

“The Jewish Woman in America” after Thirty Years

Three decades ago, Charlotte Baum, Paula Hyman and Sonya Michel published *The Jewish Woman in America*, advertised at the time as “the first book written entirely about the experience of the Jewish woman in America.” In the preface, the authors declared their intention to ask “questions that haven’t been asked before” and confessed the challenge of writing such a book, given the paucity of source material available at the time.

Thirty years after that first attempt to construct a narrative of Jewish women’s history in the United States, this roundtable discussion will explore the state of the field today. Questions to be considered include:

- What are the prevailing narratives about American Jewish women’s history today? Are these useful narratives? What questions remained to be addressed?
- To what extent has the literature of Jewish women’s history influenced the broader narratives of American Jewish history and U.S women’s history?
- To what extent has Jewish women’s history opened a dialogue about broader questions of gender in American Jewish life?
- Have some areas of scholarship (history, literature, anthropology sociology etc) made greater progress than others in exploring Jewish women’s experience?
- To what extent is the history of American Jewish women integrated within and/or differentiated from more general works about Jewish women’s experience in other national contexts?

Panelists:

Joyce Antler is the Samuel Lane Professor of American Jewish History and Culture at Brandeis University, and Professor of Women’s Studies. She is the author of *The Journey Home: How Jewish Women Shaped Modern America*, and editor of *Talking Back: Images of Jewish Women in American Popular Culture*. Her book, *You Never Call! You Never Write!: A History of the Jewish Mother*, will be published next year.

Karla Goldman is Historian in Residence at the Jewish Women’s Archive. She is the author of *Beyond the Synagogue Gallery: Finding a Place for Women in American Judaism* (Harvard, 2000). She is working on a book manuscript entitled: “American Israelites: A History of Cincinnati’s Jews.”

Paula E. Hyman is Lucy Moses Professor of Modern Jewish History at Yale University. As a young feminist graduate student she co-authored *The Jewish Woman in America*. She has written *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women* and many articles in Jewish women's history (as well as books and articles on modern French Jewry). With Deborah Dash Moore she co-edited the encyclopedia *Jewish Women in America*, which was awarded the Dartmouth Medal by the American Librarians' Association and the National Jewish Book Award in Women's Studies, both in 1998. She is co-editor of the forthcoming *Jewish Women: An Historical Encyclopedia*. She serves as the president of American Academy for Jewish Research.

Mary McCune is Assistant Professor of History at the State University of New York at Oswego where she has also served as interim director of Women's Studies. After completing an MA in Russian Literature at the University at Albany and working in state-level politics for several years, she returned to graduate school to pursue a doctorate in Women's History at the Ohio State University. Author of the recently released *The Whole Wide World, Without Limits?: International Relief, Gender Politics and American Jewish Women, 1893-1930* (Wayne State, 2005), she has also published articles in *American Jewish History* and *Feminist Studies*. Her next project will examine the immigration experience, communal work, and ideas about nation and home of Catholic and Jewish Poles in the United States.

Beth Wenger is the Katz Family Term Chair in American Jewish History and Associate Professor at the University of Pennsylvania, where she also serves as Director of the Jewish Studies program and Undergraduate Chair of the History department. She is the author of *New York Jews and the Great Depression: Uncertain Promise*, awarded the Salo Baron Prize in Jewish History by the American Academy for Jewish Research, and co-editor of *Remembering the Lower East Side: American Jewish Reflections*. She is the author of several articles on Jewish women's history. Her current book project is titled "History Lessons: The Invention of American Jewish History."