

# Modern Jewish Religious Movements

## **Religion 251**

**Classroom:** Hall of Science 200

**Class times:** F 1:00–3:20 pm

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**Professor:** Jason Radine

**Office:** 202 Comenius Hall, x1314

**Office Hours:** TTh 11am –12pm  
and by appointment

## **Course Content**

Modern Judaism exists in a wide spectrum of beliefs and practices, from ultra-traditional to secular humanist. This course will explore both the making of modern Judaism and the religious “map” of Jewish life today. Topics will include Hasidic Judaism, Zionism, and contemporary North American trends in Judaism.

## **Goals of the Course**

This course will provide an in-depth study of Jewish life as it is lived today. As will be seen, the diversity of Jewish religious practice and belief is not simply a matter of degrees of commitment, but of divergent ideological and theological positions. This course will explore the Jewish responses to modernity, and the varied attempts to resist or embrace cultural assimilation. The phenomenon of “Jewishness” vs. Judaism will be examined, and the issue of how secularism and Jewish identity can coexist.

## **Assignments and Grading**

Grading will be based on four essay examinations, each counting for 15%. There will be two research papers as well, each counting for 15% (see the Student Handbook for the academic honesty policy). Participation counts for 10% of the total course grade. Attendance roll will be taken in each class day, and unexcused absences will affect the participation grade. Assigned readings should be done before the class for which they are assigned. This is not a passive-learning course; we will be actively studying and discussing the texts and other material in class.

## **Sample Paper Topics:**

Modernity and Inter-marriage

Modern Kabbalism

Jewish Existentialism: The Philosophy of Martin Buber

Religious Anti-Zionism: Neturei Karta and Satmar

“Messianic Judaism”: Jews for Jesus

## **Required Reading:**

Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in Modern Times: An Introduction and Reader*,  
Blackwell, 1995.

Patai, Raphael and Goldsmith, Emanuel (eds.), *Events and Movements in Modern*

*Judaism*, Paragon: 1995.  
 Borowitz, Eugene, *Choices in Modern Jewish Thought: A Partisan Guide*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Behrman House, 1995.  
 Neusner, Jacob and Avery–Peck, Alan J. (eds.), *The Blackwell Reader in Judaism*, Blackwell, 2001. Called “NA” in this syllabus  
 Fishkoff, Sue, *The Rebbe’s Army: Inside the World of Lubavitch-Chabad*. Schocken: 2005.  
 Handouts

## Class Schedule

### PART ONE: BACKGROUND

- Introduction** 4 September  
 Judaism up to the early modern period
- Forerunners of Modern Judaism** 11 September  
*Readings:* Handouts, Neusner Intro, ch.1, Borowitz ch. 1.

### PART TWO: MAJOR MODERN MOVEMENTS

- Reform Judaism** 18 September  
*Readings:* Neusner 2, Patai 9, NA 16, Borowitz 2, 3.
- Orthodox Judaism** 25 September  
*Readings:* Neusner 3, Patai 6, 7, 8, NA 17, Borowitz 10.
- Conservative and Reconstructionist Judaism** 2 October  
*Readings:* Neusner 4, NA 18, Patai 10, 5, Borowitz 5.

### PART THREE: KEY TWENTIETH-CENTURY EVENTS

- Response to the Holocaust** 9 October  
*Readings:* Patai 1, 2, Borowitz 9.
- Zionism and Israel** 16, 23 October  
*Readings:* Neusner 5, 6, 7, 8, Patai 1, 11, 12, 13, Borowitz 4, NA 25.

### PART FOUR: OTHER SIGNIFICANT TRENDS IN MODERN JUDAISM

- Jewish Feminism** 30 October  
*Readings:* Patai 16, 17, Borowitz 13, NA 21.
- Existentialist Judaism** 6 November  
*Readings:* Borowitz 6, 7, 8.

**Chabad-Lubavitch**

*Readings:* Fishkoff.

13 November

**New and Emerging Forms of Judaism**

*Readings:* Borowitz 11, Patai 3, 14, 15, NA 19, 23, 24.

20 November

**Looking Forward**

*Readings:* Borowitz 12, 14, Neusner 9, NA 26.

4 December