

Introduction to Judaism

Fall 2015
Jewish Studies 211
Religious Studies 211

Instructor:

Professor Jordan D. Rosenblum
Office: 1404 Sterling Hall
Office Hours: Monday/Tuesday 10:00-11:00 am; and by appointment
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Course Hours:

Monday and Wednesday 2:30-3:45 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Through guided reading in the classroom and at home, students will learn how to read historical documents, in general.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. Students wishing to use laptops must: (1) sit in the first three rows of class; and (2) refrain from using them for anything besides taking class notes. **There is a one-strike policy for using laptops for anything else. Should any instructor observe you playing on the internet, etc., you will no longer be allowed to use your laptop in class for the remainder of the semester.** There is no reason for a student to be talking or sending texts on a 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 the 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 5** and **November 25**.

(5) Midterm: 20%. There will be one midterm, given in-class on **October 26**. 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 **7:05 PM** on **December 19**, 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 (CJ)*
- (2) Jeffrey Rubenstein, *Rabbinic Stories (RS)*
- (3) Electronic Reserve: Learn@UW (R)

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

Class Schedule:

September 2	<u>Introduction; Studying Religion and Defining Judaism</u> Reading: <i>CJ</i> , 1-21
September 7	No Class: Labor Day
September 9	<u>Contemporary Judaism: Overview</u> Reading: <i>CJ</i> , 22-68
September 14	No Class: Rosh Hashanah
September 16	<u>Jewish Identity in the United States</u> Reading: Leavy, <i>Sandy Koufax</i> , 167-194 (R); Tuchman and Levine, ““Safe Treyf,”” 1-23 (R)
September 21	<u>Creating Judaism</u> Reading: <i>CJ</i> , 69-95; Numbers 5:11-31 (R) <i>Paper One topics distributed</i>
September 23	No Class: Yom Kippur
September 28	<u>The Hebrew Bible: A Brief Survey</u> Reading: Genesis 1-3; Exodus 2:1-4:18; 7; 19-23; Deuteronomy 4-6; 12; Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1; Proverbs 8 (R)
September 30	<u>The Second Temple Period</u> Reading: <i>CJ</i> , 96-114; Community Rule (R)

- October 5 The Rabbis
 Reading: *CJ*, 115-139
 ** **Paper One due in class** **
- October 7 Text Workshop: Midrash
 Reading: *RS*, 186-189, 193-199; Harvey, “The Pupil, the Harlot, and the Fringe Benefits,” 259-264 (*R*)
- October 12 Text Workshop: Talmud
 Reading: *RS*, 80-84, 114-118, 128-135
- October 14 Rabbinic Concepts: God and Creation
 Reading: *CJ*, 140-163
- October 19 Rabbinic Concepts: Torah, Revelation, Israel, and Redemption
 Reading: *RS*, 104-113, 163-166, 169-175, 215-217, 229-248
- October 21 Mitzvot: Overview and Kashrut
 Reading: *CJ*, 164-186; Reread Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14 (*R*); “Jewish Dietary Laws” (*R*)
- October 26 **MIDTERM** (in class)
- October 28 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*)
- November 2 Mitzvot: Lifecycle
 Reading: Marcus, “Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation,” 82-123 (*R*); Selections (*R*)
- November 4 Geonim
 Reading: *CJ*, 187-208
Paper Two topics distributed
- November 9 Maimonides
 Reading: *CJ*, 209-228; Selections from Maimonides (*R*)
- November 11 Mysticism
 Reading: *CJ*, 229-249; Selections from Zohar (*R*)
- November 16 The Dawn of Modernity
 Reading: *CJ*, 250-287

- November 18 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 23 **NO CLASS: Work on Paper Two**
- November 25 **NO CLASS: Work on Paper Two**
**** Paper Two Due By End of Class ****
- November 30 Jewish Denominationalism: Women and Gender
 Reading: Charmé, “The Political Transformation of Gender
 Traditions at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, 5-34 (R)
- December 2 The Holocaust
 Reading: Friedländer, “The Holocaust,” 412-444 (R)
- December 7 Israel
 Reading: *The Jewish Political Tradition*, 295-309, 424-440, 501-
 509 (R)
- December 9 Jews and UW-Madison
 Reading: Pollack, “Jewish Problems: Eastern and Western Jewish
 Identities in Conflict At the University of Wisconsin, 1919-1941,”
 161-180 (R)
- December 14 Conclusions and Review
 Reading: *CJ*, 287-296
- December 19 **TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE**
7:05 PM