

**RELS 334/834 – Jewish Views of the Other**

**Professor:** Shawna Dolansky

**Class Hours:** Mon 11:30-2:20

**Office:** Theological Hall rm 206

**Class Location:** MC D214

**Email:** dolansky@queensu.ca

**Office Hours:** Mon 2:30-3:15 and by appointment

**Calendar Description:** A study of the tensions that come into play as Jews formulated views of the Other to balance co-existence with them. Source materials include authoritative writings of Jewish commentary and law and social scientific views of them.

**Prerequisites:** Level 3 or above or 6.0 units at the 100 level in RELS.

**Expanded Course Description:**

Communities develop and assert identities formed by a combination of internal and external factors, a process that by its very nature is exclusive – “we do this, we don’t do that.” Identity formation is therefore largely a matter of defining insiders in opposition to outsiders. The idea of the “Other” is shaped by one’s own self-definition and categorization of qualities, traits, beliefs, practices, and projections, as well as power relations between one’s own group and that of the Other.

In the history of Judaism, Others have been defined by political, social, cultural, and religious similarities and differences, and such definitions have been interpreted and reinterpreted over time as Jewish circumstances have changed. In the period in which the Hebrew Bible was composed and compiled, the ancient Israelites defined themselves ethnically and politically against their neighbours in ways that highlighted both differences from, and similarities with, other polities and peoples. By the time of the origin of Christianity under Roman imperialism, Jews were themselves a minority Other among many peoples, and sought to distinguish themselves from Others within the shared polity culturally and religiously. As they defined their own identity, they did so in contradistinction to both Romans and Christians. Jewish views of the Other(s) formed in this period became codified in the Talmud, and further elaborated in medieval writings – a period in which new Others (e.g. Muslims) appeared and new boundaries were forged in response.

With the advent of modernity, Jewish identity underwent a radical reorientation. Through most of its history, Jewish self-definition had been based on communally shared theological beliefs, practices, and ways of life. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, social, cultural, and political changes brought a crisis of identity as individual Jews began to negotiate their religious and cultural backgrounds with secular life outside of a closed Jewish community. Lines between Jew and Other blurred, as Jews internalized the Othering of the majority communities in which they lived, and many actively tried to eliminate some or all of those previously-established boundaries and be absorbed into those larger communities to varying extents, and with varying degrees of success. In response, more conservative Jews solidified pre-existing boundaries and created new ones.

As with all aspects of Judaism, modern responses to questions of identity in the face of new political and social realities are forged largely by readings of ancient texts and their histories of interpretation. This course will examine Jewish views of the Other as formed in their original historical contexts, and as interpreted throughout history, in order to understand contemporary definitions of, and responses to, Others, as Jews contemplate their own identities and boundaries both communally and individually today.

**Required Texts:**

*The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity*, eds. Laurence J. Silberstein and Robert L. Cohn. NYU Press 1994.

Additional articles posted to OnQ; see schedule.

There is a fantastic interactive timeline of Jewish history, including a section devoted to Jewish texts, available at <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/a-timeline-of-jewish-texts/>. I strongly recommend that you consult this periodically in order to keep the general chronology of events and texts straight as we work through the material.

## **Evaluation:**

### **334 students:**

- 1) Weekly reflection papers (2-3 pages) on the readings – a total of 9 for the semester worth 5% each, total 45%
- 2) Attendance & Participation 10%
- 3) Paper proposal (5%) and annotated bibliography (10%) total 15%
- 4) Paper synopses – brief oral presentation last class 5%
- 5) Term research paper (10-12 pages) due April 21 by midnight (submit electronic copy to OnQ) 25%

### **834 students:**

- 1) Weekly reflection papers (2-3 pages) on the readings – a total of 7 for the semester worth 5% each, total 35%
- 2) Attendance & Participation 10%
- 3) 2 Book presentations (10% each) total 20%
- 4) Paper proposal (5%) and annotated bibliography (5%) total 10%
- 4) Paper synopses – brief oral presentation last class 5%
- 5) Term research paper (16-18 pages) due April 21 by midnight (submit electronic copy to OnQ) 20%

## **Course Policies**

**All written work is due by 11:30 am on the due date specified in the schedule below. Late work will not be accepted. Any breach of academic integrity, including plagiarism, may result in a grade of F for the assignment and the student may be subject to further penalties as per the Queen's University policy on Academic Integrity (see below).**

**Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is constituted by the five core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (see <http://www.academicintegrity.org/icai/home.php>). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the “freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas” essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities at (<http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senateandtrustees/academicintegrity.html>)). Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts & Science Calendar on the Arts & Science website under “Academic Integrity” (<http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/students-at-queens/academic-integrity>) or from the instructor of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen's. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions that contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.

## **Copyright of Course Materials**

Course material distributed in-class and online is copyrighted and is for the sole use of students registered in this course. This material shall not be distributed or disseminated to anyone other than students registered in these courses. Failure to abide by these conditions is a breach of copyright, and may also constitute a breach of academic integrity under the University Senate's Academic Integrity Policy Statement.

## **Grading**

All components of this course will receive numerical percentage marks. The final grade you receive for the course will be derived by converting your numerical course average to a letter grade according to Queen's Official Grade Conversion Scale:

<b>A+</b> 90-100	<b>B+</b> 77-79	<b>C+</b> 67-69	<b>D+</b> 57-59	<b>F</b> 49 and below
<b>A</b> 85-89	<b>B</b> 73-76	<b>C</b> 63-66	<b>D</b> 53-56	
<b>A-</b> 80-84	<b>B-</b> 70-72	<b>C-</b> 60-62	<b>D-</b> 50-52	

## Schedule:

- January 9 Introduction to the course**
- January 16 Rethinking Jewish Identity and Culture**  
READ: Laurence Silberstein, "Others Within and Others Without: Rethinking Jewish Identity" (*The Other* ch. 1);  
READ: <http://forward.com/articles/121663/the-myth-of-authenticity/>
- January 23 Ancient Israel: Defining Boundaries**  
READ: Peter Machinist, "Outsiders or Insiders: The Biblical View of Emergent Israel and Its Contexts" (*The Other* ch. 2);  
READ: (Bible) Gen 9:18-10:32; 12:1-19:36; 25:19-34; 27:1-28:9
- January 30 Non-Israelite Others**  
READ: Trude Dothan and Robert L. Cohn, "The Philistine as Other: Biblical Rhetoric and Archaeological Reality" (*The Other* ch. 3)  
READ: Robert L. Cohn, "Before Israel: The Canaanites as Other in Biblical Tradition" (*Other* ch. 4)
- February 6 The Other in the Multicultural Mediterranean**  
READ: Kim Stratton, "Identity" in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Mediterranean Religion*  
READ: Matthew (in the New Testament)  
READ: Anders Runesson, "Judging Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew: Between 'Othering' and Inclusion," in *Jesus, Matthew's Gospel and Early Christianity: Studies in Memory of Graham N. Stanton*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner, Joel Willitts, and Richard A. Burridge (London: T & T Clark, 2011)
- Book Presentation: *Not God's People: Insiders and Outsiders in the Biblical World*, Lawrence Wills
- February 13 Rabbinic Others**  
READ: Steven D. Fraade, "Navigating the Anomalous: Non-Jews at the Intersection of Early Rabbinic Law and Narrative" (*The Other* ch. 7)  
READ: David Novak, "Gentiles in Rabbinic Thought" in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*  
READ: Christine Hayes, "The Other in Rabbinic Literature" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*
- Book Presentation: *Food and Identity in Early Rabbinic Judaism* by Jordan Rosenblum
- February 20 – Family Day – NO SCHOOL**
- February 27 Woman as Other**  
READ: Ross S. Kraemer "The Other as Woman: An Aspect of Polemic Among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World" (*The Other* ch. 6)  
READ: Elliot R. Wolfson, "Woman – The Feminine as Other in Theosophic Kabbalah: Some Philosophical Observations on the Divine Androgyne" (*The Other* ch. 8); and  
<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/women-in-rabbinic-literature/#>  
<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/gender-feminism-101/#>  
<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/engendering-judaism/#>  
<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/halakha-and-feminism/#>  
**\*DUE: Paper proposal**

**March 6 Jew as Other – Enlightenment and Modernity**

READ: Sander L. Gilman, "The Jewish Nose: Are Jews White? Or, The History of the Nose Job" (*The Other* ch 16)

READ: Jacob Meskin, "The Other in Levinas and Derrida: Society, Philosophy, Judaism" (*The Other* ch 17); and

Selections from P. Mendes-Flohr's *The Jew in the Modern World* TBA

Book Presentation: *The Relationship of Orthodox Jews with Jews of Other Religious Ideologies and Non-Believing Jews* by Adam Mintz

Book Presentation: *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish-Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times* by Jacob Katz

**March 13 Jews, Race, and the Other**

READ: Eric L. Goldstein, "The Unstable Other: Locating the Jew in Progressive-Era American Racial Discourse" ch 2 in *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*

READ: Daniel Itzkovitz, "Secret Temples" in *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies* edited by Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin; and

READ: Ann Pellegrini, "Whiteface Performances: 'Race,' Gender, and Jewish Bodies" in *Jews & Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies*

Book presentation: *The Image of the Black in Jewish Culture: A History of the Other*, By Abraham Melamed

Book presentation: *Black Jews in Africa and the Americas* by Tudor Parfitt

**March 20 Jews & Blacks**

READ: Charles Hersch, "'Every Time I Try to Play Black, It Comes Out Sounding Jewish': Jewish Jazz Musicians and Racial Identity"

READ: Maria Damon, "Jazz-Jews, Jive, and Gender: The Ethnic Politics of Jazz Argot" in *Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies*; and

<https://jwa.org/teach/livingthelegacy/american-jews-race-identity-and-civil-rights-movement>

and

<http://northerncity.library.temple.edu/exhibits/show/civil-rights-in-a-northern-cit/people-and-places/jewish-african-american-relati>

Book Presentation: *Race & Religion Among the Chosen People of Crown Heights*, by Henry Goldschmidt

**March 27 National Others: Israelis & Palestinians**

Guest lecturer Dr. Howard Adelman

readings TBA

**\*DUE: Annotated Bibliography**

Book presentation: *The Others Within Us: Constructing Jewish-Israeli Identity*, by Dan Bar-On

Book presentation: *River Jordan: The Mythology of a Dividing Line* by Rachel Havrelock

**April 3 Paper Synopses**

Students will present an overview of research-in-progress – 2 minutes to present, 2 minutes for feedback and questions among peers to workshop ideas and share resources and references.

**Potential Paper Topics and Reading Suggestions:**

- Others in (inter)marriage and/or conversion
- Diaspora Jews vs Israeli Jews
- Others in Jewish Liturgy
- The Eastern Other, e.g. Jews & Buddhism
- On Chosenness and the Other

*Talking to the Other: Jewish Interfaith Dialogue with Christians and Muslims* by Jonathan Magonet

*Unheroic conduct: The rise of heterosexuality and the invention of the Jewish man* by Daniel Boyarin

*The Unconverted Self: Jews, Indians, and the Identity of Christian Europe* , Jonathan Boyarin

*Defining Jewish Difference: From Antiquity to the Present*, Beth Berkowitz

*The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*, Eric L. Goldstein