

**JACKSON SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES  
COMPARATIVE RELIGION PROGRAM**

***RELIG 210 INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM FALL 2004***  
(M-F 11:30-12:20)

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Class Electronic Discussion List:  
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**What You May Learn In This Course:**

Think of this course as an exercise in comparing religions. Except that, here, we will be comparing a single religion to itself. By the most cautious of historical estimates, Judaism is at least 2500 years old. In that time, it has appeared in many forms, most of which no longer exist. This course surveys past forms of Judaism, and observes their similarities to and differences from those that continue to thrive today. Many different sorts of religions have carried the name “Judaism.” Before understanding the relationship of Judaism to other religions, it is important, first of all, to understand its own patterns of diversity.

The first unit of the course offers an historical overview of the social, political, and religious history of the Jews. We will learn precisely how diverse the Jewish people has been as an ethnic group and how varied their cultural traditions have been. This serves as the context for the main work of the course, the description and analysis of the specifically religious patterns created by Jews. We will see that whatever Jews have called “Judaism” has taken shape in relationship to an astounding diversity of surrounding cultural traditions in which both Jews and non-Jews shared. We will chart the historical shape of Judaism through seven key themes, each of which discloses its own perspective on the nature of the Judaic religious tradition.

Briefly, these are: 1. Scriptural formation and interpretation; 2. Forms of intellectual expression; 3. Structures of Communal Authority; 4. Patterns of Ritual life; 5. Formation of Moral Values; 6. Ideologies of Political Life.

You will leave the course with a basic working knowledge of the history of Judaism, first hand experience with interpreting some of its basic writings, a familiarity with a range of Jewish religious customs, and a general appreciation of ancient, medieval and contemporary Jewish cultural expression. And, if you really get the point, you’ll *never ever* think you can define in one sentence “what Judaism believes!”

**How Your Achievement Will Be Measured:**

1. I will evaluate your achievement primarily on the basis of two mid-term examinations (10/18 and 11/9) and a final (12/15/04, 2:30pm). I will not accept late mid-terms unless you make alternate arrangements with me at least one week before the examination. For the final examination, a two-week lead date is required.
2. *At the present moment*, I anticipate that the exams will be of the following types:
  - a. a take-home exam in which you will be asked to briefly identify important historical markers in Judaism (10/18, worth 20% of the final grade)
  - b. a take-home exam in which you will be asked to write several short essays reflecting upon issues in the interpretation of various patterns of Judaism (11/9, worth 40%).

- c. an in-class multiple-choice exam in which you will be tested on your ability to identify plausible solutions to interpretive puzzles posed by the history of Judaism (12/15, 40%).
3. Students requesting special accommodations for taking the exams will need to produce a supporting document from Disabled Student Services. I'll be happy to accommodate such students to the very best of my ability. Our arrangements will be strictly confidential.

### **How Your Achievement Can Be Enhanced:**

1. The reading load is not terribly burdensome, but careful study of the readings is important for your success. My lectures assume you will have read the assignment for that day, thought about it, and raised questions that you'd like answered. I will hardly ever "tell" you what you've read. This is, after all, "college!" If I'd wanted to be a spoon-feeder, I'd have made other career choices!
2. Each lecture is preceded by an Outline that I draw on the board. I keep to it pretty carefully. You should use it as a way of organizing your lecture notes. It will tell you where I'm going at any particular moment, and give you the pattern of the day's argument. I view the lecture period as an opportunity to reflect upon the readings with you and to create broader contexts for interpreting them.
3. You will quickly notice that my lectures are not read from prepared written texts. Rather, I have certain things on my mind and I reflect upon them with you. My goal, again, is not to tell you things, but to think about them with you. At times, I will have to give you "information," but I try to keep that to a minimum. I would rather argue with you about what the information means. Therefore, your questions and comments in class are crucial. At the very least they are a humanitarian gesture—preventing us all from suffering the trauma of a droning professor yakking to a room of sleepy-heads. More importantly, your active participation in class contributes much to your own education and to that of your colleagues: the act of formulating a question helps you clarify what you do and do not know; the act of asking it helps others determine if they're in touch with the material; my response to questions or comments forces me to clarify what I'm trying to convey. So everybody wins.

Not least--your comments help me evaluate the depth of your learning beyond the rather formal evidence of the written examinations.

### **The Role of the Class Electronic Discussion List**

Students in this course are automatically enrolled in the Class Electronic Discussion List and you will receive any and all postings to it. Some of these postings will come from me, e.g., announcements of events of interest to the course, musings on issues that come up in class. Others can come from you: requests for clarifying whatever is going on in class, reflections on current events in light of our classroom work, etc. There is no obligation to submit anything. But I encourage you to post questions of general interest to the entire list rather than to me personally. Generally, my response will be of use to others as well. I hope to be able to respond to all; but if that proves too heavy a burden, I may have to be selective. Let's see what happens.

### **Readings You'll Need to Master (on reserve at Odegaard and for sale at UWBS):**

Corrigan, et al., *Jews-Christians-Muslims: A Comparative Introduction to Monotheistic Religions* (JCM)

Corrigan, et al., *Readings in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (R)

Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People* (Scheindlin)

**Topics and Assignments:**

9/29 Organizational Meeting

9/30-10/1 FIRST DAYS OF SUKKOT: NO CLASS

**I. A Chronological Survey of Jewish History**

10/4 The “Biblical” Period: Scheindlin, 1-23

10/5 The Second Temple and Hellenistic Periods: Scheindlin, 25-49

10/6 The Formation of Classical Rabbinic Judaism in Late Antiquity: Scheindlin, 51-71

10/7-8 LAST DAYS OF SUKKOT: NO CLASS

10/11 Jews and Judaism under Islam and Christendom: Scheindlin, 71-121

10/12 “Early Modern” Judaism in the Middle East and Europe: Scheindlin, 123-171

10/13 The “New World” Context of Judaism: Scheindlin, 173-197

10/14 The Jewish Twentieth Century: Scheindlin, 199-263

10/15 Exam Review

10/18 First Mid-Term Exam

**II Scripture and Tradition in Pre-Modern Judaic Cultures**

10/19 Origins of the Bible: JCM, 3-14; R, 1-13

10/20 The Rabbinic Tradition: JCM, 15-22

10/21 How to Read a Rabbinic Text: R, 13-20

10/22 Responses to Rabbinic Tradition: JCM, 22-25; R, 20-22

**III. Judaism's Symbolic Vocabulary**

10/25 Conceptual Structure of Judaism: JCM, 77-86; R, 87-94

10/26 Messianic Movements and Theories: JCM, 86-92; R, 94-100

10/27 Modernism and Jewish Thought: JCM, 92-104, 125-32

10/28 Contemporary Traditionalism: R, 101-102

**IV. Judaic Communal Forms and Religious Authority**

10/29 Scriptural Models: JCM, 157-62; R, 157-162

11/1 The Qumran Yakhad: JCM, 162-67; R, 162-164

11/2 Early Rabbinic Sages & Disciples: JCM, 167-70

11/3 Borders of Rabbinic Society: R, 164-166

11/4 European Hasidism: JCM, 170-73; R, 166-169

11/5 Film: “A People Apart”

11/8 Discussion of Film and Exam Review

11/9 Second Mid-Term Exam

## **V. Ritual and Worship in Rabbinic and Post-Rabbinic Judaism**

11/10 The Ideal of Avodah: JCM, 215-19; R, 203-206

11/11 VETERAN'S DAY: NO CLASS

11/12 The Sabbath and Time: JCM, 219-221; R, 206-208

11/15 The Cycle of Festivals: JCM:221-226; R, 208-209

11/16 The Religious Changes of Modernity: JCM, 227-29, 248-53

11/17 Patterns of Reform: JCM, 229-231; R, 209-211

11/18 Contemporary American "Jewish Renewal": JCM, 231-34, R, 211-216

11/19 Film: "Lifting the Sparks"; discussion of film

## **VI. Ethical Values and the Formation of the Person**

11/22 What is Jewish Ethics?: JCM, 279-282

11/23 Gender, Identity, and Ethics: JCM, 282-285

11/24-26: THANKSGIVING BREAK: NO CLASS

11/29 The Evil Urge: JCM, 285-89; R, 255-262

11/30 The Nature of Justice: JCM, 289-93

12/1 Ethics Beyond Halakhah: JCM, 293-95; R, 263-265

## **VII. Judaism and Political Life**

12/2 Autonomy in Antiquity and the Middle Ages: JCM, 421-429; R, 305-317

12/3 Emancipation & the Jewish Question: JCM, 430-34; R, 317-320

12/6 Judaism in the Jewish State: JCM, 434-37; R, 320-323

12/7 Holocaust and Redemption: JCM, 438-40; R, 323-327

12/8 Film: "Whose Country? Whose Religion?"

12/9 Discussion of film

12/10 Concluding Observations and Exam Review

12/15 Final Exam, 2:30 pm