

# Judaism Then and Now

**Religion 196**

**Classroom:** 114 Comenius Hall

**Class times:** MWF 11:30-12:20

**E-Mail:** radine@moravian.edu

**Blackboard** TBA

**Professor:** Jason Radine

**Office:** 202 Comenius Hall, ext. 1314

**Office Hours:** MWF 12:30-1:30

and by appointment.

## Course Content

Judaism is one of the world's oldest religions, but is constantly changing, now more than ever. While one of the smallest world religions in terms of population, it has been one of the most historically influential, being the primary forerunner of Christianity and a major inspirational resource in Islam. While Judaism is a religion, Jewish life is much more than that, being a culture that can exist independently of the religion. The purpose of this course is to provide a broad overview of Judaism in a generally chronological framework, so the historical development of Jewish life and thought can be observed. We will be studying the origins of Judaism (both within Jewish tradition and in modern scholarly proposals) as well as the development of Jewish national identity and law. In addition to Jewish history, we will study most of the major Jewish rituals and actions, both how and why they are done.

## Goals of the Course

1) *Religious Literacy in a Multi-Cultural Society:* Students in this course should be conversant in major Jewish ideas, practices, and terms. We live in a multi-cultural society, and it's essential in today's world to have an at least basic understanding of various religions. Judaism should be understood on its own terms, as it is certainly *not* "Christianity without Jesus."

2) *Understanding the Interrelationship between Jewish religion and culture:* Jewish life is somewhat distinctive in the religious world in functioning sometimes on a cultural rather than just religious level. This class will pay attention to this distinction.

3) *The Academic, Scholarly Method of Studying Religion:* In the modern academic environment, religions should be studied both on their own terms as well as from the point of view of critical textual and historical study. This may result in views of Jewish history that are not always the same as traditional sacred texts claim.

4) *Close Reading Skills:* Close textual reading is a hallmark of Jewish scholarship and devotion; we will also be reading selected texts very closely. With the methods of close reading, small details are brought to the surface rather than glossed over. This skill is useful in a virtually limitless range of life tasks.

5) *Analysis of Contrasting Arguments*: Jewish intellectual life has always been highly dialectical; that is, involving contrasting opinions in dialogue and argumentation. We will be studying some of these debates closely, and this can be helpful learning how to read contrasting arguments and how to come to one's own conclusion in an intelligent way.

### **Required Texts**

1) *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs, and Rituals* by George Robinson. New York: Pocket Books (Simon and Shuster), 2000.

2) *The Blackwell Reader in Judaism*, edited by Jacob Neusner and J. Avery-Peck. Malden MA: Blackwell, 2001

3) Handouts given out in class.

### **Grading and Class Policies**

- 1) Seven exams, some of which may be take-home mini-papers each worth 13%. For those that are take-home, the time allotted for them will be lecture instead. Consult the Student Handbook for the academic honesty policy.
- 2) Active, in-class participation: 9%. Cell phones must be silenced in class.
- 3) Readings, which should be done by the day on which they appear on the syllabus; that is, before class.
- 4) Attendance. After two unexcused absences, each further unexcused absence will reduce your overall course grade by one third of a letter. Two times late unexcused counts as one unexcused absence.
- 5) It is within the instructor's purview to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades for an assignment or for the course.
- 6) Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

### **Lecture and Readings Schedule**

#### **The Background of Judaism**

Introduction and Overview What is Judaism? What is Jewish?	January 19 <sup>th</sup>
Ancient Cultural Background I	January 21 <sup>st</sup>

## Canaanite Religion and National Deities

Ancient Cultural Background II Babylonian mythic influences: Creation and the Flood <i>Readings:</i> Handout	January 23 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>Judaism and the Bible</b>	
The Jewish Bible, the Tanakh Overall Structure and the Patriarchs and Matriarchs <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 257-271; Neusner 19-20.	January 26 <sup>th</sup>
Torah Moses, Exodus, and Law <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 271-279; Neusner 20-25.	January 28 <sup>th</sup>
The Israelite Settlement Outsiders or Insiders? <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 279-281; Handout	January 30 <sup>th</sup>
The Rise and Fall of Israel and Judah Monarchy and Exile <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 281-299, 306-308; Neusner 25-30, 42-49.	February 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Tanakh exam	February 4 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Rabbinic Judaism</b>	
Second Temple Judaism Apocalypticism and Sectarianism <i>Readings:</i> Neusner 49-59, and chapters 3 and 7	February 6 <sup>th</sup>
The Roots of Rabbinic Judaism Halakhah and the Mishnah <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 310-343, Neusner ch. 6	February 9 <sup>th</sup>
The Talmud Gemara, and the Two Talmuds <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 343-354, Neusner ch. 5	February 11 <sup>th</sup>
The Talmud (continued) Talmudic Dialectic <i>Readings:</i> Handout	February 13 <sup>th</sup>
Rabbinic Judaism Exam	February 16 <sup>th</sup>

## **Jewish Worship and Holidays**

Jewish Prayer Temple in Home and Synagogue <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 7-55.	February 18 <sup>th</sup>
Jewish Holidays Shabbat and the High Holidays <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 76-100	February 20 <sup>th</sup>
Jewish Holidays II The Pilgrimage Feasts <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 101-111, 118-128	February 23 <sup>rd</sup>
Jewish Holidays III Minor Holidays <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 111-118, 128-137	February 25 <sup>th</sup>
Jewish Holidays Exam	February 27 <sup>th</sup>

## **The Jewish Life**

The Jewish Life Cycle Milestones and Rites of Passage <i>Readings:</i> Robinson ch. 3, Neusner ch. 11	March 9 <sup>th</sup>
The Jewish Life Cycle II Milestones and Rites of Passage <i>Readings:</i> Robinson ch. 3, Neusner ch. 11	March 11 <sup>th</sup>
The Jewish Lifestyle The Mitzvot <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 195-229	March 13 <sup>th</sup>
The Jewish Lifestyle II Kashrut <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 234-256.	March 16 <sup>th</sup>
Jewish Life Exam	March 18 <sup>th</sup>

## **Medieval and Early Modern Jewish History**

Medieval Jewish History Scholarship and Persecution	March 20 <sup>th</sup>
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*Readings:* Robinson 404-424, Neusner chapters 8-9.

Medieval Jewish History Kabbalah <i>Readings:</i> Robinson ch. 5.	March 23 <sup>rd</sup>
Revolutions in 17 <sup>th</sup> century Judaism Sabbatai Zevi and Baruch Spinoza <i>Readings:</i> Robinson ch. 8	March 25 <sup>th</sup>
The Haskalah Moses Mendelssohn and the Jewish Enlightenment <i>Readings:</i> Robinson ch. 8.	March 27 <sup>th</sup>
Hasidism The Rebbes and their followers	March 30 <sup>th</sup>
Medieval and Early Modern Judaism Exam	April 1
<b>Modern Judaism</b>	
Reform Judaism Judaism for the Modern Age <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 55-59, 230-231, Neusner ch. 16	April 3 <sup>rd</sup>
Conservative Judaism Modern in Outlook, Traditional in Practice <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 59-61, 232, Neusner ch. 18	April 6 <sup>th</sup>
Modern Orthodox Judaism Tradition and the Modern World <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 63-65, Neusner ch. 17.	April 8 <sup>th</sup>
The Holocaust The Shoah <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 489-498	April 15 <sup>th</sup>
Zionism The Jewish State <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 480-489, Neusner ch. 25.	April 17 <sup>th</sup>
The State of Israel Conflict Within and Without	April 20 <sup>th</sup>
Modern Judaism Exam	April 22 <sup>nd</sup>

## **New Developments in Judaism**

Reconstructionist Judaism <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 61-63, 232-233		April 24 <sup>th</sup>
Secular Humanism and Jewish Renewal <i>Readings:</i> Neusner chs. 19 and 24		April 27 <sup>th</sup>
Feminism and Judaism <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 65-68, Neusner ch. 21.		April 29 <sup>th</sup>
Other Modern Thinkers <i>Readings:</i> Neusner ch. 23.		May 1 <sup>st</sup>
New Developments Exam	8:30am	May 7 <sup>th</sup>