

REL 244: Judaism

DePauw University
Fall 2008
MWF 12:30-1:30
Asbury Hall 117

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Office hours: Tues 2-4pm; Thurs 10:30-noon

Course Description

This course is a basic introduction to Jewish history, beliefs, practices, and institutions from their roots in the biblical, second Temple, and rabbinic periods up through their appearance and development in the contemporary world. The course presumes no prior knowledge of Judaism nor does it assume nor seek to instill any commitment to practice or belief on the student's part. Open-minded observation, participation, and reflection on some Jewish practices is expected.

Together we will look for continuity and discontinuity in Judaism from epoch to epoch as well as diversity within Judaism so that the student can gain an appreciation of Judaism's complex evolution throughout the centuries. The sacred texts of Judaism will be studied in class whenever possible to anchor our understanding of the unfolding beliefs and practices in the literary sources of the tradition.

Required Texts

Scheindlin, Raymond P. A Short History of the Jewish People. 1998.
Strassfeld, Michael. A Book of Life: Embracing Judaism as a Spiritual Practice. 2002.
Holtz, Barry. Back to the Sources. 1984.
Potok, Chaim. The Chosen.

EITHER The Jewish Study Bible. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, 2004. (preferred)
OR Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures. NJPS Translation.

Recommended

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. The Sabbath, 1951.
Neusner, Jacob and Alan Avery-Peck. The Blackwell Companion to Judaism. (print reserves)

Statement on Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty constitute serious offenses that undermine your education and violate DePauw policy on academic integrity and may result in penalties ranging from a lowered grade to course failure or expulsion. All work submitted in this class must be your own, and must be completed specifically for this class. You may not turn in work previously written for another class. Any use of another's work without proper citation constitutes plagiarism and will be dealt with severely. The policy and discussion of each student's obligations and rights are in the Student Handbook.

Proper citation of secondary sources should follow one of the standard formats (MLA, Chicago, etc.) and include all of the following: author, title, publisher, place, date of publication, and page number.

Biblical texts should be cited as follows within the body of the text: (Book Chapter: Verse, translation*). E.g. "When God began to create" (Gen 1:1, NJPS). If you have further questions regarding plagiarism or citation styles ask me or consult a writing handbook.

****translation only required when quoting directly from the text***

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Course Requirements: All assignments must be completed to pass the course.

1. **Attendance and Participation:** Regular class attendance is expected. More than two unexcused absences will result in a lower grade. Students are expected to complete assigned readings prior to each class, to be prepared to discuss primary sources, and to contribute to class discussions with questions, comments, and observations.
Chevruta Study: A part of your participation grade will consist of weekly forum posts based on your Chevruta study. Each week you will be expected to meet with your partner for at least 1 hour of reading according to the study method provided by me during the first week of class. As a pair you should post 3-5 questions that arose from the text and a discussion of one of those questions.
2. **Short Reflection Papers:** The following events are taking place this fall. You are strongly encouraged to attend as many of these as possible. Written reflections are required for *at least 3* of them (a 4th would count as extra credit). Such first hand experiences of participant/observation of Jewish practices and community are an important part of the study of Judaism. While I assure you that I have no underlying goal or expectation that you become any more or less religious, I strongly encourage you to make an effort to understand the tradition both from an insider's and an outsider's perspective. You are not expected to agree with the ideas or practices we discuss, nor are you required to actively participate in any of the rituals we experience. You are, however, expected to be an active observer and try to understand how those practices serve as a part of the religious and cultural traditions of Judaism.

- High Holiday Service – Neilah at end of Yom Kippur (October 9th time TBA) dinner provided
If you cannot attend this service, try to attend one of the others indicated on syllabus.
- Shabbat Service – Friday Nov 7th time TBA (Anderson Street Hall Sanctuary) dinner provided
If you cannot attend on this date, see me about the dates of other services.
- Comedy's Oddcouple – Rabbi, Palestinian Christian, Muslim stand-up routines (November 1st)
reflect on the way Jews and Judaism are presented and critiqued
- Tehora/Purity – film to be shown in class Monday Nov 24th.

Please make every effort to attend these events. If you are unable to attend you must inform me at least one week before the event so that we can work out an appropriate accommodation. You are invited to propose an alternative event (such as a visit to a synagogue in Indy or Bloomington, or in your home town during break) as long as you clear it with me ahead of time. Such proposals should be for events that take place during the semester.

A short written reflection (ca. 1000 words) on your experience of each event should be submitted on moodle no later than *one week after the event*.

3. **In Class Examination.** A study guide will be provided one week ahead.
4. **Paper #1: Text Interpretation:** Write a 5-6 page, double-spaced, *d'var Torah* on the text describing the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai found in Exodus 19-20. A *d'var Torah* (a word of Torah) is a short commentary or teaching explaining the meaning and message of the passage. Your commentary must incorporate comments from the haftarah, midrash, targum, Talmud, Rashi, and the Zohar (you may mention other sources as well). More detailed instructions will be provided in the coming weeks.

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5. **Holiday Presentation:** Students will work in groups to present the textual and historical origins, structure, rituals, customs, foods, practices, and meanings and significance of one of Judaism's annual festivals. Each group will be responsible for a 20-25 minute class presentation, which must include a 5 minute class activity to experience some element of the festival. Each member of the group must lead part of the presentation. The group will receive a single grade for the presentation. Possible topics include: Omer/Shavuot, Tisha b'Av, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot/Simchat Torah, Hanukkah, and Purim.

Each group must submit a 2 page outline, plus a complete bibliography *one week before* the presentation. I encourage you to meet with me as a group before you present.

Key Points for Making a Good Presentation (For additional assistance contact the S center).

1. Conduct good research. Below is a good list of print resources to draw on. Do not rely primarily on websites, as they are significantly less reliable. Some comparison of websites that represent different branches or types of Judaism can be useful *after* you have done the basic research from reliable sources.

Some General Resources for Presentation Topics (Available on Reserve in ROW).

Naomi Black, *Celebration: The Book of Jewish Festivals*.

Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays*.

Barbara Rush, *The Jewish Year: Celebrating the Holidays*.

Michael Strassfeld, *The Jewish Holidays: A Guide and Commentary*.

Arthur Waskow, *Seasons of Our Joy: A Modern Guide to the Jewish Holidays*.

2. Select information wisely. You will have only 20-25 min. as a group. Each topic easily merits a presentation at least two to three times that length. The assignment, therefore, requires that you make choices in the material you present. Choose that information that you think most important. Omit overly detailed and technical information. Develop an organizational structure that allows you to link your comments together in a coherent and meaningful way.
2. Know your audience. Do not dwell on those matters with which the audience is likely to be familiar; do not skip over matters with which the audience is likely to be unfamiliar. Explain terms where necessary.
3. Speak clearly. The effectiveness of any presentation relies not only on what you say, but also how you say it.
4. Avoid colloquialisms. While comments made in an oral presentation need not be as polished as a written paper, they should reflect the serious work that goes on in the classroom. Common language used among one's peers may not be appropriate.
5. Engage the class. The more you can do to involve the class in the presentation and activity the better the presentation will be for everyone involved. Think about how you can best convey the history and practice of this holiday to your classmates. This may very well mean not using Powerpoint.

6. **Paper #2: Research Paper.** This paper invites you to explore in greater depth some aspect of contemporary Jewish life and practice. I have suggested some possible topics, but you are welcome to construct your own. Regardless of topic, your paper should be narrowly conceived. I am more interested in depth than breadth.

- The development and modern practice of one of Judaism's traditions (*kashrut*, circumcision, purity/*niddah/mikveh*, baby naming, prayer/meditation, *tefillin*).
- Judaism's traditions and approaches to one of the following: women, homosexuality, education, charity, justice, war/peace, economics, messianism/eschatology, interfaith marriage, interfaith dialogue, environmental sustainability, etc.
- Judaism's modern movements: select one of the movements of modern Judaism (Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, or Reform); examine its origins and development, central tenets (i.e., theology and rituals), institutions, and the difficulties or challenges facing this segment of the Jewish community.

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- The State of Israel: examine the role of Israel/Zionism in Judaism, the role of Judaism in Israel, or tension between secular and religious Jews in Israel.
- Biography of an influential Jewish writer, scholar, or leader and the influence he or she had on Jewish life or thought (e.g. Martin Buber, Maimonides, Rabbi Akiva, Theodor Herzl, Golda Meir, Abraham Joshua Heschel, the Baal Shem Tov, Judith Plaskow, Jesus of Nazareth, Ezra, Shabbetai Tsvi, Adam Sandler, Anne Frank, etc.)

I strongly encourage you to speak with me while you are formulating the direction of your paper.

Monday November 3rd: Submit on moodle a one-page, single spaced proposal, indicating your topic and the issues you intend to discuss. Include a one-page bibliography as well.

Friday December 12 5pm: Submit a 10-12 page paper based upon your research.

The text should be double spaced (no title page), 12 pt font, 1 in. margins, and include full citations of all references used.

7. **Final Examination:** Thursday December 18, 8:30-11:30am.

Grade Breakdown

Assignment	Percentage of Final Grade	Final Grade Breakdown	
Attendance and Participation	15%	A	93-100
Reflection Papers	10%	A-	90-92.99
Midterm exam	15%	B+	87-89.99
Holiday presentation	15%	B	83-86.99
Text Interpretation paper	15%	B-	80-82.99
Research Paper	15%	C+	77-79.99
Final exam	15%	C	73-76.99

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Course Outline**

Week 1	
Wed	
What is Judaism? What does it mean to be Jewish? How to approach the study of Judaism?	
Fri	
Origins: <i>Gen 1-11</i>	Holtz, 11-29.
Week 2	
Mon	
Origins: <i>Gen 12; 15-18; 22; 28; 32; 37; 50</i>	Scheidlin, 1-23.
Wed	
Exodus and Sinai: <i>Ex 1-15; 19-20</i>	Holtz, 31-81.
Fri	
Tablets of Stone: <i>Ex 21-24; Deut 4-5; Ex 31:18-34:35</i> Law: <i>Lev 19; Deut 21; 2 Kg 22-23.</i> Land: <i>Num 33:50-56; Deut 7:1-11</i>	Holtz, 83-104.
Week 3	
Mon	
Monarchy: <i>Deut 17-20; 2 Sam 5-7; 2 Kg 17-18</i> Prophecy: <i>Deut 13:1-6; 18:1-22; Isa 1</i> Priesthood and Temple: <i>Lev 8; 28; 1 Kg 8</i> <i>2 Kings 22-23</i>	
Wed	
Exile and Return <i>2 Kg 24-25; Lam 1-2; Isa 40</i> <i>Ps 89; 100; 79; 95</i> <i>Ezekiel 1, 37, 40</i>	Scheidlin, 25-49. Holtz, 105-128.
Fri	
Persian Period and Hellenism <i>Ezra 1, 3, 7, 9-10; Isaiah 45, 66; Zech 3-6</i> Torah: <i>Neh 8-9, Ps 19, Ps 119:85-120</i> <i>Dan 7, 11-12</i>	
Week 4	
Mon	
Second Temple Sectarianism Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes Josephus "On Jewish Sects" Dead Sea Scrolls - IQS Jesus of Nazareth - <i>Gospel of Matthew</i>	Cohen, "Sectarian and Normative" Vermes, "Jesus and Charismatic Judaism"
Wed	
In Class Exam	

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Fri	
Emergence of Rabbinic Judaism <i>Gen 2:1-3; Ex 16:21-30; 31:12-17</i> <i>Mishnah Avot</i> <i>Mishnah Shabbat</i> R. Akiva and R. Ishmael	Scheindlin, 51-69. Holtz, 129-134.
Week 5	
Mon	
Midrash Targum Creation Stories - <i>Genesis Rabbah</i> <i>Leviticus Rabbah on 2:1</i> <i>Mekhilta de R. Ishmael on Ex 16</i>	Holtz, 177-211.
Wed	
Talmud – Rabbinic Thought <i>b. Baba Metzia 59a-b; b. Menachot 29b; b. Shabbat 30b-31a; b. Gittin 55b-56b; b. Berakhot 61b.</i>	Scheindlin 71-95. Holtz, 135-175.
Fri	
Canonization and Codification Law and Practice Medieval codes Torah Commentary: Rashi, Maimonides, Ibn Ezra	Scheindlin, 97-121. Holtz, 213-259.
Week 6	
Mon	
Mysticism/Kabbalah <i>Zohar (Ma'aseh Breishit, Ma'aseh Merkavah, Kabbalah)</i>	Scheindlin, 123-147. Holtz, 305-359.
Tuesday	
Rosh Hashanah – New Year 5769	
Monday Evening Tuesday Morning	
Wed	
Nature Park	
Hasidism Baal Shem Tov	Scheindlin, 149-171. Holtz, 361-401.
Fri	
Haskala (enlightenment) Modern Jewish Movements Reform and Orthodoxy Abraham Geiger and Samson Raphael Hirsch	Scheindlin, 173-197. Kaplan, "Reform Judaism." (Blackwell) Brown "Orthodox Judaism." (Blackwell)
Paper #1 due 5 pm.	
Week 7	
Mon	
Conservative and Reconstructionist Solomon Schechter and Mordecai Kaplan	Gordis, "Conservative Judaism" (Blackwell) "Who is a Reconstructionist Jew" (moodle)
Wed	
Piety and the Daily Life of Judaism Food: <i>Kashrut (Gen 1:29-30, 9:2-6; Lev 17; Deut 12:20; Isa 11:6; Lev 11; Deut 14)</i>	Strassfeld, Introduction. Strassfeld, 3-102.

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<p>Thursday Yom Kippur – Day of Atonement</p>	
<p>Kol Nidre - Wednesday Evening Shacharit - Thursday Morning Neilah and Break Fast - Thursday Evening</p>	
Fri	
Sabbath	Strassfeld, 103-134. Heschel, <i>The Sabbath</i>
Week 8	
Mon	
Three Paths: Study Torah	Strassfeld, 139-175. Neusner, "Doctrine of Torah." (Blackwell)
Wed	
Three Paths: Prayer Siddur – <i>Shema and its blessings</i> <i>Deut 6:4-9; Ps 145; 1 Kg 8; Dan 6:11; Isa 6:3</i> <i>Tefillin (Ex 13:1-10, 11-16; Deut 6:4-9, 11:13-21)</i> <i>Amidah, Kaddish</i>	Strassfeld, 176-205; 487-504. Holtz, 403-429. Avery-Peck, "Doctrine of God." (Blackwell)
Fri	
Three Paths: Loving-Kindness Ethics <i>Sex: Niddah (Lev 12, 15; Ezek 18:6; 26:17; Gen 38; Deut 22; Lev 18; 20:19).</i> Homosexuality	Strassfeld, 206-223. Dorff, "Ethics of Judaism." (Blackwell)
Week 9 Fall Break	
Week 10	
Mon	
Chaim Potok, <i>The Chosen</i> , Chapters 1-7.	
Wed	
Chaim Potok, <i>The Chosen</i> , Chapters 8-18.	
Fri	
Israel: A Chosen People / A Persecuted People	Scheindlin, 199-215. Neusner, "Doctrine of Israel." (Blackwell)
Week 11	
Mon	
Paper #2 proposal due 5 pm.	
Zionism Land	Scheindlin, 217-259. Strassfeld, 467-486.
Wed	
Festival Calendars - <i>Lev 23; Num 28-29; Deut 16:1-17</i> Pesach - <i>Ex 1-15, Song of Songs</i>	Strassfeld, 227-243.
Fri	
Presentations Omer/Shavuot – <i>Ruth</i>	Strassfeld, 244-255.
Week 12	
Mon	
Presentations Sukkot/Simchat Torah - <i>Ecclesiastes (Qohelet)</i>	Strassfeld, 274-283.

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Wed	
Presentations Rosh Hashanah - <i>Gen 21-22; 1 Sam 1-2</i>	Strassfeld, 260-264.
Fri	
Presentations Yom Kippur - <i>Lev 16, Isa 58, Jonah</i>	Strassfeld, 265-273.
Week 13	
Mon	
Presentations Hanukkah - <i>1 Maccabees</i>	Strassfeld, 284-289.
Wed	
Presentations Purim - <i>Esther</i>	Strassfeld, 293-297.
Fri	
Presentations Tisha b'Av - <i>Lamentations (Eichah)</i>	Strassfeld, 256-259.
Week 14	
Mon	
Film - Tehora/Purity	
Wed, Fri	
Thanksgiving Break	
Week 15	
Mon	
Women	Baskin, "Women in Contemporary Judaism." (Blackwell)
Wed	
Life Cycle Events	
Brit Milah - Circumcision - <i>Gen 17; Ex 13:11-16</i>	Strassfeld, 304-323; 337-344
Fri	
Bar/Bat Mitzvah Conversion - <i>Ruth 1</i>	Strassfeld, 324-336; 345-356.
Week 16	
Mon	
Marriage and Divorce <i>Gen 2:22-24; Deut 24:1-4; Hos 2:21-22;</i> Intermarriage	Strassfeld, 357-424
Wed	
Aging, Death and Mourning <i>Kaddish, Ps 23</i>	Strassfeld, 425-463
Fri	
Paper #2 due 5pm	
Conclusions	
Thurs December 18	
Final Exam 8:30-11:30am	