

Introduction to Judaism

Fall 2012

Hebrew and Semitic Studies 211

Jewish Studies 211

Religious Studies 211

Instructor:

Professor Jordan D. Rosenblum

Office: Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies, 1340 Van Hise Hall

Office Hours: TuTh 9:00-10:00 am; and by appointment

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Course Hours:

Tuesday and Thursday 1:00-2:15 pm

Prerequisite(s):

This course assumes no prior knowledge of Hebrew and/or Judaism.

Course Description:

This course surveys the major practices, beliefs, and traditions of Judaism. Throughout, we will ask: what is Judaism? In an attempt to answer this deceptively simple question, students will examine how Jewish communities across history have shaped their practices and beliefs within their own specific historical circumstances. Further, students will explore how Jewish self-identity, textual traditions, and religious practices combine to define "Judaism." Students will interact with primary sources, including (but not limited to) the Hebrew Bible, the Talmud, and the Zohar.

Course Goals:

Through guided reading in the classroom and at home, students will learn how to read historical documents, in general. Students will further develop these analytical skills through several writing assignments, both in class and take home. Finally, students will understand the historical development and the literature of rabbinic Judaism.

Classroom Etiquette:

In both class and discussion sections, students are expected to arrive on time and should not engage in private conversations. While laptops are allowed in both class and discussion sections, students should use their computers for taking notes and not for surfing the web, sending e-mails, etc. There is no reason for a student to be talking or sending texts on his/her cellular phone during class time. This is distracting to both professor and students. *Students whose behavior in class is disruptive can expect a significant reduction in their final grade.*

Requirements and Grading:

(1) Regular class attendance of lectures and careful preparation of assigned texts are essential aspects of this course. Readings are to be completed for the class day upon which they appear on the syllabus. Please bring the assigned texts to both class and discussion section each week. In grading papers and tests, we will be particularly concerned that you are learning the material and concepts that are taught in class sessions. Prior learning of Jewish sources is not a substitute for doing the work required by this course.

(2) Attendance and participation in sections: 10%. Active involvement in discussion sections is highly important. Your teaching assistant will provide an additional syllabus with standards and guidelines.

(3) Regular Pop Quizzes: 10%. Throughout the semester, students should expect to receive occasional in-class pop quizzes. These short quizzes will assess students' knowledge of course readings. If a student is absent when a pop quiz is given, then his/her grade for that quiz will be a 0. At the end of the semester, the lowest quiz grade will be dropped, and the remaining grades will be averaged and will count towards 10% of each student's overall grade.

(a) Students have the opportunity to replace up to two (2) pop quizzes by attending a CJS lecture (information available online at: <http://jewishstudies.wisc.edu/lectures/>) and writing a one page response paper. Each response paper will replace one quiz grade. The structure of the response paper is as follows: one paragraph summarizing the content and thesis of the lecture and one paragraph of your own critical assessment of the lecture. Each paper must be submitted to your teaching assistant within one week of the lecture. *Late papers will not be accepted.*

(4) Two papers: 15% each; 30% total. Two short papers, each not more than **three** typed, double-spaced pages, will be assigned during the semester. They are due at the beginning of class on **October 4** and **November 27**. No e-mail submissions will be accepted.

(5) Midterm: 20%. There will be one midterm, given in-class on **October 18**. It may address any of the readings and class discussions up to that point.

(6) Take-Home Exam: 30%. The take-home exam, due by **3:00 PM** on **December 21**, will be cumulative and will address issues covered in the readings and class discussions.

(7) You may sign up for honors credit, which can be a very productive way of exploring your own interests in relation to the topics of the course. If you do so, it is your responsibility to talk with the professor to arrange your honors work in the first two weeks of the semester.

****Students are expected to bring relevant texts to every class****

Honor Code:

Students are expected to follow the University of Wisconsin-Madison Academic Honor Code. If students have any questions about this policy, please speak with your teaching assistant or the instructor. More information on plagiarism can be found at: http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html

Extension Policy:

Extensions on papers and exams **will not be granted**. For each 24-hour period that a paper or exam is late, the student's grade will be reduced by one full letter grade.

Required Books:

- (1) Michael L. Satlow, *Creating Judaism: History, Tradition, Practice* [Columbia University Press, 2006] (*CJ*)
- (2) Jeffrey Rubenstein, *Rabbinic Stories* [Paulist Press, 2002] (*RS*)
- (3) *The Jewish Study Bible* [Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds; Oxford University Press, 1999] (recommended) (*HB*)
- (4) Electronic Reserve: Learn@UW (*R*)

****All books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore****

Class Schedule:

September 4	<u>Introduction; Studying Religion and Defining Judaism</u> Reading: <i>CJ</i> , "Introduction," 1-21
September 6	<u>Contemporary Judaism: Overview</u> Reading: <i>CJ</i> , "Promised Lands," 22-68
September 11	<u>Jewish Identity in the United States</u> Reading: Jane Leavy, <i>Sandy Koufax: A Lefty's Legacy</i> , 167-194 (<i>R</i>); Tuchman and Levine, "'Safe Treyf': New York Jews and Chinese Food," 1-23 (<i>R</i>)
September 13	<u>Creating Judaism</u> Reading: <i>CJ</i> , "Creating Judaism," 69-95, Numbers 5:11-31 (<i>HB</i>)
September 18	NO CLASS: Rosh Hashanah
September 20	<u>The Hebrew Bible: A Brief Survey</u> Reading: Genesis 1-3, 17; Exodus 19-20; Leviticus 19; Deuteronomy 4-6, 34; Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1; Proverbs 8 (<i>HB</i>) <i>Paper One topics distributed</i>
September 25	<u>The Hebrew Bible: Purity and Dietary Laws</u> Reading: Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14 (<i>HB</i>); Mary Douglas, "The Abominations of Leviticus," 42-58 (<i>R</i>); Marvin Harris, "The Abominable Pig," 67-79 (<i>R</i>)

- September 27 The Second Temple Period
Reading: *CJ*, “Between Athens and Jerusalem,” 96-114;
Community Rule (*R*)
- October 2 The Rabbis
Reading: *CJ*, “The Rabbis,” 115-139
- October 4 Text Workshop: Midrash
Reading: *RS*, 186-189, 193-199; Warren Harvey, “The Pupil, the Harlot and the Fringe Benefits,” 259-264 (*R*)
** Paper One due in class **
- October 9 Text Workshop: Talmud
Reading: *RS*, 80-84, 114-118, 128-135
- October 11 Rabbinic Concepts: God and Creation
Reading: *CJ*, “Rabbinic Concepts,” 140-163
- October 16 Rabbinic Concepts: Torah, Revelation, Israel, and Redemption
Reading: *RS*, 104-113, 163-166, 169-175, 215-217, 229-248
- October 18 **MIDTERM** (in class)
- October 23 Mitzvot: Overview and Kashrut
Reading: *CJ*, “Mitzvot,” 164-186; Reread Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14 (*HB*); “Jewish Dietary Laws” (*R*)
- October 25 Mitzvot: Sacred Time and Prayer
Reading: Mishnah Shabbat 7 (*R*); Mishnah Pesachim 10 (*R*); Mishnah Sukkah 1-2 (*R*); Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1 (*R*); Mishnah Yoma 8:9 (*R*); Mishnah Berakhot (*R*)
- October 30 Mitzvot: Lifecycle
Reading: Ivan Marcus, “Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation,” 82-123 (*R*); Selections (*R*)
- November 1 Geonim
Reading: *CJ*, “The Rise of Reason,” 187-208
- November 6 Maimonides
Reading: *CJ*, “From Moses to Moses,” 209-228; Selections from Maimonides (*R*)
- November 8 Mysticism
Reading: *CJ*, “Seeing God,” 229-249; Selections from Zohar (*R*)
Paper Two topics distributed

- November 13 The Dawn of Modernity
Reading: *CJ*, “East and West,” 250-287
- November 15 The Rise of Jewish Denominationalism
Reading: Reform Responsum on Cosmetic surgery (R);
Conservative Responsum on Same Sex Marriage and Divorce (R);
Orthodox Responsum on Writing “G-d” (R)
- November 20 **NO CLASS: Society of Biblical Literature conference**
- November 22 **NO CLASS: Thanksgiving**
- November 27 Jewish Denominationalism: Women and Gender
Reading: Stuart Charmé, “The Political Transformation of Gender Traditions at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, 5-34 (R)
** Paper Two Due In Class **
- November 29 Jewish Denominationalism: Kashrut, “Outreach,” etc.
Reading: David Kraemer, “‘Bugs in the System’ (The Kashrut Wars),” 147-172 (R)
- December 4 The Holocaust
Reading: Saul Friedländer, “The Holocaust,” 412-444 (R)
- December 6 Israel
Reading: *The Jewish Political Tradition*, 295-309, 424-440, 501-509 (R)
- December 11 Jews and UW-Madison
Reading: Jonathan Pollack, “Jewish Problems: Eastern and Western Jewish Identities in Conflict At the University of Wisconsin, 1919-1941,” 161-180 (R)
- December 13 Conclusions and Review
Reading: *CJ*, “Whither Judaism?,” 287-296
- December 21 **TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE**
3:00 PM