

Great Jewish Books
JUDS0681/RELS0322
CRN: 16320

Fall, 2018

Judaism is sometimes defined as an extended conversation between writers in different places and times, writing in different languages. This course will give you access into this conversation. Who are the major thinkers and their works? What are the topics and ideas that engage them, and how do they engage each other? We will wrestle with their ideas, both as universal answers to perennial questions of human concern (e.g., why is there evil in the world) and as expressions of their own Jewishness.

This is a WRIT class.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you should be able:

1. To identify several major works of the Jewish canon, their historical context and importance;
2. To identify, critique, evaluate, and apply to one's own life some of the major themes and important ideas that run through this literature, such as: the nature of human beings; how to live a good and moral life; obedience and freedom; home and exile; and personal identity;
3. To evaluate and critique the category of "Jewish literature";
4. To compare and contrast the works examined in this class in order to identify the relationships between them;
5. To write better;
6. To better constructively critique both other people's writing and your own;
7. To develop your presentation and teaching skills

Instructor

Professor Michael Satlow, Religious Studies and Judaic Studies.

Please note that my goal is to run a classroom accessible to all. Should you need accommodations, or if there is anything else that I can do to help you to thrive in this class, please talk to me early in the semester.

Resources

You will be doing a lot of reading for this course and you should own the texts listed below, all available at the Brown Bookstore. You will want to make notes in these books as you read and bring the book under discussion to class.

The Jewish Study Bible: Second Edition (ed. Berlin, Brettler, Fishbane)

The Talmud: Selections (ed. N. Solomon)

A Maimonides Reader (ed. I. Twersky)

The Kabbalistic Tradition (ed. A. Unterman)
Koren/Sacks Siddur
Jerusalem, Or on Religious Power and Judaism (M. Mendelssohn)
Halakhic Man (J. Soloveitchik)
Engendering Judaism (R. Adler)
Mr. Mani (A. B. Yehoshua)
What is Jewish Literature? (H. Wirth-Nesher)

Some weeks you will also have access to a study guide, available on Canvas. It is important that you consult this guide while doing your reading.

Canvas will also be used for submission of work.

Expectations

I believe that learning is most effectively done by means of a process: (1) reading or engaging with other evidence with a particular question in mind; (2) individual thinking and articulation (usually in writing) of thoughts; (3) discussion with others; (4) self-reflection and revision. The class expectations are meant to further this process:

1. Attendance. Much of your learning will occur in discussion during class. Be prepared to attend, be fully present at, and engage in every class. I want you to see the class as a space in which we are all focused on the same goal of mutual understanding and learning.
2. Reading. Most weeks we will tackle a single work. You must complete all of the assigned readings prior to class. You will often be provided in advance with focus questions. Much of our time in class will be spent examining primary source material together.
3. Reading responses. Most weeks you should write a substantive response (4-5 paragraphs) on Canvas to the reading. Prompts will be provided. These are due on Tuesday, 11:59 PM before class. After class, you must then also respond to at least two posts by Friday, 11:59 PM.
4. Paper. This paper (2500-3000 words) will analyze an approved book. A list of suggested books can be found at the end of the syllabus; you are expected to consult with me about your choice. A draft is due October 19, with the peer reviews due the week after. The final version is due by November 1.
5. Presentation. You will present on one of the works that we are reading during part of a class period and then lead the discussion.
6. Take Home Examination. This is an essay exam that will help you to synthesize the reading that we did for this class. It will be due on Sunday, December 16, at noon.

Time Expectations

The following “good faith” estimate of time expectations is required on all Brown syllabi by the Dean of the College:

Our accrediting agency requires an expectation of at least 180 hours of coursework in order to receive four credit hours. This figure will be reached in this class through the following expectations:

- (1) Class meeting (39 hours);
- (2) Reading for class (8 hours/week * 13 weeks = 104 hours)
- (3) Weekly writing assignments (2 hour each*11=22 hours)
- (4) Paper (10 hours)
- (5) Revisions (5 hours)
- (6) Take home exam (10 hours)

Grading

I believe that grades neither give a good incentive for you to experience genuine learning nor that a single letter captures the totality of your learning. I would like, and I would like you to like, to see grading as an afterthought to your learning. I will not focus on your grade and I will try to help you to do the same.

Grading will be calculated as follows: Short writing responses (35%); paper (25%); presentation (10%); final exam (30%). Deficiencies in attendance or participation will result in downgrading. I am open to other suggestions about how to best grade you if alternatives would be more effective in helping you to learn. Please do not hesitate to speak to me about this in the first couple of weeks of the semester.

Extensions and incompletes will be given only for extraordinary reasons. Any violations of Brown's Academic Code will result in failure from the class and automatic referral to the Dean's office.

Tentative Schedule

September 5	Introduction
September 12	Bible (I): The Torah <i>Reading:</i> Genesis; Exodus 1-24; Leviticus 1; Deuteronomy <i>Assignment:</i> Reading response
September 19	Cancelled
September 26	What is Jewish Literature? <i>Reading:</i> H. Wirth-Nesher, <i>What is Jewish Literature?</i> <i>Assignment:</i> tbd.
October 3	Bible (II): Prophets and Writings <i>Reading:</i> Joshua 1-11; 2 Samuel; Isaiah 1-2, 42-54; Psalms 23, 24, 103; Job 1-3, 38-42; Ecclesiastes <i>Assignment:</i> Reading response
October 10	Talmud <i>Reading:</i> <i>The Talmud</i> , pages to be announced

	<i>Assignment: Reading response</i>
October 17	Maimonides <i>Reading: A Maimonides Reader, 1-119; 231-358</i> <i>Assignments: Reading response</i> Paper draft due October 19
October 24	Kabbalah <i>Reading: The Kabbalist Tradition</i> <i>Assignments: Reading response</i>
October 31	Siddur <i>Reading: Excerpts from Koren/Sacks Siddur</i> <i>Assignments: Reading response</i> Final paper due November 1
November 7	Enlightenment <i>Reading: Jerusalem, Or on Religious Power and Judaism</i> <i>Assignment: Reading response</i>
November 14	Modern Orthodoxy <i>Reading: The Halakhic Man</i> <i>Assignment: Reading response</i>
November 28	Judaism and Feminism <i>Reading: Engendering Judaism</i> <i>Assignment: Reading response</i>
December 5	Israel <i>Reading: Mr. Mani</i> <i>Assignment: Reading response</i>
December 12	Conclusion

List of Possible Books for Paper

Dov Baer ben Samuel, *In Praise of Baal Shem Tov: The Earliest Collection of Legends about the Founder of Hasidism* (ed. Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome Mintz, 1970)

Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto, *The Path of the Just* (ed. Yaakov Feldman, 1996)

Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man*

Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption* (1886-1929, 2005)

Glückel of Hameln, *The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln* (1646-1724, 1977)

Isaac B. Singer, *In My Father's Court* (1966)

Abraham Isaac Kook, *The Lights of Penitence, The Moral Principles, Lights of Holiness, Essays, Letters, and Poems* (ed. Ben Zion Bokser, 1978)

Solomon Ibn Gabirol, *Selected Poems of Solomon Ibn Gabirol* (trans. Peter Cole, 2001)

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz; and, The Reawakening* (1986)

Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1965)

Mordecai Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of America-Jewish Life* (rpt. 2010)

Shmuel Yosef Agnon, *The Bridal Canopy* (1967)

Saul Bellow, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (2004)

Gluckel of Hameln, *The Memoirs of Gluckel of Hameln*

Henry Roth, *Call it Sleep*