

Introduction to Judaism, Spring 2018  
MWF 11:45-12:35  
REL2600/JST2930  
Matherly Hall 107  
Prof. Rachel Gordan, Dept. of Religion  
Office: Anderson Hall, Room 130  
e-mail: rgordan@ufl.edu  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-6 pm, and by appointment

#### I. General Overview of the Course:

This course introduces students to the Jewish religious tradition in its various historical and contemporary manifestations. We will be asking: how has Judaism changed, over time? What divisions does it have, and how does it respond to the challenges of modernity? To answer these questions, our readings and discussion will cover core Jewish “stories” and their ongoing impact on the Jewish religious tradition, Jewish beliefs and practices, key literary classics of the Jewish tradition, varieties of classical and modern Jewish religious expression (for instance, philosophy and mysticism), and the contemporary Jewish movements. Although this is not a history class, we will proceed chronologically in order to appreciate the historical development of Judaism and the roles that memories of the Jewish past play in motivating Jewish religious practices and commitments.

In addition to learning more about Judaism and the Jewish people, you will also have the opportunity to broaden your academic horizons, learn valuable lessons regarding the study of religion in general and, it is hoped, improve your analytic and presentation skills. This course is open to everyone. There are no pre-requisites, and no knowledge of religious studies in general or Judaism in particular is presupposed.

#### Caveats and additional information

Syllabus: Depending on time constraints and other factors, the instructor may alter the syllabus during the semester. Students will be given notice of such alterations.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance>.

For grading policies, please see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter that must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

<http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu>

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio>

Students are invited to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open.

Readings: Three books are required for this course. There will be additional required readings, which will be available online or will be distributed as handouts. Students should complete readings before the discussion session for which they have been assigned.

Required Texts:

1) Eliezer Segal, *Introducing Judaism* (London: Routledge, 2009). ISBN 13: 978-0-415-44009-7; henceforth IJ. This book is a readable and user-friendly stand-alone introduction to the Jewish religious tradition. NOTE: an e-book version of this title is also available: see

<http://www.jbeonlinebooks.org/eBooks/judaism/>

(2) Judith Baskin and Kenneth Seeskin (eds.), *The Cambridge Guide to Jewish History, Culture, and Religion* (New York: Cambridge, 2010). ISBN 13: 978-0-521-68974-8; henceforth CG. This is a wide-ranging work with essays by a host of leading scholars. It covers Judaism as well as other important aspects of the Jewish experience.

3) David Biale (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of World Religions: Judaism*. New York: Norton: 2015). ISBN 13: 978-0-393-91258-6; henceforth: NAJ. This new source reader will provide you with direct access to a great many primary source documents of the study of Judaism and the Jewish experience. Please bring this to class every session.

5) For our Bible readings, you may want to use the Jewish Publication Society translation here: <https://jps.org/download-the-tanakh-1917-translation/>

Grading (how we will assess the progress and quality of your learning in this course):

1) Attendance and participation **20%**

2) Three in-class tests **30%** (There will be 4 tests; the lowest grade will be dropped.) Test questions will derive from our readings, lectures and class discussions.)

4) Midterm **20%**

5) Writing assignments 30% Three, short writing assignments will be handed out during the semester.

Extra credit: There are two lectures (Thursday, Feb 8<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 in the Judaica Suite, and Tuesday, March 27<sup>th</sup>) which you may attend and complete a one-paragraph summary)

Grading Scale:<sup>[SEP]</sup> final letter grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A 93-100	C+ 77-79
A- 90-92	C 73-76
B+ 87-89	C- 70-72
B 83-86	D 60-69
B- 80-82	E 0-59

For UF policies on grading, please see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

**Schedule:**

Introduction:

*Jews, Judaism* – what do they mean?

1) Monday, January 8: Introduction -- ***Judaism, Jewishness, and Jews***

2) Wednesday, January 10:

IJ 1-6

NAJ 45-56

3) Friday, January 12

IJ 11-20

CG 6-20

4) Monday, January 15:

NAJ: 59-64

5) Wednesday, January 17:

Judaica Suite

6) Friday, January 19:

NAJ: 72-96

\*\*Writing assignment #1

Due to [rgordan@ufl.edu](mailto:rgordan@ufl.edu) by 8 pm, Tuesday, Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup>

7) Monday, January 22:

CG: 20-33

Deuteronomy 34 (death of Moses)

8) Wednesday, January 24:

**Passover**

NAJ: 247-251

9) Friday, January 26

***Early Second Temple Period***

IJ: 21-36

CG: 34-38

10) Monday, January 29:

**The Later Second Temple Period: Independence, Sectarian Disputes, and Destruction**

CG: 38-57

11) Wednesday, January 31:

NAJ: 142-147

**Chanukah**

\*\*Writing assignment #2

Due to [rgordan@ufl.edu](mailto:rgordan@ufl.edu) by 8 pm, Tuesday, Jan 30<sup>th</sup>

12) Friday, February 2:

Rabbinic Judaism

IJ: 40-59

13) Monday, February 5:

Rabbinic Judaism

CG: 58-82

14) Wednesday, February 7

Talmud

CG 311-317

NAJ: 193-201

Thursday, February 8<sup>th</sup> 5 pm Ruby Namdar talk, Judaica Library

15) Friday, February 9:

Talmud

CG 317-323

CG 323-335

- 16) Monday, February 12:  
Test #1
- 16) Wednesday, February 14:  
Practice and Belief  
CG 288-310
- 17) Friday, February 16:  
Sabbath & holidays  
NAJ 214-221  
IJ 277-303
- 18) Monday, February 19:  
Synagogues & liturgy  
IJ: 245-256  
NAJ 89-96
- 19) Wednesday, February 21:  
Lifecycle & death  
IJ 295-303  
IJ 182-186
- 20) Friday, February 23:  
Marriage & Gender  
CG 357-369

#### Medieval Judaism

- 21) Monday, February 26:  
Judaism Under Islam and Christianity  
IJ 60-68
- 22) Wednesday, February 28:  
Jewish Philosophy  
NAJ 285-289  
NAJ 299-306  
NAJ 322-331
- 23) Friday, March 2 Midterm
- 25) Monday, March 12  
Jewish philosophy: Maimonides  
IJ 141-144  
NAJ 322-329
- 26) Wednesday, March 14  
Jewish Mysticism  
IJ 86-102
- 27) Friday, March 16: Test 2
- 28) Monday, March 19:  
Jewish learning  
IJ 197-222
- 29) Wednesday, March 21  
Rise of the Talmud  
CG 317-331
- 30) Friday, March 23:  
Modern Judaism  
CG 140-151  
NAJ 493-496
- 31) Monday, March 26

Jews and modernity  
CG 151-154  
NAJ 503-511  
IJ 105-117

Tuesday, March 27<sup>th</sup> John Connelly evening talk

- 32) Wednesday, March 28
  - Jews and modernity
  - CG 154-166
  - IJ 117-21
- 33) Friday, March 30: Passover – no class
- 34) Monday, April 2: Test 3
- 35) Wednesday, April 4:
  - CG 414-423
  - NAJ 438-442
- 36) Friday, April 6: end of Passover – no class
- 37) Monday, April 9
  - Mendelssohn and rise of Reform
  - Jewish movements
  - NAJ 512-519
  - NAJ 531-538
  - NAJ 543-544
- 38) Wednesday, April 11
  - From Reform to Conservative
  - NAJ 547-551
  - IJ 117-130
- 39) Friday, April 13
  - CG 210-232
- 40) Monday, April 16
  - Jewish thinkers
  - NAJ 576-584
  - \*\*Writing Assignment #3: due to [rgordan@ufl.edu](mailto:rgordan@ufl.edu) by Sunday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> at 8:00 pm
- 41) Wednesday, April 18
  - Newer American variants
  - CG 445-464
- 42) Friday, April 20
  - The Shoah
  - CG 233-257
- 43) Monday, April 23:
  - NAJ 634-662
- 44) Wednesday, April 25: Test 4