

Modern Jewish Religious Movements

Religion 251

Classroom: 105 Comenius Hall

Class times: TTh 10:20-11:30am

E-mail: radine@moravian.edu

Professor: Jason Radine

Office: 108 Comenius Hall, x1314

Office Hours: TTh 4:00-5:00pm
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

1) Grading will be based on four essay examinations and two research papers as well (see the Student Handbook for the academic honesty policy). The exams and papers are weighted equally, and the course grade will be based on an average of all of these assignments. Plagiarized papers will receive F grades, and will result in a one-letter grade reduction for your course grade overall at least, and a failing grade in the class at most. 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.

3) Active, in-class participation. Cell phones must be silenced in class, and texting is not allowed.

4) Readings, which should be done by the day on which they appear on the syllabus; that is, before class.

5) 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. 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
Changes in Ritual Practice
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.
Borowitz, Eugene, *Choices in Modern Jewish Thought: A Partisan Guide*, 2nd edition, Behrman House, 1995.
Levenson, Alan, *An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thinkers*, Rowman and Littlefield, 2006.
Fishkoff, Sue, *The Rebbe’s Army: Inside the World of Lubavitch-Chabad*. Schocken: 2005.
Rubin, Barry, *Israel: An Introduction*, Yale University Press, 2012.

Course Schedule

Overview

Overview of Judaism, Part 1	August 27 th
Overview of Judaism, Part 2	August 29 th
Judaism and the Challenge of Modernity <i>Readings:</i> Neusner 1, Borowitz 1	September 3 rd
No class September 5 th for Rosh Hashanah	

Early Responses

Baruch Spinoza, pioneer heretic <i>Readings:</i> Levenson 1, Borowitz Appendix	September 10 th
Moses Mendelssohn and the “Jewish Enlightenment” <i>Readings:</i> Levenson 2	September 12 th
Early Hasidism <i>Readings:</i> Handout	September 17 th

Major Modern Movements

Reform Judaism: Abraham Geiger
Readings: Levenson 4, Borowitz 3
September 19th

Reform Judaism
Readings: Neusner 2
September 24th

Samson Raphael Hirsch and Rav Kook
Readings: Levenson 3, 11
First exam
September 26th

Modern Orthodox Judaism
Readings: Neusner 3, Borowitz 10
October 1st

Conservative Judaism
Readings: Neusner 4
October 3rd

Reconstructionist Judaism
Readings: Levenson 9, Borowitz 5
October 8th

Jewish Existentialism

Franz Rosenzweig
Readings: Levenson 6, Borowitz 6
October 10th

Martin Buber
Readings: Levenson 5, Borowitz 7
October 17th

Abraham Joshua Heschel
Readings: Levenson 13, Borowitz 8
October 22nd

Musar
Readings: Levenson 10
October 24th

Zionism and Holocaust

Zionism, Part 1
Readings: Levenson 7, 8, Neusner 6
Second exam
October 29th

Zionism, Part 2
Readings: Borowitz 4
First paper due
October 31st

Holocaust <i>Readings: Borowitz 9</i>		November 5 th
State of Israel		
State of Israel <i>Readings: Rubin chs. 1-2</i>		November 7 th
State of Israel Continued <i>Readings: Rubin chs. 3-4</i>		November 12 th
State of Israel Continued <i>Readings: Rubin ch. 7</i>		November 14 th
Recent Developments		
Modern Chabad <i>Readings: Fishkoff</i> Third exam		November 19 th
Jewish Feminism <i>Readings: Borowitz 13</i>		November 21 st
New Movements <i>Readings: Borowitz 12</i> Second paper due		December 3 rd
New Movements, continued <i>Readings: Borowitz 14</i>		December 5 th
Final (fourth) Exam	1:30pm	December 13 th