

Introduction to Judaism, Fall 2017
Tues, 3-5, Thurs 4-5
REL2600/JST2930
Prof. Rachel Gordan, Dept. of Religion
Office: Anderson Hall, Room 130
e-mail: rgordan@ufl.edu
Office Hours: Thursdays: 2:30-4:00 and 5:00-6:00, and by appointment

I. General Overview of the Course:

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the Jewish religious tradition in its historical and contemporary manifestations. We will examine Judaism in its formative stages, beginning with its biblical roots. We will be asking how it was that Judaism was able to survive and flourish, notwithstanding violent challenges. We will find that the ability of Judaism to accept diversity within its ranks proved helpful, as did efforts by Jewish leaders to render the knowledge and practice of Judaism accessible. As we discover how Judaism came to be the religion we recognize today, we will be mindful of the many kinds of Judaisms that have existed throughout history, as well as the importance of other categories, including, nation, culture, civilization, and people, in Jewish self-understanding.

As we move through the semester, our goals include gaining knowledge of and familiarity with the following: 1) core Jewish “stories” and their ongoing impact on the Jewish religious tradition 2) literary texts of the Jewish tradition 3) Jewish beliefs and practices 4) varieties of Jewish religious expression, such as philosophy and mysticism, and the contemporary Jewish “denominations”

(Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and so forth)

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/) 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: Four 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.

4) Cynthia Baker, *Jew* (Rutgers, 2017).

5) For our Bible readings, please download a clean, usable, and copyright free/public domain copy of the 1917 JPS 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 writing assignments **30%**
- 3) Leading class discussion, twice during the semester **20%**
- 4) Midterm **10%**
- 5) Final **20%**

Course Requirements:

1. Attendance & Participation: Out of respect to the rest of the class, please be on time. We will normally begin 10 minutes after the hour. Students who maintain a perfect attendance record will receive extra credit. Staying focused on discussion, taking notes, and following-up on classmates’

comments, are excellent ways to improve this grade. Occasionally, class will begin with a very short writing exercise based on the reading for that day.

2. For the **in-class essays**, you will be given the question(s) in advance, and you may bring one notecard of notes with you to class for your essay. Your answers to these essays should be based on our readings, class lectures, and class discussion.

3. Leading class discussion: Twice during the semester, you will be responsible for leading part of the class discussions (we will assign sections in the beginning of the semester). Presentations should be about 15-20 minutes. These assignments will be graded based on your ability to pick out major themes/ideas in the reading and present them clearly to your classmates. Please feel free to be in touch with Professor Gordan about the content of your presentation as you plan it. On the day you lead discussion, submit one page of your notes/major points to Professor Gordan (this page may be in bullet points or in paragraphs. You may email it to rgordan@ufl.edu before class or bring it with you to class).

Schedule:

Introduction: *Jews, Judaism* – what do they mean?

1) Tuesday August 22nd ***Judaism, Jewishness, and Jews***

Reading: Mark Oppenheimer, “Reclaiming Jew,” *New York Times*, April 22, 2017

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/22/opinion/reclaiming-jew.html?_r=0

“A Portrait of Jewish Americans”:

<http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>

2) Thursday August 24th ***Who Counts As a Jew?***

CANVAS Reading: “Will The Real Jews Please Stand Up?” Aaron Hahn Tapper

Continue with Pew Report

<http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>

Unit 1: *Story, Scripture and Tradition, from the Bible to the Talmud*

3) Tuesday August 29th

Library session. Meet in Price Judaica Library

From Adam to Moses: Patriarchs and the Exodus

a. IJ: 11-20

b. CG: 6-20

4) Thursday August 31st

From Adam to Moses: Patriarchs and the Exodus -- continued

a. NAJ: 59-64

b. NAJ: 72-96

5) Tuesday, September 5th

From Moses to Jeremiah: Judges, Kings, and Prophets

a. CG: 20-33

b. Hebrew Bible: Deuteronomy 34 (death of Moses); Joshua 6

Exile and Restoration: The Early Second Temple Period

a. IJ: 21-39

b. CG: 34-38

6) Thursday, September 7th 4-5

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

a. CG: 38-57

b. NAJ: 159-190

7) Tuesday, September 12th: 3-5

The Emergence of Rabbinic Judaism

a. IJ: 40-59

b. CG: 58-62

c. NAJ: 193-213

Rabbinic Judaism and the Oral Torah: Mishnah, Midrash, Talmud

a. CG: 63-84

b. NAJ: 252-263

c. CG: 311-17 (on Origins of the Talmud)

Summary: Israel's Sacred History/Story

a. IJ: 163-71

8) Thursday, September 14th 4-5

In-class writing #1

9) Tuesday, September 19th, 3-5

Unit 2: Practice and Belief (in Scripture and Tradition)

Jewish Daily Worship

a. IJ: 245-256 (ch. 16)

b. NAJ: 237-251 (synagogue)

Dietary Laws; Passover

a. IJ: 257-276 (ch. 17); 239-244 (ch. 15)

b. Hebrew Bible: Deuteronomy 14

Thursday, September 21st 4-5, no class Rosh Hashanah

10) Tuesday, September 26th 3-5

Sabbaths and Festivals (and Calendar)

a. IJ: 277-294 (ch. 18)

b. Biblical Texts: NAJ 88 (esp. Exod. 20.8-11) and 91-93 (Lev. 23); also Exodus 31:12-18

c. Rabbinic Traditions: NAJ: 214-221

11) Thursday, September 28th, 4-5

Aggadah

a. Creation: NAJ 74-76; 221-226

b. Abraham: NAJ 76-78; 226-231

Life Cycle: Birth and Death

a. IJ: 295-306 (ch. 19)

b. IJ: 182-187 (ch. 11)

Marriage and Gender

a. CG: 357-369 (ch. 14)

b. NAJ: 234-237 (rabbinic traditions concerning women)

12) Tuesday, October 3rd 3-5

In-class writing assignment #2

Unit 3 Medieval Judaism

Judaism under Islam and Christianity

a. IJ: 60-69 (ch. 4)

b. NAJ: 285-298

Jewish Philosophy 2: Maimonides

a. IJ: 141-44

b. NAJ: 322-341

Thursday October 5th 4-5 Sukkot – no class

13) Tuesday, October 10th

Jewish Mysticism 1: Origins and Transmission

a. IJ: 86-105 (ch. 6)

b. CG: 399-413

c. NAJ: 420-445

Study of Torah and Talmud

a. IJ: 197-225 (ch. 13)

Thursday October 12th Shemini Atzeret no class

14) Tuesday October 17th 3-5

Unit 4: Modern Judaism: Tradition and Change

Overview: CG Chapters 6-8 (skim the history, pay more attention to religious developments) NAJ: 493-498

From Ghettos to Emancipation

a. IJ: 106-117 (ch. 7, part 1)

b. CG: 151-54 (selection from ch. 6, on printing press)

c. NAJ: 503-511 (skim)

15) Thursday, October 19th 4-5

Luria, Ba'al Shem Tov and Hasidism

a. CG: 157-62 (selection from ch. 6)

b. CG: 414-423

The rise of Reform Judaism

a. NAJ: 512-519 (Mendelssohn; Science of Judaism)

b. NJ: 531-537 (Early Reform);

Neo-Orthodoxy and Positive Historical (Conservative) Judaism

a. IJ: 117-21

b. NAJ: 537-550

16) Tuesday, October 24th 3-5

Midterm

17) Thursday, October 26th 4-5

The 3 "Main" Movements in America

a. IJ: 122-30; CG: 210-232 (on Jews in America)

b. Halakhah in focus: the Sabbath; NAJ 550-558

Newer (American) Variants: Reconstructionist, Renewal, Nondenominational

a. CG: 445-464 (ch. 18)

18) Tuesday, October 31st 3-5

Unit 5: Contemporary Judaism 1: Catastrophe, Rebirth, Aftermath

The Shoah

a. CG: 233-57 (ch.9)

b. NAJ: 634-662

19) Thurs, Nov 2 4-5

Attend Professor Cynthia Baker's talk

20) Tues Nov 7th 3-5

The Emergence of Modern Jewish Nationalism (Zionism)

a. IJ: 172-78

b. NAJ: 663-684

The State of Israel

a. CG: 258-287 (ch. 10)

b. CG: 486-493 (ch. 20)

21) Thursday, November 9

In-class writing #3

22) Tues Nov 14th 3-5

Contemporary Judaism/Boundaries, Challenges

Cynthia Baker, *Jew*, Introduction, p 1-15

Cynthia Baker, *Jew*, Chapter one

23) Thursday Nov 16th

Mitchell Hart, "Jews and Race"

Tuesday Nov 21st American Academy of Religion no class

Thursday Nov 23rd Thanksgiving

24) Tuesday Nov 28th 3-5

Cynthia Baker, *Jew*, Chapter Two

25) Thursday Nov 30th 4-5

Cynthia Baker, *Jew*, Chapter Three

26) Tuesday, Dec 5th 3-5

Finals review

Take-home final due to rgordan@ufl.edu by **Monday, December 11, 5 pm.**