

Judaism

Religion 126**Classroom:** 111 Comenius Hall**Class times:** Tues/Thurs 2:35-3:45**E-Mail:** radine@moravian.edu**Professor:** Jason Radine**Office:** 108 Comenius Hall, ext. 1314**Office Hours:** Tues/Thurs 4-5pm
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 four in-class exams, plus two 5-page research papers.
- 1) Consult the Student Handbook for the academic honesty policy. 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 Elaine Mara, Assistant Director of Learning Services for 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.
- 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 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.

Lecture and Readings Schedule

The Background of Judaism

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| Introduction and Overview What is Judaism? What is Jewish? | January 14 th |
| Ancient Cultural Background Canaanite Religion and National Deities | January 16 th |

Judaism and the Bible

The Jewish Bible, the Tanakh
Overall Structure and the Patriarchs and Matriarchs
Readings: Robinson 257-271, handout. January 21st

Torah
Moses, Exodus, and Law
Readings: Robinson 271-279, handout January 23rd

The Rise and Fall of Israel and Judah
Monarchy and Exile
Readings: Robinson 279-299, 306-308. January 28th

Biblical Judaism Exam

Rabbinic Judaism

Second Temple Judaism
Apocalypticism and Sectarianism
Readings: 116-125 January 30th

The Roots of Rabbinic Judaism
Halakhah and the Mishnah
Readings: Robinson 310-343, Alexander chs. 2 and 4. February 4th

The Talmud
Gemara, and the Two Talmuds
Readings: Robinson 343-354, Alexander ch. 5. February 6th

The Talmud (continued)
Talmudic Dialectic
Readings: Alexander ch. 6. February 11th

Jewish Worship and Holidays

Jewish Prayer
Temple in Home and Synagogue
Readings: Robinson 7-55, Alexander 3.1 February 13th

Jewish Holidays
Shabbat and the Major Holidays
Readings: Robinson 76-111, 118-128, Alexander 3.2-3 February 18th

Jewish Holidays II
Minor Holidays
Readings: Robinson 111-118, 128-137

February 20th

Rabbinics and Worship exam

Jewish Life Cycle and Lifestyles

The Jewish Life Cycle
Milestones and Rites of Passage
Readings: Robinson ch. 3.

February 25th

The Jewish Lifestyle
The Mitzvot
Readings: Robinson 195-229

February 27th

The Jewish Lifestyle II
Kashrut
Readings: Robinson 234-256.

March 11th

Medieval and Early Modern Jewish History

Medieval Jewish History
Scholarship and Persecution
Readings: Robinson 404-424, Alexander 171-176, 105-116.

March 13th -18th

Medieval Jewish History
Kabbalah
Readings: Robinson ch. 5, Alexander 125-132.

March 20th

Revolutions in 17th century Judaism
Sabbatai Zevi and Baruch Spinoza
Readings: Robinson ch. 8

March 25th

The Haskalah
Moses Mendelssohn and the Jewish Enlightenment
Readings: Robinson ch. 8, Alexander 9.3.1, 11.4.

March 27th

Hasidism
The Rebbes and their followers
Readings: Alexander 9.1

April 1st

Lifestyle and Medieval/Early Modern exam

Modern Judaism

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| Reform Judaism Judaism for the Modern Age <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 55-59, 230-231, Alexander 9.2 | | April 3 rd |
| Conservative and Modern Orthodox Judaism Tradition in a Modern World <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 59-66, 232, Alexander 9.3.2-3. | | April 8 th |
| The Holocaust The Shoah <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 489-498, Alexander 11.5. | | April 10 th |
| Zionism The Jewish State <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 480-489, Alexander 10 | | April 15 th |
| The State of Israel Conflict Within and Without <i>Readings:</i> Alexander 10 | | April 17 th |
| New Developments in Judaism | | |
| Reconstructionist and Secular Humanist Judaism <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 61-63, 232-233. | | April 22 nd |
| Feminism and Judaism <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 65-68. | | April 24 th |
| Final Exam | 1:30pm | May 2 nd |