

CJS290 H1F 2015
Who's a Jew? Myth, Theory, & Practice
Thursday, 12pm – 2pm
Jackman Humanities Building, Room 214

INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Sol Goldberg

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Office hour: Tuesday 1pm-2pm

Office: Jackman Humanities Building 218b (located in the Centre for Jewish Studies)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

"Who is a Jew?" is a complex question that has engaged not just Jews of virtually all stripes but also non-Jews, both friends and enemies. The question comes up especially at moments of legal, political, and existential crisis when a decision about who belongs within the group is unavoidable. But the question is also one that scholars must address as soon as they begin to study "the Jews" and their literature, philosophy, culture, religion, or history. Which texts, ideas, practices, symbols, and people should be included within "Jewish" studies? What makes any text, idea, practice, symbol, or person "Jewish" and so a possible object for Jewish studies?

This course intends to introduce students to a host of fascinating theoretical and methodological issues that have long been debated and that must be decided in defining Jewish identity, both for Jewish Studies and within Jewish life. In the course, in other words, we'll explore together not only different ways in which the fundamental normative question about membership in the Jewish community might be answered but also different ways in which the basic subject matter of Jewish Studies might be constructed.

EVALUATION

1. **Midterm** (October 22): 25%
2. **Weekly In-class Assignment**: 10%
3. **Short Essay** (11:59pm November 21): 30%
4. **Final Exam**: 35%

TRANSPARENCY & ON-GOING STUDENT INPUT

Students, I believe, have the right to inquire about the pedagogical methods and objectives adopted in the course. Although students should not expect everything in the course to be exactly as they would wish, they are entitled to justifications for why I have decided to do things one way rather than another. So please ask at any point during the semester if you are not clear about the purpose or value of a topic, text, or assignment. It is the responsibility of a teacher to accommodate as many learning styles as possible. But this responsibility assumes that students make known their difficulties as soon as they arise.

EMAIL POLICY

I try to answer emails as quickly as possible. But bear in mind that I am not always online and that the quantity of emails which I receive is greater at some points in the semester than at others. This is to say: please don't be surprised if I don't immediately reply to all of your emails. Expect an answer within 48 hours, especially if the issue can be handled quickly over email. If you anticipate that an issue requires a discussion (e.g., questions about your essay or an assignment), then it is best to make an appointment to meet with me in person since more involved issues will not be addressed through email exchanges.

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Students with diverse needs are welcome in this course. Please contact the Accessibility Centre (<http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>) for needs assessment, referrals and arrangements. The instructors will be glad to provide whatever assistance is necessary.

PLAGIARISM

From the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters:

"It shall be an offence for a student knowingly:

To represent as one's own any idea or expression of an idea or work of another in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work, i.e. to commit plagiarism. Wherever in the Code an offence is described as depending on 'knowing,' the offence shall likewise be deemed to have been committed if the person ought reasonably to have known."

COURSE MATERIAL & EXPECTATIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

All of the texts for the course will come from:

- Michael Walzer, Menachem Lorberbaum, and Noam J. Zohar (ed.) *The Jewish Political Tradition: Volume I: Authority* (Yale University Press, 2003)
- Michael Walzer, Menachem Lorberbaum, Noam J. Zohar, and Ari Ackerman (editors), *The Jewish Political Tradition: Volume II: Membership* (Yale University Press, 2006)

These volumes are available at the UofT Bookstore (214 College Street; 416.640.7900), and students are expected to have the appropriate volume with them in class every week.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT

Please switch off cell-phones before class; do not talk to your classmates during class; use laptops only for taking notes. Distraction of other students is unacceptable.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

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| 09/17: Introduction | 10/29: "Election" |
| 09/24: "Covenant: God's law and people's consent" | 11/05: "Social Hierarchy": |
| 10/01: "Revelation: Torah and reason" | 11/12: "Gender Hierarchy" |
| 10/08: "Rabbis and sages" | 11/ 19: "Converts" |
| 10/15: "Controversy and dissent" | 11/26: "Heretics and Apostates" |
| 10/22: In-class Midterm Test | 12/03: "Gentiles" |