

Introduction to Judaism
University of Florida
Spring 2015
EUH 3931 section 03C5
MWF 7
Keene-Flint 105

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This course aims to provide students with a basic introduction to Judaism. The focus will be on religious beliefs and practices that over two thousand years (until the nineteenth century) were the defining elements of Jewish identity. Such rituals and practices were not uniform, since every Jewish community around the world developed interpretations and customs that suited their particular needs and demands. However, there was and is a core set of beliefs and practices to normative Judaism, and that is what this course will cover.

While we won't be able to cover every aspect of Judaism, the hope is that students will come away with 1) a fundamental knowledge and understanding of the core beliefs and rituals of what is known as normative Judaism, and the communities that lived by them; and 2) a working familiarity of those Jewish communities that have significantly challenged or "re-formed" those beliefs and practices, particularly in the modern world.

Required Books:

Norman Solomon, *A Very Short Introduction to Judaism*
Philip Alexander, *Textual Sources for the Study of Judaism*

These texts should be purchased as part of the course requirement.

There may also be articles that are part of the required reading assignments. I will provide necessary information about these as we go along.

Course Requirements:

Attendance is mandatory. You will be allowed to miss three class meetings without penalty; anything beyond that will affect your final evaluation and grade.

Please try to arrive to class on time.

Like any and all classes at the University, the assumption in this one is that you and those around you are here to learn. For this to occur, students must respect one another. Disagreement and debate are healthy, but please be civil during class discussions.

There will be four in-class exams. Each exam will count 25% towards your final grade. The exams will consist of identifications and essays.

These are the dates of the exams: January 30, February 27, March 27, April 22.

Grading Scale:

A = 100-92.5	C = 77.4-72.5
A- = 92.4-90	C- = 72.4-70
B+ = 89.9-87.5	D+ = 69.9-67.5
B = 87.4-82.5	D = 67.4-62.5
B- = 82.4-80	D- = 62.4-60
C+ = 79.9-77.5	Fail = Below 60

Relevant University Policies:

"Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office (www.dso.ufl.edu/drp/). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation."

Students with disabilities will of course be accommodated, so long as their requests are accompanied by an official letter from UF's Office of Disabilities.

"In writing papers, be certain to give proper credit whenever you use words, phrases, ideas, arguments, and conclusions drawn from someone else's work. Failure to give credit by quoting and/or footnoting is PLAGIARISM and is unacceptable." Please review the University's honesty policy in your student handbooks or on the University's webpage.

"Student records are confidential. UF views each student, not their parent(s), as the primary contact for all communication."

Lecture Schedule

Week 1: Introduction: What do we mean by Judaism?

Reading: Solomon, pp. 1-29

Week 2: Law (*Halacha*) and commandments (*mitzvot*)

Reading: Alexander, pp. 1-9; 11-16

Week 3: God and Israel

Carl Ehrlich, "Aspects of the Divine," in *Understanding Judaism* (pdf file)

Alexander, pp. 111-116 (Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith); also to be found in Solomon, p. 133

Week 4: Sacred Writings: Bible, Talmud, Commentaries

Reading: Alexander, pp. 57-68; 83-95

Week 5: Sacred and Profane: Time and Space

Reading: Solomon, pp. 52-81

Alexander, pp. 68-77

Week 6: Sacred and Profane: Food and Sexuality

Reading: Solomon, pp. 82-95

Mark Solomon, "Sexuality," in *An Oxford Guide to Modern Judaism* (pdf file)

Week 7: The Jewish life-cycle:

birth, bar/bat mitzvah, marriage and divorce, death, and the afterlife

George Robinson, "Birth to Death: A Jewish Life Cycle," in *Essential Judaism* (pdf file)

Week 8: Israel and Exile

Reading: Arnold Eisen, "Exile," from *Twentieth-Century Jewish Religious Thought* (*pdf*)

Week 9: Ethics and Philosophy

Alexander, pp. 16-26; 95-116

Week 10: Judaism and Others

Week 11: Messianism and mysticism (kabbalah)

Reading: Alexander, pp. 26-33; 117-132

Weeks 12-15: Modern Religious Movements: Reform, Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Hasidism

Reading : Solomon, pp. 96-132
Alexander, pp. 33-44, 132-155