

**RELI 220/2 A:  
INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY AND RELIGION  
OF THE JEWS**

Time: Wednesday and Friday, 1315-1430

Location: H 411 SGW

Professor: Ira Robinson

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Course Website: Moodle: accessed through your "My Concordia"

**Course Description:**

This course will examine the history of Jews and of Judaism from ancient times until the present. It will emphasize the continuities, changes and interrelationships with respect to Jewish social, religious and intellectual life through the ages. It will also carefully examine the varieties of belief and practice in contemporary Jewish life.

**Course Requirements:**

1. Students will write a take-home mid-term assignment and a final take-home assignment. The mid-term and will be worth 20% of the final grade and the final take-home assignment will be worth 40% of the final grade.
2. Along with each reading assignment there will be a question assigned. Students are required to submit a 1 page (typewritten) response to any ten assignments during the course of the term. Responses for any question will be accepted for full credit only on the day it is due at the end of class unless accompanied by a reasonable excuse. Responses received after the due date, or non-hard copy responses (e.g. email attachments) without a reasonable excuse will be penalized one point if the response is up to one week late, and two points if it is more than a week late. If you choose to submit more than ten responses, your grade will be determined on the basis of your best ten responses. Each response will be worth 4% of the final grade for a maximum of 40%.

**Grading Standards**

- A Superior grasp of the material; explanations clear and well-written; presentation of original insights going beyond class discussion.

- B Good grasp of the material; clear and orderly presentation; demonstration of ability to utilise concepts learned.
- C Adequate grasp of the material; reasonably clear presentation.
- D Clearly inadequate grasp of the material; unclear presentation.
- F Assignments not presented.

### **Learning Objectives:**

The learning objectives of this course include competency in the area Judaism, improved ability to synthesize information, and improved writing ability.

### **Plagiarism:**

The most common offence under the Academic Code of Conduct is plagiarism that the Code defines as "the presentation of the work of another person as one's own or without proper acknowledgement."

This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, professor's course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student, for example, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone - it can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. "Presentation" is not limited to written work. It also includes oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. Finally, if you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism.

In Simple Words:

DO NOT COPY, PARAPHRASE OR TRANSLATE ANYTHING FROM ANYWHERE WITHOUT SAYING FROM WHERE YOU OBTAINED IT!

### **LIST OF SERVICES:**

- **Department of Religion Academic Advisors:** Dr. Naftali Cohn and Dr. Marc Lalonde. To schedule an appointment, call 514-848-2424, x2065.
- **Concordia Counselling and Development** offers career services, psychological services, student learning services, etc. <http://cdev.concordia.ca/>
- **The Concordia Library Citation and Style Guides:**  
<http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/citations.html>

- **Advocacy and Support Services**  
<http://supportservices.concordia.ca/>
- **Student Transition Centre**  
<http://stc.concordia.ca/>
- **New Student Program**  
<http://newstudent.concordia.ca/>
- **Access Centre for Students with Disabilities**  
<http://supportservices.concordia.ca/disabilities/>
- **Student Success Centre**  
<http://studentsuccess.concordia.ca/>
- **The Academic Integrity Website**  
<http://provost.concordia.ca/academicintegrity/>
- **Financial Aid & Awards**  
<http://web2.concordia.ca/financialaid/>
- **Health Services**  
<http://www-health.concordia.ca/>

#### **Texts:**

Michael Brenner, *A Short History of the Jews* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2010). Available at the Concordia University Bookstore.

All other required readings will be made available in a course pack, available at the Concordia University Bookstore.

For more background information, students are urged to go to the following website: [www.myjewishlearning.com](http://www.myjewishlearning.com)

#### **Syllabus:**

September 9: Introduction to Course; Who is a Jew?

##### **No required reading**

September 11: Hebrew Bible: Torah as Story

##### **Reading:**

Hebrew Bible: Exodus, chapters 1-15

Ilana Pardes, *The Biography of Ancient Israel: National Narratives in the Bible* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000), pp. 16-39, 164-168.

Brenner, pp. 1-17.

September 16: Hebrew Bible: Torah as Constitution

**Reading:**

Hebrew Bible: Exodus, chapters 19-23

Daniel Elazar, "Covenant and Community", *Judaism* 49 (2000), pp. 387-398.

September 18: Ancient Judaism: Temple and Community; Challenge of Hellenistic Civilization

**Reading:**

Brenner, pp. 19-53.

September 23: **No Class--Yom Kippur**

September 25: Ancient Judaism: Varieties of Judaic Belief

**Reading:**

Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18; *Jewish War* 2 (Cambridge, MA, Loeb Classical Library, 1969)

Brenner, pp. 55-67.

September 30: Rabbinic Judaism: Torah as Constitution

**Reading:**

Mishna, Berakhot, tr. Philip Blackman (New York, Judaica Press, 1964). chapter 1

Michael Fishbane, "Law, Story and Interpretation: Reading Rabbinic Texts", in Michael Walzer, Menachem Lorberbaum, Noam J. Zohar, and Yair Lorberbaum, eds., *The Jewish Political Tradition. Volume I Authority* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000), pp. xxxix-lv.

October 2: Rabbinic Judaism: Torah as Story

**Reading:**

Reuven Hammer, *The Classic Midrash: Tannaitic Commentaries on the Bible* (Mahwah, Paulist, 1994), pp. 102-111.

Michael Fishbane, *The Exegetical Imagination: on Jewish Thought and Theology* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard, 1998), pp. 9-21.

October 7: Medieval Judaism: Polemic with Christianity

Presentation of the video "The Disputation"

**Reading:**

Miri Rubin, "Imagining the Jew: the Late Medieval Eucharistic Discourse", *In and Out of the Ghetto: Jewish-Gentile Relations in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany*, ed. R. Po-Chia Hsia, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 177-208.

October 9: Medieval Judaism: Between Islam and Christianity

**Reading:**

Brenner, pp. 69-81, 95-115.

#### October 14: Medieval Judaism: Encounter With Philosophy

##### **Reading:**

Isadore Twersky, *A Maimonides Reader* (New York, Behrman, 1972, pp. 402-423.

Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)* (New Haven, Yale, 1980), pp. 356-374.

Brenner, pp. 83-93.

#### October 16: Medieval Judaism: Mysticism

##### **Reading:**

Daniel Matt, *Zohar: the Book of Enlightenment* (Mahwah, Paulist, 1983), pp. 43-45.

Arthur Green, *A Guide to the Zohar* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 63-85.

Ivan Marcus, "The Social Foundations of Medieval Mysticism in Judaism", in Calvin Goldscheider and Jacob Neusner, eds. *Social Foundations of Judaism* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1990), pp. 49-56.

#### October 21: Early Modern Judaism: Women

##### **Reading:**

Renee Levine Malamed, *Heretics of Daughters of Israel?: The Crypto-Jewish Women of Castile* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 31-44, 212-217.

Chava Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1998), pp. 89-103, 220-226.

Brenner, pp. 117-135.

#### October 23: Early-Modern Judaism: Messianism and Hasidism

##### **Reading:**

Arthur Green, "Teachings of the Hasidic Masters", in Barry W Holz, ed. *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts* (New York, Summit Books, 1984), pp. 361-401.

Brenner, pp. 137-165.

#### October 28: Early Modern Judaism: Spinoza, Revolution, and Emancipation

##### **Reading:**

Benedict Spinoza, "Theological-Political Treatise", in Richard H. Popkin, ed. *The Philosophy of the 16th and 17th Centuries* (New York, Free Press, 1966), pp. 232-246.

Brenner, pp. 167-207.

#### October 30: Modern Judaism: Religious Responses to Emancipation

##### **Reading:**

Samson Raphael Hirsch, "Religion Allied to Progress", in *Judaism Eternal* ed. I. Grunfeld (London, Soncino, 1959), pp. 224-244.

Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: a History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*

(Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1995), pp. 62-99.

November 4: Modern Judaism: Secular Responses to Emancipation

**Reading:**

Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question", in Robert C. Tucker, ed. *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York, Norton, 1978), pp. 26-52.

Jehuda Reinharz and Paul Mendes-Flohr, *The Jew in the Modern World* (New York, 1980 ), pp. 220-226.

Brenner, pp. 273-306

November 6: Modern Judaism: Anti-Semitism

**Reading:**

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* tr. Ralph Manheim (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1971), pp. 300-329

Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933* (Cambridge, Ma, Harvard, 1980), pp. 303-327.

Brenner, pp. 255-271.

November 11: Modern Judaism: Holocaust

**Reading:**

Abraham Sutzkever, "Never Say This is the Last Road", in Leo W. Schwarz, ed. *The Root and the Bough: the Epic of an Enduring People* (New York, Rinehart, 1949), pp. 66-92, 155-163.

Brenner, pp. 319-347.

November 13: Modern Judaism: Zionism

**Reading:**

Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea* (New York, 1972), pp. 200-231.

"The Proclamation of the State of Israel", in Itamar Rabinovich and Jehuda Reinharz, *Israel in the Middle East* (New York, Oxford, 1984), pp. 12-15.

Brenner, pp. 306-317.

November 18: Contemporary Judaism: Israel

**Reading:**

Yeshayahu Liebowitz, "The Religious Significance of the State of Israel"; Hillel Halkin, "A Letter to an American Jewish Friend" in Carol Diamant, ed. *Zionism: the Sequel* (New York, Hadassah, 1998), pp. 76-81, 179-187.

Brenner, pp. 349-368, 377-387.

November 20: Contemporary Judaism: Diasporas

**Reading:**

Jack Wertheimer, *A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America* (New York, Basic Books, 1993), pp. 43-65.

Brenner, pp. 209-253, 368-377.

November 25: Contemporary Judaism: The Judaic Calendar and Lifecycle

**Reading:**

Daniel H. Gordis, "Marriage: Judaism's 'Other' Covenantal Relationship" in Rela M. Geffen, ed. *Celebration and Renewal: Rites of Passage in Judaism* (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1993), pp. 90-131.

November 27: Contemporary Judaism: Jewish Religious Movements

**Reading:**

Roger Kamenetz, *Stalking Elijah: Adventures With Today's Jewish Mystical Masters* (Harper San Francisco, 1997), pp. 16-52.

December 2: Contemporary Judaism: Women and Judaism

**Reading:**

Annette Daum, "Language and Liturgy", in Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut, *Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue* (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1992), pp. 183-202.

Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco, Harper, 1991), pp. 213-238.

December 4: The Jewish Situation Today; Conclusions

**Reading:**

Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, "The Sovereign Self: Jewish Identity in Post-Modern America", *Jerusalem Viewpoints* no. 453 (May, 2001), pp. 1-10.

Sylvia Barack Fishman, *The Way Into the Varieties of Jewishness* (Woodstock, VT, Jewish Lights, 2007), pp. 209-227, 239-240.

Calvin Goldscheider, "Judaism, Community, and Jewish Culture in American Life", Zvi Gitelman, ed., *Religion or Ethnicity: Jewish Identities in Evolution* (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2009), pp. 267-285.