

Using *Jewish Women and the Feminist Revolution* in university courses

Since the Jewish Women's Archive (JWA) launched the *Jewish Women and the Feminist Revolution* online exhibit (<http://www.jwa.org/feminism>) in September 2005, professors around the country have used the exhibit in their courses on subjects including American Jewish history, Women and Religion, and Introduction to Women's Studies. Below are some suggestions for ways to incorporate *Jewish Women and the Feminist Revolution* into your teaching.

Primary document analysis assignment

Jewish Women and the Feminist Revolution includes hundreds of primary resources, such as letters, articles, photographs, videos, posters, manifestos, works of art, conference programs, and t-shirts. Ask your students to choose one primary document and analyze it as an historical artifact: What do we learn from this document? What do we know about it? What perspective does it reflect? What questions do you have about it?

Use in lecture

If you have internet access and computer projection ability in your classroom, you can show images from the exhibit in class. For example, in an American Jewish history course, you might choose ritual artifacts from the exhibit to discuss ritual innovation in contemporary Jewish life. In a Women's History course, you might discuss different facets of feminism from the 1960s to the 1990s by using images such as:

- the photo from the founding conference of NOW (1966)
- the cover of the first edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1970)
- the premiere issue of *Ms.* magazine (1972)
- the photo from the first National Women's Conference (1977)
- the program from the Barnard conference on sexuality (1982)
- the cover of a young women's magazine, *HUES: Hear Us Emerging Sisters* (1992)
- photo from the UN Conference on Women held in Beijing (1995)
- PSA posters from Eve Ensler's V-Day (1999)

Primary document study: juxtapositions

Select two documents from the exhibit and have students analyze them in relation to one another. For example:

- Ezrat Nashim's Call for Change (Paula Hyman's document) and B'not Esh Jewish Feminist Spirituality Collective founding letter (Judith Plaskow's document), as an example of differences between liberal feminism and cultural feminism.
- Photograph from the NOW founding conference (1966) with Sonia Pressman Fuentes' statement and the photograph from the first B'not Esh Jewish Feminist Spirituality Collective retreat (1981) with Judith Plaskow's statement, as an example of the women's rights generation vs. the women's liberation generation.
- Cover of *Ms.* magazine (1972) with Letty Cottin Pogrebin's statement and of *HUES* magazine (1992) with Ophira Edut's statement, as an example of second wave and third wave cultural production.

- “The Digital Liberation of God” artwork by Helene Aylon and “Foremothers” artwork by Joan Snyder, as an example of artistic representations of Jewish feminist struggle.
- Ritual tambourine (Nina Beth Cardin artifact) and Miriam’s Cups (Tamara Cohen artifacts), as examples of Jewish ritual innovations, short-lived and mainstream.

Paper assignment #1: Be the Curator

Have students explore the “Themes” section of the exhibit. Then ask them to design their own theme, choosing artifacts from the exhibit and grouping them in new combinations. Ask them to write introductions to each section of their theme (following the model of the exhibit) as well as an explanation of why they chose this particular theme, its significance, and why they selected the objects they included in it.

Paper assignment #2: Be the Historian

The *Jewish Women and the Feminist Revolution* exhibit does not include a “master narrative” of the history of feminism and Jewish women. Rather, it provides a collection of artifacts that together tell a multi-faceted story about Jewish feminism from multiple perspectives. Ask students to explore the material in the exhibit (there are over 200 artifacts and 75 short essays) and write their own synthetic narrative about the history of Jewish women and feminism. Additional component: ask students to include a reflection on the process of writing a historical narrative from a collection of documents and artifacts. How did they approach this task? What was difficult about it? What was fun about it? What additional information did they need/want?

Paper assignment #3: Be an exhibit participant

After studying the history of either second wave feminism in general or Jewish feminism in particular, have students choose an artifact they would want to add to the exhibit to convey a particular aspect of feminist history (or Jewish feminist history) that they think is important and not sufficiently represented in the exhibit. Have them write the statement that would accompany the artifact, explaining its history and context and why it is a significant addition to the exhibit.

Research project on other ethnic/religious feminist communities

This exhibit conveys the history of a particular group’s contribution to the American women’s movement, and how feminism has impacted the group’s own particular community. Using this exhibit as a model, research and create a similar project for the history of another community’s feminist history (e.g. African American women, Latina women, Catholic women). This could include choosing representative documents and personal stories, creating a timeline, and/or creating themes. This could be a good group project.

If you have used *Jewish Women and the Feminist Revolution* in your course or have additional suggestions of ways to use it, please email us at feminismexhibit@jwa.org and we will include your ideas on this list (with attribution, of course). Thank you!