

# Judaism

**Religion 126****Classroom:** 213 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:** Fridays 1:00-3:00pm  
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) *The Norton Anthology of World Religions: Judaism* by David Biale (Norton), 2015.
- 3) Handouts given out in class.

### **Grading and Class Policies**

- 1) Average of three in-class exams, plus two 5 page research papers. 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 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) If you anticipate needing assistance from the disabilities office, contact Laurie Roth at (610) 861-1401, or at her office in the Academic Support Center on the first floor of Monocacy Hall. Disability accommodations can only be granted with authorization from the Academic Support Center.

### **Lecture and Readings Schedule**

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

Introduction and Overview September 1<sup>st</sup>  
What is Judaism? What is Jewish?

Ancient Cultural Background September 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Canaanite Religion and National Deities

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

The Jewish Bible, the Tanakh September 8<sup>th</sup>  
Overall Structure and the Patriarchs and Matriarchs  
*Readings:* Robinson 257-271, Biale 72-80

Torah  
Moses, Exodus, and Law  
*Readings:* Robinson 271-279, Biale 80-96  
September 10<sup>th</sup>

The Rise and Fall of Israel and Judah  
Monarchy and Exile  
*Readings:* Robinson 279-299, 306-308, Biale 97-119.  
September 15<sup>th</sup>

Biblical Judaism Exam

### **Rabbinic Judaism**

Second Temple Judaism  
Apocalypticism and Sectarianism  
*Readings:* 116-125, Biale 137-139, 142-153, 159-165, 174-175, 185-190.  
September 17<sup>th</sup>

The Roots of Rabbinic Judaism  
Halakhah and the Mishnah  
*Readings:* Robinson 310-343, Biale 193-208.  
September 22<sup>nd</sup>

The Talmud  
Gemara, and the Two Talmuds  
*Readings:* Robinson 343-354, Biale 208-213, 232-237.  
September 24<sup>th</sup>

Talmudic Dialectic  
*Readings:* Same as previous day.  
September 29<sup>th</sup>

### **Jewish Worship and Holidays**

Jewish Prayer  
Temple in Home and Synagogue  
*Readings:* Robinson 7-55, Biale 237-244.  
October 1<sup>st</sup>

Jewish Holidays  
Shabbat and the Major Holidays  
*Readings:* Robinson 76-111, 118-128, Biale 214-221, 246-251, 342-360.  
October 6<sup>th</sup>

Jewish Holidays II  
Minor Holidays  
*Readings:* Robinson 111-118, 128-137.  
October 8<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. October 15<sup>th</sup>

The Jewish Lifestyle  
The Mitzvot  
*Readings:* Robinson 195-229 October 20<sup>th</sup>

The Jewish Lifestyle II  
Kashrut  
*Readings:* Robinson 234-256. October 22<sup>nd</sup>

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

Medieval Jewish History  
Scholarship and Persecution  
*Readings:* Robinson 404-424, Biale 285-341. October 27<sup>th</sup>

Medieval Jewish History  
Kabbalah  
*Readings:* Robinson ch. 5, Biale 420-456. October 29<sup>th</sup>

Revolutions in 17<sup>th</sup> century Judaism  
Sabbatai Zevi and Baruch Spinoza  
*Readings:* Robinson ch. 8, Biale 456-464, 503-511. November 3<sup>rd</sup>

The Haskalah  
Moses Mendelssohn and the Jewish Enlightenment  
*Readings:* Robinson ch. 8, Biale 512-530. November 5<sup>th</sup>

Hasidism  
The Rebbes and their followers  
*Readings:* Biale 465-491. November 10<sup>th</sup>

Lifestyle and Medieval/Early Modern exam

## **Modern Judaism**

Reform Judaism  
Judaism for the Modern Age  
*Readings:* Robinson 55-59, 230-231, Biale 531-537. November 12<sup>th</sup>

Conservative and Modern Orthodox Judaism Tradition in a Modern World <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 59-66, 232, Biale 537-558.	November 17 <sup>th</sup>
The Holocaust The Shoah <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 489-498, Biale 631-662.	November 19 <sup>th</sup>
Zionism The Jewish State <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 480-489, Biale 663-684.	December 1 <sup>st</sup>
The State of Israel Conflict Within and Without <i>Readings:</i> Same as previous day.	December 3 <sup>rd</sup>
<b>New Developments in Judaism</b>	
Reconstructionist and Secular Humanist Judaism <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 61-63, 232-233, Biale 576-580, 685-722.	December 8 <sup>th</sup>
Feminism and Judaism <i>Readings:</i> Robinson 65-68, 234-237, 414-419, 559-563, 605-630.	December 10 <sup>th</sup>
Last exam	1:30pm
	Friday, December 18 <sup>th</sup>