

RELS-234 Judaism: An Introduction

Fall 2014 / Tues and Thurs 3:00-4:15 pm / Olin 201

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Office Hours in Olin 208: Tues and Thurs 12-1 and by appointment

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Description of Course

Should we say “Judaism” or “JudaismS”? During the more than 2,000 years of Jewish history, Judaism has been defined as a religion, a civilization, a nationality, an ethnicity, and a culture. In order to sort through all the aspects that make up these collective Judaisms, this course will be divided into three parts:

History – we will begin with the biblical roots of Judaism in the Ancient Near East, then trace the development of Judaism into the Modern period within the two major Jewish communities of the US and Israel. This overview of historical events and movements will give us the context for understanding changing beliefs and practices.

Beliefs - while Judaism is not a dogmatic religion with a defined creed of faith, we will still endeavor to delineate some major tenets of belief by examining foundational Jewish texts such as the Hebrew Bible and Talmud.

Practices – this part will be devoted to exploring the core practices of Jewish life and attempting to understand what, if anything, is axiomatic to all Judaism. Moreover, stress will be placed on those aspects, such as holidays and life cycle events, which are pertinent to understanding the Jewish communities that students might encounter in their lives.

Required Texts

- Cohn-Sherbok, Dan. *Judaism: History, Belief and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Raphael, Marc Lee. *Judaism in America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.
- Bible: any translation is fine. In fact, the more translations, the better!
- Other course readings will be available in pdf form and I will email them to you.

Assignments and Grading

Papers (2)	30% (15% each)
Reflections (3)	15% (5% each)
Show and Tell	10%
Class participation/attendance	15%
Midterm Exam	10%
Final Exam	20%

1. Attendance, Participation and Reading – all three are key components to having a valuable learning experience. I will be taking attendance at every class session, and participation grades will reflect attendance records. Missing two class meetings may result in the issuance of an academic warning slip. MORE THAN FOUR UNEXCUSED ABSENCES WILL RESULT IN A ZERO FOR THE PARTICIPATION PORTION OF THE GRADE. Also both exams will reflect material dealt with in class.

Class discussion will take up a significant portion of each class session. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU BRING YOUR PRIMARY SOURCES WITH YOU TO EVERY CLASS. Participation is also dependent on you doing the assigned reading before class. See the schedule below for reading assignments. Reading assignments should be completed by the corresponding class date. Frequently, I will give you specific questions to consider while you read.

2. Exams – A take home Midterm Exam will cover material from both class and readings. A cumulative Final Exam will be given during the exam period and will cover material from both class and readings from the entire course (however, more focus will be placed on the second half of the course). The purpose of these exams is to ensure that you complete all the readings and take notes in class as well as to give you the opportunity to synthesize and reflect on all of the material that we have covered throughout the semester.

3. Papers - You will be responsible for writing two short papers during the semester, 5-7 pages in length. Detailed assignments will be handed out in class two weeks before the due date for each paper.

1. Primary source analysis on Jewish short stories (due October 30th)
2. Research paper on topic of your choosing (due December 4th)

4. Show and Tell – You are each responsible for finding ONE relevant news article related to one class topic and presenting it to the class (we will choose topics at the beginning of the semester). While some of the topics we will be discussing might seem “antiquated” and “irrelevant” in the modern context, you will see that they are very much still a part of our contemporary conversations.

5. Reflections – You will be responsible for three short writing assignments that are designed to encourage you to reflect on different aspects of the course:

- 1) Reflect on reading Prof. Raphael’s book in preparation for his visit to our class. This will take the form of framing discussion questions for his visit. **DUE MONDAY, SEPT 15 via email.**
- 2) Reflect on watching a movie that deals with Jewish life or history. You will be asked to evaluate the historical accuracy of the film’s depictions. **DUE MONDAY, SEPT 29 via email**
- 3) Reflect on a Jewish experience from this semester. This can take many different forms such as going to a Hillel event on campus, visiting a synagogue, or touring the Jewish Museum in Philadelphia. **DUE THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20 via email**

Course Schedule

Class	Date	Topic	Primary Source Reading	Secondary Source Reading
An Overview of the History of Jews and Judaism				
1	Tues, August 26	Setting the Stage – Modernity vs. Tradition?		Raphael, 1-12
2	Thurs, August 28	Where does “tradition” come from? Part 1: Covenant and Revelation from Ancient Israel to the Second Temple Period	In Bible – Genesis 17; Exodus 19-20; 2 Samuel 7; Deuteronomy 6-7	Raphael, 13-21 (skip “Jewish Law”) Lawrence Schiffman, <i>From Text to Tradition</i> , 17-27 (pdf)
3	Tues, September 2	Where does “tradition” come from? Part 2: The Rise of the Rabbis and Rabbinic Literature	Sources from the Mishnah and Talmud (in Cohn-Sherbok, 118, 119, 126, 131)	Raphael, 19-20 (“Jewish Law”) Cohn-Sherbok, 115-117, 123-124, 129-131, 133-135
4	Thurs, September 4	American Judaism 1: Reform Judaism	Sources in Cohn-Sherbok: -Israel Jacobson (263) -Isaac Mayer Wise (266) -Pittsburgh Platform (267) - Abraham Geiger (271)	Raphael, 39-56, 64-67 (top), 150-160 Cohn-Sherbok, 259-262, 269-271
5	Tues, September 9	American Judaism 3: Conservative and Reconstructionist Judaism	Sources in Cohn-Sherbok: - Zacharias Frankel (266) - Mordechai Kaplan (334) Selections from “Emet v’Emnuah” (pdf)	Raphael, 60-64, 68-69, 140-144, 165-169
6	Thurs, September 11	American Judaism 2: Modern Orthodoxy	Cohn-Sherbok: - Orthodox Critique (264) - Samson Raphael Hirsch (264, 265)	Raphael, 56-60, 67-68, 160-165
7	Tues, September 16	Judaism in America: A Discussion with the author, Prof. Raphael	Prepare Questions for discussion (due via email on Sept 15 th)	Raphael, 70-73, 115-126
	Thurs,	American Judaism 4:	Sources in Cohn-Sherbok:	Cohn-Sherbok, 233-

8	September 18	Ultra Orthodoxy	-Baal Shem Tov (236-237) -Tzaddik (238-239)	236 Raphael, 24-26, 144-146
9	Tues, September 23	The Promised Land, Zionism and the State of Israel	Sources in Cohn-Sherbok: -Theodor Herzl (280-281) -Zionist Congress (282) -Balfour Declaration (318) -Declaration of the State of Israel (319)	Cohn-Sherbok, 432-434, 278-280, 312-318 Raphael, 129-134
Jewish Beliefs				
10	Thurs, September 25	NO CLASS – ROSH HASHANAH	At home assignment: Watch a Jewish movie and write a reflection (due Sept 29 th)	
11	Tues, September 30	Focus on God: A closer look at monotheism	- In Bible - Genesis 1-3, 6-8 - Flood Narrative in <i>Gilgamesh</i> (pdf)	Cohn-Sherbok, 9-10, 14-16
12	Thurs, October 2	Focus on God: Jewish Theology	Sources in Cohn-Sherbok: -Maimonides' 13 Articles of Faith (183) - Post Holocaust Theology (Richard Rubenstein, 355; Bernard Maza, 381; Steven Jacobs, 382)	Cohn-Sherbok, 365-368, 377-380, 383-386 Raphael, 26-27
13	Tues, October 7	Jewish Mysticism and Spirituality	Sources in Cohn-Sherbok: - <i>Bereshit Rabbah</i> on Genesis 3 (196) -Talmud, <i>Kiddushin</i> 71a (197) -Azeriel of Gerona (207) -Zohar (208)	Cohn-Sherbok, 194-195, 205-207 Raphael, 116-120
14	Thurs, October 9	Jewish Values and Ethics 1	"The Ethical Will of Eleazar of Mainz" in <i>The Way of Torah</i> by Jacob Neusner, 87-90 (pdf)	Cohn-Sherbok, 564-567 Jewish Values list (pdf)
15	Thurs, October 16	Midterm		

16	Tues, October 21	Jewish Values and Ethics 2	- Rabbinic sources on Euthanasia (pdf) -Vanessa Ochs, "Ten Jewish Sensibilities" (pdf)	Elliot Dorff, "A Methodology for Jewish Medical Ethics," in <i>Contemporary Jewish Ethics and Morality</i> , ed. Elliot Dorff and Louis Newman, 161-173 (pdf)
17	Thurs, October 23	Gender in Judaism	In Bible: Judges 4 Rabbinic Sources on Beruria (pdf) Blu Greenberg, "Can a Mild-Mannered Yeshiva Girl Find Happiness Among the Feminists?" in <i>On Women and Judaism</i> , 21-38 (pdf)	Raphael, 70-72
18	Tues, October 28	Who is a Jew?	In Bible: Ezra 9-10 Ruth 1 Source in Cohn-Sherbok: -Reform Movement's Resolution on Patrilineal Descent (325) David Klinghoffer, <i>The Lord Will Gather Me In: My Journey to Jewish Orthodoxy</i> , 7-13, 177-187	Raphael, 108-112, 120-121 Cohn-Sherbok, 336-338, 572-575
Jewish Practices				
19	Thurs, October 30 FIRST PAPER DUE	Places of Worship: From Temple to Synagogue	In Bible – skim 1 Kings 6-8 Sharon Strassfeld and Michael Strassfeld, eds., <i>The Second Jewish Catalog: Sources and Resources</i> , "The Geography of the Synagogue, 264–269 (pdf)	Cohn-Sherbok, 483-485 Raphael, 97-108
20	Tues, Nov 4	Forms of Worship: From Sacrifice to	In Bible: -Skim Leviticus 1-7	Cohn-Sherbok, 438-440, 488-491

		Prayer	-Daniel 6 Sources from Prayer book (pdf)	Raphael, 21-24
21	Thurs, Nov 6	The Jewish Table	In Bible - Leviticus 11 Source in Cohn-Sherbok: Shulkhan Aruk Dietary Laws (556-557)	Cohn-Sherbok, 554-556 David Kraemer, "‘Bugs in the System’ (The Kashrut Wars)," 147-172 (pdf)
22	Tues, Nov 11	Shabbat	In Bible – reread Genesis 1-2 Source in Cohn-Sherbok: -Code of Jewish Law (401-402) Abraham Joshual Heschel, <i>The Sabbath</i> , 12-33 (pdf) Blu Greenberg, "Shabbat," in <i>How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household</i> , 25-29, 51-57 (pdf)	Cohn-Sherbok, 494-500 Raphael, 34-35
23	Thurs, Nov 13	High Holy Days	In Bible: -Leviticus 16 -Book of Jonah Shalom Aleichem, "A Yom Kippur Scandal" (pdf)	Cohn-Sherbok, 515-517, 420-422, Raphael, 27-30
24	Tues, November 18	Passover	In Bible – Exodus 6-14 Blu Greenberg, "Pesach," 398-403	Cohn-Sherbok, 507-509 (top), Raphael, 32 ("Pesach")

25	Thurs, November 20	Hanukkah	- 1 Maccabees 1-4 (in some Bibles) -Ron Wolfson, "Confronting the December Dilemmas." In <i>Introduction to Judaism</i> , 42-50 (pdf)	Raphael, 31 Cohn-Sherbok, 522-524
26	Tues, November, 25	Coming of Age and Death (Brit Milah, B'nai Mitzvot, and Mourning)	In Bible: Reread Genesis 17 Ecclesiastes 7:1-2 Source in Cohn-Sherbok -Kaddish (492) Judith Kaplan Eisenstein, "The First Bat Mitzvah" (pdf) Midrash Kohelet Rabba 7 (pdf)	Cohn-Sherbok, 533-535, 559-61 Raphael, 35-37 (skip "marriage")
27	Tues, Dec 2	Sexuality and Marriage	In Bible: Genesis 24 and 29; Song of Songs 1 "Rabbis and Wives: Love, Babylonian Style (Bavli Ketubot 62B)," in <i>Rabbinic Stories</i> by Jeffrey Rubenstein, 139-150 (pdf)	Cohn-Sherbok, 538-541, 544-547 Raphael, 36 David Novak, "Some Aspects of Sex, Society, and God in Judaism" in <i>Contemporary Jewish Ethics and Morality</i> , ed. Elliot Dorff and Louis Newman, 271-283 (pdf)
28	Thurs, December 4 SECOND PAPER DUE	Jewish Symbols and Objects	Collect visual images of Judaism to bring to class	Cohn-Sherbok, 549-550 (only read about Mezuzah)