

JEWISH HISTORY: ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL
Spring 2022

Jewish Studies 01:563:201
History 01:506:271
Middle Eastern Studies 01:685:208

Tues/Thurs, 4th period, 2:00 – 3:20
Miller Hall 115

Professor Gary A. Rendsburg
office: 12 College Avenue, room 203
email: grends@rutgers.edu

Course Description: This course examines the social, religious, intellectual, and political experience of the Jewish people from the crystallization of their national-religious consciousness in the biblical period through the end of the 15th century. The religion and culture of the Jews are discussed within the broader context of their environment. The course divides neatly into three main periods: the biblical (or ancient) period, the post-biblical period (known as late antiquity), and the medieval period. We will begin our course with the ancient Israelites as an independent people in their own land, and then move to the study of the Jews under foreign rule (including Babylonia, Persia, Greece, Rome, Islam, and Christianity). Primary sources (Bible, Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus, Talmud, Maimonides, etc.) are emphasized throughout. The course concludes with the Expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula.

Curriculum Note: The course is required for majors and minors in Jewish Studies, and it is also cross-listed in History and in Middle Eastern Studies.

LEARNING GOALS:

Core Curriculum Historical Analysis [HST] Learning Goals:

Per the SAS Core Curriculum Learning Goals, as outlined here:

<https://sasoue.rutgers.edu/core/core-learning-goals>

- HST-1. Explain the development of some aspect of a society or culture over time.
- HST-2. Employ historical reasoning to study human endeavors, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments.

Learning Goals Specific to this Course:

- Students will acquire an overview of major developments in the history of the Jewish people from Israel's beginnings c. 1200 B.C.E. until 1492 C.E.
- Students will learn to analyze primary sources critically.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students are expected to read the material assigned in the textbook (*The Jews: A History*, 2nd ed.) and at the Canvas website, and to have access to the extensive course packet at all times.

To supplement our course material, occasional video lectures also will be assigned.

Exams: There are three exams (two midterms and a final) (at the moment, I am planning on take-home exams), each covering approximately one-third of the course material.

Specific dates still to be decided, but in general the exams will occur during these timeframes:

- week of February 21
- week of April 4
- week of May 9 (final exam period)

Grading:

Each of the exams is worth 30% of the course grade, for a total of 90%.

The remaining 10% of your grade is based on class participation, attendance, progress, engagement with the material, etc.

TEXTBOOK, COURSE PACKET, ETC.:

Textbook:

The Jews: A History, by John Efron, Steven Weitzman, and Matthias Lehmann

2nd edition (Pearson, 2014)

Suggested retail price: \$90.20

ISBN-10: 0-205-85826-0 (paperback)

ISBN-13: 978-0-205-85826-2 (paperback)

Available at the Rutgers University Bookstore / Barnes & Noble

(Gateway Building) 732-246-8448

Also available as an e-book:

<http://www.pearsonhighered.com/educator/product/Jews-The-A-History-Plus-MySearchLab-with-eText-Access-Card-Package/9780205896264.page>

NOTE: A 3rd edition of this book has recently appeared, but we will continue with the 2nd edition.

Course Packet:

A large amount of supplemental material (maps, charts, primary sources, etc.) is included in the extensive Course Packet (in three parts, available at the Canvas course website).

Bible:

In addition, from time to time you will need to consult an English translation of the Bible (mainly the Jewish canon, though occasionally the New Testament).

You can access various Bible translations online. The best site is probably <https://www.biblegateway.com/>, and the best translations available there are the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV) and the *New International Version* (NIV).

Or you already may own a Bible, which is fine. If you do not, and you would like to buy one, recommended versions include:

- *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures* (Jewish Publication Society)
- *The Jerusalem Bible* (Koren)
- *The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)* – published in several different editions, including the following:
 - *The Harper Collins Study Bible*
 - *The New Oxford Annotated NRSV Bible*

OFFICE HOURS:

In light of the ongoing health concerns, and to minimize face-to-face contact, and upon University recommendation, office hours will be held via Zoom, not in-person, by appointment.

ATTENDANCE:

A major portion of the educational experience in this course takes place in the classroom. While I do not take formal attendance, you will be at a great disadvantage if you are not present in class on a regular basis. Also, see above, regarding the final 10% of your course grade.

If you expect to miss a class session, kindly use the University self-reporting system for absences: <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> An email is automatically sent to me to apprise me of your absence.

Or you may wish to inform me ahead of time if you know that you will miss class, especially if there will some (good) reason for missing two or more classes in a row. Overall responsibility for the course material, however, remains yours at all times.

If you do miss class, please make sure to get the notes from someone. If there is something in the notes that you do not understand, feel free to discuss with me for further clarification.

Finally, please make every effort to arrive in time for the start of class. Late arrival is disruptive to the class discussion and in general disrespectful to me and your classmates.

Special Note Regarding Covid:

Under normal circumstances, we know that students often “power through” colds and other ailments. In light of the pandemic, however, we want to discourage such behavior. Notwithstanding what we state above – to wit, “a major portion of the educational experience in this course takes place in the classroom” – we certainly do not wish you to attend class if you are feeling ill.

If you contract covid, we understand that you will need to isolate. Should such occur, we will make every effort to work with you regarding deadlines, assignments, etc.

In line with University policy, note that masks are required in the classroom.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Please note the University's academic integrity policy:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>

I personally endorse the policy and enforce its guidelines. In short, no cheating of any sort will be tolerated in my course; and such actions are grounds for probation and potential dismissal from the University.

DISABILITY POLICY:

- Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

CLASS SCHEDULE

Jewish History: Ancient and Medieval

My teaching style is very much a freestyle approach. Which is to say, I do not like to be pegged down to a specific topic to be covered on a specific date or during a specific week. At the same time, however, I recognize the need to progress systematically through the material, especially as this course covers about 2700 (!) years of history. What follows, accordingly, is a presentation of the topics to be covered and the requisite readings, though I do not indicate the specific dates or weeks during which we will cover each topic. I promise to give you ample warning when we are moving on to the next topic. I certainly do not want you to fall behind in your readings.

Ancient Israel

- Weitzman, *The Jews*, pp. 1-30
- CP, 1.4-40, 1.53-68
- Rendsburg, "The Early History of Israel" (Canvas – 01)
- Rendsburg, "Israelite Origins" (Canvas – 02)
- Rendsburg, "Twelve Tribes" (Canvas – 03)
- Faust, "Emergence of Israel and Ethnogenesis" (Canvas – 04)
- *Exodus 12-15*
- *Deuteronomy 1-3*
- *Joshua 1-12 / Judges 1*
- *1 Samuel 8 / 2 Samuel 7*

Israelite Religion

- CP, 1.41-52
- Rendsburg, "An Essay on Israelite Religion" (Canvas – 05)
- Weinfeld, "Israelite Religion" (Canvas– 06)
- *Hosea 1-3*
- *2 Kings 17:7-23*
- *Isaiah 44:24-45:22*

Persian Period

- Weitzman, *The Jews*, pp. 32-38
- Spar, "Cyrus and the Judean Diaspora" (Canvas – 07)
- CP, 1.69-75
- *2 Chronicles 36*
- *Ezra 1-2*
- *Nehemiah 8, 13*

The Bible

- Weitzman, *The Jews*, pp. 38-55
- CP, 1.76-80

Hellenism and Judaism

- Weitzman, *The Jews*, pp. 58-76, 83-84
- "Philo," EJ entry (Canvas – 08)
- CP, 2.4-23

Jewish Sects of the Second Temple Period

- Weitzman, *The Jews*, pp. 76-83
- CP, 2.24-57
- Jaffee, "Samaritans" (Canvas – 09)
- "Samaritans" – Hadassah Magazine (Canvas – 10)

Jews under Roman Rule

- Weitzman, *The Jews*, pp. 85-115

Rabbinic Judaism

- Weitzman, *The Jews*, pp. 116-148
- CP, 2.58-98
- Levine, "Synagogue" (Canvas – 11)
- Hachlili, "Synagogues" (Canvas – 12)
- Himyar / Tablet Magazine (Canvas – 13)

Jews under Islam

- Lehmann, *The Jews*, pp. 149-166, 172-176
- CP, 3.13-21, 3.24-48
- Geller, “Karaites” (Canvas – 14)
- Telushkin, “Karaites” (Canvas – 15)
- Wikipedia entry, “Karaites” (Canvas – 16)
- Rustow, “Baghdad in the West” (Canvas – 17)
- Somekh, “Jews under Islam” (Canvas – 18)
- Lowney, “Maimonides – Medicine” (Canvas – 19)
- Lowney, “Maimonides – Religion” (Canvas – 20)

Medieval Jewish Thought

- Lehmann, *The Jews*, pp. 166-172
- CP, 3.78-82

Jews under Christendom

- Lehmann, *The Jews*, pp. 178-207
- CP, 3.4-12, 3.22-23, 3.49-77
- Whittock, “Jews in Medieval Europe” (Canvas – 21)
- Audio Segment: Dorsey Armstrong, “The Persecution of the Jews” (6 audio tracks = 30 mins.) (Canvas)

Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts

- Rendsburg, “Scroll Down” (Canvas – 22)
- National Geographic, “Bible Hunters” (Canvas – 23)