

**RELS 234 – Judaism**

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**Office Hours:** Tues 12:20-2:20

**Class Hours:** Tues 2:30-5:20

**Class Location:** Dunning Hall rm 11

**Calendar Description:** *An introduction to the self-definition of Judaism through an analysis of the concepts of God, Torah and Israel past and present. Also, a preliminary study of the struggles facing Jews in Europe, the State of Israel and North America.*

Prerequisites: Level 2 or above or 6.0 units at the 100 level in RELS.

**Expanded Course Description:** This course will present the development of religious and cultural aspects of Judaism from the time of ancient Israel to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The history of the Jews, and of the world, will serve as background for understanding Jewish rituals, beliefs, practices, ethics, ideas, philosophies, and other religious and cultural developments.

Today the term “Jewish” refers to a people, a culture, a nation, certain ethnicities, a religion, a way of thinking, and a way of life. As we will see, there have been – and continue to be – many different “Judaisms.” In sifting through the variety of often-contradictory ideas of what it means to be Jewish, our main goal will be to try to discern what, if anything, constitutes an *essence* of Judaism.

**Texts:**

You will need a Bible (or you can read it online at biblegateway.com, and choose NRSV translation). The best translation for our purposes is the JPS *TANAKH*, but any modern Bible translation (anything produced after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls) is acceptable, such as the *Revised Standard* and *New Revised Standard Versions* (RSV and NRSV), *New English, Jerusalem, New International Version*. Though poetic, the *King James Version* is not acceptable.

Jewish religious and cultural expressions are born and re-born in response to, and in interaction with, the times and places in which Jews live. To provide necessary historical background, I am requiring Scheindlin's *A Short History of the Jewish People* – it is available for purchase through the Queen's bookstore.

I have additionally selected a number of online articles that are required in order to supplement your understanding of certain Jewish ideas and institutions, and which include primary texts drawn from rabbinic, medieval, and modern sources. All readings listed in the schedule below are required.

For your own reference, and to keep track of the various periods of history we'll be exploring, you can find an excellent timeline at <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/Jewish-History-Timeline/>.

**Evaluation:**

4 quizzes\* on readings and lecture material, worth 10% each = 40%

2 response papers 10% each = 20% (3 pages max; choice of 3 potential response paper topics: see schedule)

Group presentation worth 10%

Final Exam OR paper\*\* worth 30% (paper will be 8-10 pages and consist of the following breakdown: proposal and preliminary bibliography 5% each, total 10%; + final paper 20%. Your decision to write a paper instead of a final exam must be made in time to hand in a paper proposal no later than Feb 3; final paper due last day of class)

\*Quizzes will take place during the first 15 minutes of class time; students who are late to class will not get extra time. There will be no make-up quizzes without a doctor's note or other official documentation.

## Course Policies

**All written work is due by 2:30 pm on the due date specified in the schedule below. Late work will be penalized at 5% per day; work more than 3 days late 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:**

- Jan 6**            **In the Beginning: Israel in the Ancient Near East**  
**In class:** *Short film - The Tribe; discuss selections from Genesis 1-11*
- Jan 13**           **Covenant: The Hebrew Bible**  
**READ:** Scheindlin Intro and ch. 1, and Bible: Gen 12-22; Exod 19-20; Lev 1-6, 11-12; Deut 28
- Jan 20**           **From Israelite to Jew: Apocalypticism and Messianism**  
**READ:** Scheindlin ch. 2, and Bible: Isa 2-3, 11; Zech 13-14; Dan 11-12  
**In class:** *Quiz #1*
- Jan 27**           **Rabbinic Judaism**  
**READ:** Scheindlin ch. 3  
[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Talmud/talmud\\_101.shtml?p=0](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Talmud/talmud_101.shtml?p=0)
- Feb 3**            **Jewish Holidays & Rites of Passage**  
**DUE:** Final paper proposal  
**In class:** *Group Presentations – see sign-up sheet.*
- Feb 10**           **Medieval Philosophy & Mysticism**  
**READ:** Scheindlin ch 4 & 5  
**DUE:** *Holidays & Rites of Passage Response Paper:* Learning about the holidays and rites of passage in Judaism provides great insight into what this religion thinks is important, because here it is evident what Judaism values most in terms of both celebrating and commemorating. Write a response paper that begins with a general thesis statement about some of the values apparent in Judaism based on the holidays and rites of passage you have learned about through the class presentations. In your paper, be sure to include the names and descriptions of at least 6 holidays and 4 rites of passage as evidence for your thesis.  
**In class:** *Quiz #2*
- Feb 17**           **READING WEEK**
- Feb 24**           **Emancipation, Enlightenment, & Reform**  
**READ:** Scheindlin ch 6 & 7
- Mar 3**            **Prayer, Deeds of Loving-Kindness, Repentance, and Study**  
**READ:**  
<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ritual/Prayer/Themes and Theology/Why Pray/Speaking to God.shtml?p=0>  
[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ritual/Jewish Practices/Jewish Practices\\_101.shtml?p=0](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ritual/Jewish Practices/Jewish Practices_101.shtml?p=0)  
<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ritual/Jewish Practices/Mitzvot.shtml?p=0>  
<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ethics/Caring For Others/Tikkun Olam Repairing the World .html?p=0>  
[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ritual/Torah Study/Torah Study\\_101.shtml?p=0](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ritual/Torah Study/Torah Study_101.shtml?p=0)  
**DUE:** Final paper bibliography
- Mar 10**           **Evil & Suffering**  
**READ:** Scheindlin ch 9; Ex 20:5-6; Deut 28; Ezek 18; Prov 1-4; Ecc 1-6; Job 1-8; 14; 29-32; 38-42  
**In class:** *Quiz #3*
- Mar 17**           **Shtetl Life and the End of an Era**  
**READ:** Scheindlin ch 8  
**In class:** *Fiddler on the Roof*

**Mar 24**      **Israel, Zionism, and North American Judaisms**

**READ:** Scheindlin ch. 10, 11, and *Afterword*

**DUE:** *Fiddler on the Roof* response paper

**In class:** *The Chosen*

**Mar 31**      **Women and Jewish Law**

**READ:** Exod 21; Num 27, 30; Deut 24:1; Prov 31

[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Issues/Gender\\_and\\_Feminism/Gender\\_and\\_Feminism\\_101.shtml?p=0](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Issues/Gender_and_Feminism/Gender_and_Feminism_101.shtml?p=0)

[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Issues/Gender\\_and\\_Feminism/Traditional\\_Views/Rabbinic.shtml?p=0](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Issues/Gender_and_Feminism/Traditional_Views/Rabbinic.shtml?p=0)

[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Issues/Gender\\_and\\_Feminism/Traditional\\_Views/Medieval.shtml?p=0](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Issues/Gender_and_Feminism/Traditional_Views/Medieval.shtml?p=0)

[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history/Modern\\_History/1948-](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history/Modern_History/1948-1980/America/Liberal_Politics/Feminism/American_Jewish_Feminism.shtml?p=0)

[1980/America/Liberal\\_Politics/Feminism/American\\_Jewish\\_Feminism.shtml?p=0](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history/Modern_History/1948-1980/America/Liberal_Politics/Feminism/American_Jewish_Feminism.shtml?p=0)

[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Issues/Gender\\_and\\_Feminism/Feminist\\_Thought/Theology/Rachel\\_Adler.shtml?p=0](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Issues/Gender_and_Feminism/Feminist_Thought/Theology/Rachel_Adler.shtml?p=0)

**DUE:** *The Chosen* response paper; final term paper

**In class:** Quiz #4

**8 Minute Group Presentations for Feb 3 – Jewish holidays and rites of passage –  
TOPIC SIGN-UP SHEET - \*4 people per group\***

Holidays

Sabbath

Shavuot

Rosh Hashanah

Yom HaShoah

Yom Kippur

Yom Ha'atzma'ut

Sukkot

Tisha B'Av

Simchat Torah

Rites of Passage

Newborn ceremonies

Hanukah

Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Tu B'Shvat

Conversion

Purim

Wedding

Passover

Death and Mourning

**Your goal is to convey the basics of your topic to the class in 8 minutes in a memorable way.**

*Be creative:* make posters, handouts, powerpoints, artwork, food, dioramas, or even a (short) dramatic enactment – anything to involve the whole class and meaningfully communicate the essence of your holiday or rite of passage.

Basic research for these presentations can be done at [myjewishlearning.com](http://myjewishlearning.com), but feel free to branch out from there – ask me if you would like further suggestions.

Make sure that workload is spread evenly among all members of a group – if a group member is not participating in preparations for the presentation, please notify me. Each student will be evaluated individually based on the material s/he presents in class. This is worth 10% of your final mark for the course.