

**RELS 234 – Judaism**

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**Office Hours:** Mon 1:15-2:15

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

**Class Location:** Jeffery rm 128

**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. 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. In this class we will be thinking about Judaism as expressions of religion and culture that are intimately related to the historical contexts in which they develop and re-develop.

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.

**Intended Student Learning Outcomes:**

Upon completing this course, students will have learned –

- To study, think about, and discuss religion and religions from a critical, academic perspective;
- The relationship between historical, social, political, and cultural contexts, and the development of religious ideas;
- The place of texts and textual interpretation in the development and maintenance of Judaism;
- Basic Jewish beliefs and practices, as well as the diversity of their expression, both historically and in today's world;
- A general overview of the history of Judaism and the Jewish people;
- Why and how it is that – as with any religion, and despite insider claims to the contrary – there is not, and has never been, a single defining authentic “Judaism” for all Jews in all places and times; or even within one single place and time.

**Texts:**

You are not required to purchase any texts for this class; however, you are required to read all of the assigned material as listed on the schedule below.

You will need a Bible, but you can read it online at biblegateway.com (choose NRSV translation). In print, 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 for academic use.

There are fantastic resources for studying Judaism online, including timelines that will help you keep track of where we are in the course – check out <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/story-jews/explore-the-diaspora/visual-timeline/> for a basic overview, a breakdown of the chronology of the development of Jewish texts at <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/a-timeline-of-jewish-texts/>, and a dense interactive timeline with pop-ups and links at <http://www.odiyeda.com/en/>. I strongly recommend that you consult any or all of these periodically in order to keep the general chronology of events and texts straight as we work through the material.

**Evaluation:**

5 quizzes\* on readings and lecture material, worth 8% each = 40%

3 response papers, worth 5%, 10% and 10% each = 25%

Group presentation worth 10%

Final Exam – take-home – worth 25%

\*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.

**Turnitin Policy**

This course makes use of Turnitin, a third-party application that helps maintain standards of excellence in academic integrity. Normally, students will be required to submit their course assignments through onQ to Turnitin. In doing so, students' work will be included as source documents in the Turnitin reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism.

Turnitin is a suite of tools that provide instructors with information about the authenticity of submitted work and facilitates the process of grading. Turnitin compares submitted files against its extensive database of content, and produces a similarity report and a similarity score for each assignment. A similarity score is the percentage of a document that is similar to content held within the database. Turnitin does not determine if an instance of plagiarism has occurred. Instead, it gives instructors the information they need to determine the authenticity of work as a part of a larger process.

Please read Turnitin's Privacy Pledge, Privacy Policy, and Terms of Service, which governs users' relationship with Turnitin. Also, please note that Turnitin uses cookies and other tracking technologies; however, in its service contract with Queen's Turnitin has agreed that neither Turnitin nor its third-party partners will use data collected through cookies or other tracking technologies for marketing or advertising purposes. For further information about how you can exercise control over cookies, see Turnitin's Privacy Policy.

Turnitin may provide other services that are not connected to the purpose for which Queen's University has engaged Turnitin. Your independent use of Turnitin's other services is subject solely to Turnitin's Terms of Service and Privacy Policy, and Queen's University has no liability for any independent interaction you choose to have with Turnitin.

### **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:**

#### **Sept 10 In the Beginning**

**In class:** *Short film, The Tribe, to introduce the question of Jewish identity;*  
*Discussion of selections from Genesis 1-11*

#### **Sept 17 History, Memory, and Identity**

Genesis 12-15, 22; Exodus 1-20; Lev 11-12; Deut 28

<http://www.bibleodyssey.org/passages/related-articles/covenant-in-the-hebrew-bible.aspx>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-memory/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/i-was-redeemed-from-egypt/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/2500-bce-to-539-bce-the-story/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/ancient-jewish-religion-and-culture/#>

**Due:** 1-page reflection on *The Tribe*, seeking a preliminary answer to the question "What is Judaism?"

#### **Sept 24 From Israelite to Jew**

Isaiah 2-3, 11; Zechariah 13-14; Daniel 11-12

<http://www.bibleodyssey.org/places/related-articles/destruction-and-reconstruction-of-the-temple.aspx>

<http://www.bibleodyssey.org/people/related-articles/emergence-of-judaism.aspx>

<http://www.bibleodyssey.org/places/main-articles/second-temple.aspx>

<http://www.bibleodyssey.org/tools/timeline-gallery/s/second-temple-judaism.aspx>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/hellenism-judaism/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/lets-talk-about-sects/#>

**In class:** *Quiz #1*

#### **Oct 1 Rabbinic Judaism**

[http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Halakhah/halakhictexts\\_101.shtml](http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Halakhah/halakhictexts_101.shtml)

[http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Midrash/Midrash\\_Aggadah/How\\_Midrash\\_Functions.shtml](http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Midrash/Midrash_Aggadah/How_Midrash_Functions.shtml)

<http://myjewishlearning.com/article/talmud-101/#>

<http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Talmud/Mishnah.shtml>

<https://img.fireeden.net/tg/image/1491/54/1491542901346.pdf> ("The Oven of Akhnai" - required to read pp. 1-2 only; reading the rest is optional)

**In class:** *Quiz #2*

**Oct 8 Thanksgiving - NO CLASS**

**Oct 15 Jewish Holidays & Rites of Passage**

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-jewish-denominations/#>

**In class:** *Group Presentations*

**Oct 22 Medieval Philosophy & Mysticism**

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/medieval-jewish-history-101/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/rashi/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/maimonides-rambam/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/nahmanides-ramban/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/medieval-jewish-philosophy-reason-in-a-religious-age/#>

**DUE:** *Holidays & Rites of Passage Response Paper:* Learning about the holidays and rites of passage in Judaism provides great insight into what this religion deems 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. Maximum: 3 pages double-spaced.

**Oct 29 Prayer, Deeds of Loving-Kindness, Repentance, and Study**

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/mitzvot-a-mitzvah-is-a-commandment/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/prayer-101/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/torah-study-101/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/tzedakah-101/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/gemilut-hasadim-101/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/tikkun-olam-repairing-the-world/#>

**In class:** *Quiz #3*

**Nov 5 Emancipation, Enlightenment, & Reform**

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/early-modern-jewish-history/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/crypto-jews/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-emancipation-and-enlightenment/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/haskalah/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-history-1700-to-1914/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/traditional-jewish-life-1700-1914/#>

**Nov 12 Shtetl Life and the End of an Era**

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/shtetl-in-jewish-history-and-memory/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/sholem-aleichem-hot-topic/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/hasidic-movement-a-history/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-denominations-emergence-and-growth/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-emigration-in-the-19th-century/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/modern-jewish-history-101/#>

**In class:** *Quiz #4; Film: Fiddler on the Roof*

**Nov 19 Evil & Suffering**

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/blood-libels/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/anti-semitism/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/1933-1939-early-stages-of-persecution/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/ghettos-under-the-nazis/>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-final-solution/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/auschwitz-birkenau/#>

**DUE:** *Fiddler on the Roof* response paper: Under the pen name of Sholem Aleichem, Russian-born American émigré Solomon Rabinovitch wrote a variety of short stories in Yiddish featuring Tevye the Dairyman and other characters from the Old World shtetl in the late 19th century. His American audience loved them, performing plays based on them and eventually producing this movie. In your viewing of the movie, what attitudes toward the Old World shtetl does Sholem Aleichem capture, and how do they round out and complement the assigned readings' descriptions of the transitions Jews in eastern Europe underwent in the 19th century? In your opinion, what might explain the movie's appeal in 20th century North America among Jewish and non-Jewish audiences alike?

**Nov 26**      **Israel, Zionism, and Contemporary Judaisms**

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-dreyfus-affair/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/zionism/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/secular-zionism/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jews-around-the-world-1980-to-2000/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/are-the-jewish-people-chosen/#>

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-identity/#>

**In class:** Quiz #5

**8 Minute Group Presentations for Oct 15 – Jewish holidays and rites of passage –  
TOPIC SIGN-UP SHEET - \*Max 3 people per group\***

Holidays

Sabbath

Shavuot (Pentecost)

Rosh Hashanah (New Year's)

Yom HaShoah (Holocaust memorial)

Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)

Yom Ha'atzma'ut (Israel Independence Day)

Sukkot (Booths)

Tisha B'Av (9<sup>th</sup> of Av – destruction of temples)

Simchat Torah (Celebration of Torah)

Rites of Passage

Newborn ceremonies

Hanukah

Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Tu B'Shvat (Festival of Trees)

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.