Sociology and Genealogy

Professor Eviatar Zerubavel

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Office Hours: Tu, Th 5:15-6:15

This course examines the phenomenon of genealogy from a sociological perspective. During the semester we will explore the notions of ancestry, descent, consanguinity, and co-descent, as well as the social communities we collectively construct in our minds based on those ties. Doing that will provide us with a new outlook on some basic sociological notions such as family, ethnicity, race, and nationhood.

The readings for the course incorporate ideas and research produced by sociologists, anthropologists, historians, literary critics, and legal scholars. They also, however, incorporate ideas and research produced by both evolutionary biologists and geneticists, as we shall tackle the delicate relations between culture and nature.

There is only one required book for the course: Ancestors and Relatives by Eviatar Zerubavel. It has been ordered through the Douglass Bookstore. All other required course readings are posted on the course website on sakai.rutgers.edu. Students are expected to read all the required material prior to the class for which it is assigned.

A midterm exam that will be given on February 28 will count for one third of the final course grade. A 15-page term paper due on the semester’s last class (April 26) will count for the other two thirds.

Class attendance is required. Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/ to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Poor class attendance will affect the grade.

Students are required to follow current Academic Integrity Policy as indicated in the website http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml. Violations include cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism. For further information on how to avoid plagiarism in your work, see http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/lib_instruct/instruct_document.shtml and take a 20-minute interactive-tutorial on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity at http://sccweb.scc-net.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/Intro.html.
1. INTRODUCTION

2. SOCIOLOGY AND GENEALOGY

January 19

January 24
Zerubavel, Ancestors and Relatives, pp. 11-13.

3. ANCESTRY AND DESCENT

January 26
Zerubavel, Ancestors and Relatives, pp. 15-23.

January 31
Zerubavel, Ancestors and Relatives, pp. 23-30.

4. CO-DESCENT

February 2
Zerubavel, Ancestors and Relatives, pp. 31-38.

February 7


**February 9**


**5. NATURE AND CULTURE**

**February 14**


**February 16**


**February 21**


**February 23**


February 28

**Midterm Examination**

6. **THE POLITICS OF ANCESTRY AND DESCENT**

March 1

Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives*, pp. 77-78.

March 6

Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives*, pp. 78-86.

March 8


March 20


March 22


7. **GENEALOGICAL ENGINEERING**


8. THE FUTURE OF GENEALOGY


April 17 Paper Presentations

April 19 Paper Presentations

April 24 Paper Presentations

April 26 9. CONCLUSION (and Term Paper Due)