

Jewish Culture, Spring 2019  
MWF 12:50-1:40  
REL 2930/JST2930  
FLI 105

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Office Hours: Mondays, 5-6 pm, Wednesdays 2-4 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) Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays*. ISBN 0671873032
- 2) Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer, The Cambridge Guide to Jewish History, Culture, and Religion* ISBN 0805210229
- 3) Chaim Potok, *The Chosen*, Norton: 2015). ISBN 0449213447

Grading (how your progress will be assessed in this course):

- 1) Attendance and Participation 20% A very high participation grade (18-20) is earned by attending almost every class, making comments and asking questions that show that you have completed the readings and podcasts and listened to your classmates and professors. A good A&P (15-17) grade is earned by attending at least 75% of the class and participating every day, but not necessarily making it clear that you have done the readings and/or listened to others. An A&P grade of 14/20 (70%) is earned by attending fewer than 75% of the classes (no matter what kind of comments are made).
- 2) Three in-class tests 30% Test questions will derive from our readings, podcasts, and class discussions and mini-lectures.
- 4) Midterm 20%
- 5) Children's holiday book presentation 15% (12-18 min oral presentation to your classmates about one of the holiday/Shabbat books in the Judaica library that we will see during our visit to the Judaica library on 1/18.) You will receive more instructions on this assignment.
- 6) Pop Quizzes 15% These will most likely occur while we are reading *The Chosen*, as a way to keep us on top of the reading, but there may be 1 or 2 pop quizzes before then. Your lowest pop quiz grade will be dropped.

Grading Scale:<sup>[UF]</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:

### **Part 1: What is Judaism? What Do Jews Do?**

Holidays

- 1) Monday, January 7: What does it mean to be a Jew?  
<https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/is-judaism-a-religion-or-a-culture/>

Categories: community/culture, rituals/deed, belief/God

- 2) Wednesday, January 9: **What does it mean to be a Jew? Continued**  
<https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/is-judaism-a-religion-or-a-culture/>  
 Shabbat, *The Jewish Way*, Irving Greenberg, 127-132 CANVAS
- 3) Friday, January 11  
 Shabbat  
 Judaism Unbound, episode 100: The Third Era  
<http://www.judaismunbound.com/podcast/2018/1/4/judaism-unbound-episode-100-the-third-era-yitz-greenberg-2?rq=shabbat>
- 4) Monday, January 14:  
 Shabbat  
 Greenberg, 132-145  
 Rabbi David Kaiman visit
- 5) Wednesday, January 16:  
 Rosh Hashanah  
<https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/246524/unorthodox-episode-107-rabbi-shai-held-high-holiday-resolutions-5778>  
 Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur  
 Greenberg, Chapter Six
- 6) Friday, January 18:  
 Judaica library visit for Children's holiday books  
  
 Monday, January 21: Holiday (no class)
- 7) Wednesday, January 23  
 Sukkot  
 Greenberg, chapter 4
- 8) Friday, January 25  
 Shavuot  
 Greenberg, Chapter 3  
 Conversion and Shavuot: <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/262268/unorthodox-podcast-episode-136-shavuot-jewish-conversion-stories>
- 9) Monday, January 28:  
 Passover  
 Greenberg, Chapter 2
- 10) Wednesday, January 30:  
*Hanukkah:*  
 Greenberg, Chapter 8  
*And... Jews and Christmas:*  
<https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/220570/unorthodox-episode-71-jewish-christmas-chinese-food-movies-trees-hanukkah>

\*\*\*Thursday, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 4:30 pm *GI Jews* film screening at the Hippodrome (free)

11) Friday, February 1:

**Test #1** (*this test will include an extra credit question that can be answered if you attend GI Jews on Thursday, 1/31*)

## **Part II Life Cycle and the Prayer Life of a Jew**

### Meaningful religious milestones

12) Monday, February 4:

Jewish Weddings! *And... kids?*

<https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/244092/episode-103-jewish-wedding-anita-diamant-amichai-lau-lavie-jen-glantz>

What If I don't want kids? <http://jpmedia.co/dont-want-kids-episode/>

Canvas Kosofsky *The Book of Customs*, wedding reading

13) Wednesday, February 6

Circumcision

Canvas Kosofsky, *The Book of Customs* Circumcision reading

14) Friday, February 8:

Bar-Mitzvah

Canvas: Mark Oppenheimer, *Thirteen and A Day: The Bar and Bat Mitzvah Across America*, 3-20

16) Monday, February 11:

Death

Rabbi Michael Joseph visit

Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*, Chapter 14, p. 275-288

### A Jewish Relationship with God Through Prayer and Study

15) Wednesday, February 13:

Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*, 3-17

16) Friday, February 15:

Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*, 17-26

17) Monday, February 18:

Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*, Chapter two: Using the Liturgy, 27-38

18) Wednesday, February 20:

Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*, "The Shema," 122-134

19) Friday, Feb 22:

**Midterm**

20) Monday, February 25: Talmud (readings to be distributed)

- 21) Wednesday, February 27: Talmud (readings to be distributed)
- 22) Friday, March 1: Sex and the Talmud <http://jpmedia.co/mini-episode-hiding-under-the-bed/>

Spring break March 2-9

- 25) Monday, March 11  
The Jewish 1950s symposium
- 26) Wednesday, March 13  
Hammer, Chapter 5, The Creation of the Siddur

**Part III Different Kinds of Jews**

- 27) Friday, March 15  
Gastronomic Jews:  
<https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/264854/unorthodox-episode-140-molly-yeh-michael-twitty-simon-doonan>
- 28) Monday, March 18: Jews of No Religion, Episode #150  
<http://www.judaismunbound.com>
- 29) Wednesday, March 20: Episode 151: Judaism from a Transgender Perspective  
<http://www.judaismunbound.com>
- 30) Friday, March 22:  
**Test #2**

\*\*\*\*Questions for the Author: Please submit 2-4 questions for Samira Mehta (about the *Beyond Chrismukkah* reading) by Sunday, March 24, 4 pm.

- 31) Monday, March 25: Intermarried Jews  
Canvas: Mehta, *Beyond Chrismukkah*, 78-111
- 32) Wednesday, March 27: Intermarried Jews  
Canvas: Mehta, *Beyond Chrismukkah*, 78-111
- 33) Friday, March 29:  
*The Chosen*, chapter 1
- 34) Monday, April 1:  
*The Chosen*, through chapter 4  
Joy of Text 401b: Fact or Fiction  
<http://jpmedia.co/the-fact-or-fiction-episode/>
- 35) Wednesday, April 3:  
*The Chosen*, through chapter 5

- 36) Friday, April 5:  
*The Chosen*, through chapter 6 and Hasidic women:  
<https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/272619/unorthodox-episode-154-ruchie-freier-paula-eiselt-93queen>
- 37) Monday, April 8  
*The Chosen*, through chapter 10  
The idea of Jewish Modesty: <http://jpmedia.co/the-tznius-episode/>
- 38) Wednesday, April 10  
*The Chosen*, through chapter 11
- 39) Friday, April 12  
*The Chosen*, through chapter 12
- 40) Monday, April 15  
*The Chosen*, through chapter 15  
Desire and Judaism: <http://jpmedia.co/mini-text-episode-forbidden-fruit-kiddushin-81a-b/>
- 41) Wednesday, April 17  
*The Chosen*, finished
- 42) Friday, April 19  
Children's book presentations
- 43) Monday, April 22:  
Children's book presentations
- 44) Wednesday, April 24  
test #3