and is chair of the Department of Jewish Studies at California State University, Long Beach.