

# Judaism

**Religion 126****Classroom:** 201 Comenius Hall**Class times:** Wednesdays 6:30pm-9:30pm**E-Mail:** radine@moravian.edu**Professor:** Jason Radine**Office:** 108 Comenius Hall, ext. 1314**Office Hours:** Tues/Thurs 1:30-2:30pm  
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 as seen 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) *Textual Sources for the Study of Judaism*, edited and translated by Philip S. Alexander; University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- 3) Handouts given out in class.

### **Grading and Class Policies**

- 1) Average of three in-class exams, plus two 5 page research papers.
  - i. Consult the Student Handbook for the academic honesty policy.
- 2) Active, in-class participation. Cell phones must be silenced in class.
- 3) Readings, which should be done by the day on which they appear on the
  - i. syllabus; that is, before class.
- 4) Attendance. After two unexcused absences, each further unexcused
  - i. absence will reduce your overall course grade by one third of a letter. Two times late unexcused counts as one unexcused absence.
- 5) Accommodations: Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, assistant director of learning services for academic and disability support at 1307 Main Street, or by calling 610-861-1510. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

### **Lecture and Readings Schedule**

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

Introduction and Overview  
What is Judaism? What is Jewish?

January 16<sup>th</sup>

Ancient Cultural Background  
Canaanite Religion and National Deities

#### **Judaism and the Bible**

The Jewish Bible, the Tanakh

Overall Structure and the Patriarchs and Matriarchs <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 257-271	
Torah Moses, Exodus, and Law <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 271-279	January 23 <sup>rd</sup>
The Rise and Fall of Israel and Judah Monarchy and Exile <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 279-299, 306-308.	January 30 <sup>th</sup>
Biblical Judaism Exam	
<b>Rabbinic Judaism</b>	
Second Temple Judaism Apocalypticism and Sectarianism <i>Readings:</i> 116-125	February 6 <sup>th</sup>
The Roots of Rabbinic Judaism Halakhah and the Mishnah <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 310-343, Alexander chs. 2 and 4.	
The Talmud Gemara, and the Two Talmuds <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 343-354, Alexander ch. 5.	February 13 <sup>th</sup>
Talmudic Dialectic <i>Readings:</i> Alexander ch. 6.	
<b>Jewish Worship and Holidays</b>	
Jewish Prayer Temple in Home and Synagogue <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 7-55, Alexander 3.1	February 20 <sup>th</sup>
Jewish Holidays Shabbat and the Major Holidays <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 76-111, 118-128, Alexander 3.2-3	
Jewish Holidays II Minor Holidays <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 111-118, 128-137	February 27 <sup>th</sup>

Rabbinics and Worship exam

### **Jewish Life Cycle and Lifestyles**

The Jewish Life Cycle

Milestones and Rites of Passage

*Readings:* Robinson ch. 3.

The Jewish Lifestyle

March 13<sup>th</sup>

The Mitzvot

*Readings:* Robinson 195-229

The Jewish Lifestyle II

Kashrut

*Readings:* Robinson 234-256.

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

Medieval Jewish History

March 20<sup>th</sup>

Scholarship and Persecution

*Readings:* Robinson 404-424, Alexander 171-176, 105-116.

Medieval Jewish History

Kabbalah

*Readings:* Robinson ch. 5, Alexander 125-132.

Revolutions in 17<sup>th</sup> century Judaism

March 27<sup>th</sup>

Sabbatai Zevi and Baruch Spinoza

*Readings:* Robinson ch. 8

The Haskalah

Moses Mendelssohn and the Jewish Enlightenment

*Readings:* Robinson ch. 8, Alexander 9.3.1, 11.4.

Hasidism

The Rebbes and their followers

*Readings:* Alexander 9.1

Lifestyle and Medieval/Early Modern exam

## **Modern Judaism**

### Reform Judaism

Judaism for the Modern Age

*Readings:* Robinson 55-59, 230-231, Alexander 9.2

April 3<sup>rd</sup>

### Conservative and Modern Orthodox Judaism

Tradition in a Modern World

*Readings:* Robinson 59-66, 232, Alexander 9.3.2-3.

### The Holocaust

The Shoah

*Readings:* Robinson 489-498, Alexander 11.5.

April 10<sup>th</sup>

### Zionism

The Jewish State

*Readings:* Robinson 480-489, Alexander 10

### The State of Israel

Conflict Within and Without

*Readings:* Alexander 10

April 17<sup>th</sup>

## **New Developments in Judaism**

### Reconstructionist and Secular Humanist Judaism

*Readings:* Robinson 61-63, 232-233.

April 24<sup>th</sup>

### Feminism and Judaism

*Readings:* Robinson 65-68.

### Last exam

May 1<sup>st</sup>