

Jewish Civilization: From the Birth of the Israelites until the Present JST 150

**Rachel S. Harris
Judaic Studies Department
Humanities - 241**

**Tel: (518) 442 4134
Email: rsharris@albany.edu**

Course Goals: This class explores the dynamic history of the Jewish people and its interaction with great world cultures. Beginning with the origins of Israelite monotheism, we will first trace the consolidation and subsequent fragmentation of the ancient Israelites. We then explore several dispersed Jewish communities through the Middle Ages, and examine the ways they redefined themselves and Judaism in light of their experiences in several different host societies. Finally, we examine the Jewish encounter with the Modern world, including the Jewish Enlightenment, the nationalization of the Jews, and the rise of new Jewish centers on the eve of the Nazi Holocaust.

Course Requirements: Students are expected to attend all class meetings. Attendance will be taken periodically. Without proper notification and documentation *ahead* of time when feasible, failure to attend more than two class meetings will result in your final grade being lowered by one full letter grade.

There will be a mid-term (worth 25%) and a final exam (worth 25%) that will consist of short answers of key terms and longer essays on more substantial questions. Two longer essays (worth 20% each) and class attendance and participation (10%) make up the total course mark.

Mid-term exam – in class

Monday 6th November 2006

Essays are due: Wednesday 11th October 2006 start of class

Friday 1st December 2006 start of class

For essays choose one of these questions.

First Essay Question: Bible and Reality

1. How did Jews respond to the Babylonian exile?
2. In what ways has modern scholarship changed the way biblical history is understood?
3. Explain the ways in which systems of governance defined the Jewish nation in Ancient Israel?
4. To what extent can Jews be considered a single nation before the destruction of the second temple?

Second Essay Question: Diaspora

1. “Life was better under the Sultan than the Pope” Discuss in relation to the treatment of Jews 1300-1600.
2. “Moses Mendelssohn changed Jewish identity” To what extent may this statement be considered true?
3. Compare the treatment of Jews in Western Europe to those in Eastern Europe in the 19th Century.
4. How did modern secular ideas affect Jewish thinking in the modern world?
5. Why was the development of Hebrew important in the modern world? How did this affect Jewish nationalism?

Written assignments must be typed, doubled-spaced with one-inch margins on all four sides, and should be more than simple summaries; instead they should be critical examinations of the question, addressing the larger themes of the course. Essays should be 1000-1500 words (4-6 pages) and include a bibliography of cited works. You must get approval from me ahead of time for any alternative topic that you wish to tackle. Late papers will not be accepted unless you have received permission ahead of time. A guide to essay writing and citations can be found at the end of the course reader.

Respect and tolerance for all viewpoints as well as courteous and attentive behavior are expected from all class participants. Anyone who fails to adhere to these standards may be required to leave the class at my discretion.

Support: If you are having any difficulties in the course, I encourage you to contact me sooner rather than later so that we can devise a work plan and strategies so that you can be successful in the course.

Grading: I strive to be fair and accurate in grading student assignments. If you are dissatisfied with a grade that you have received, please present to me *in writing* what error you feel has been made and what course of action you propose for remedying it. Then, please visit my office during regular office hours (or contact me to make an appointment) and we will discuss your concerns. Additionally, if you wish to have your final exam returned, please contact me during the first week of the new semester to arrange for the exam to be returned to you. It is my policy *not* to leave student work in public places for pick up. I do not give out or discuss grades over email.

| Percentage % | Grading Bands | |
|--------------|---------------|---|
| 96-100 | A+ | Excellent knowledge of subject. Critical awareness of academic debate with excellent use of evidence to illustrate argument. Appropriate contextualization of material. |
| 91-95 | A | |
| 86-90 | A- | |
| 81-85 | B+ | Good knowledge of subject. Clear awareness of debate, with appropriate use of evidence. Some awareness of larger historical context. Accurate use of appropriate terms. |
| 76-80 | B | |
| 71-75 | B- | |
| 66-70 | C+ | Displays factual knowledge of subject. Some evidence of discussion and awareness of different points of view. Adequate documentation. Some use of appropriate terms |
| 61-65 | C | |
| 56-60 | C- | |
| 51-55 | D+ | Poor knowledge of subject. Poor presentation of work. Limited, incorrect or no use of appropriate terms. Minimal discussion. |
| 46-50 | D | |
| 41-45 | D- | |
| 40 or below | FAIL | Work below minimum standard required. |

Academic Integrity: The University at Albany adheres to the following policy regarding intellectual honesty: “It is every student’s responsibility to become familiar with the standards of academic integrity at the University. Claims of ignorance, of unintentional error or of academic or personal pressures are not sufficient reasons for violations of academic integrity.” Plagiarism and other violations of the rules of academic integrity are treated seriously. See the university’s policy on plagiarism at:

http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html#plagiarism

Learning Disabilities: If you are a student with a documented learning disability, please inform me immediately so that we can make arrangements to accommodate your needs. If you suspect that you may have learning disability but do not have it documented, please contact the Disabled Student Services located in Campus Center, Room 127 (442-5490).

Required Texts: The following are required for the course:

A course reader is for sale at Shipmates (at Stuyvesant Plaza, 458-7758) and on Electronic Reserve at the library. Books can be purchased in the Campus Bookstore or borrowed from the University Library.

The Principle Text Books

- Littman, Naomi Pasachoff and Robert J. *A Concise History of the Jewish People*. Oxford, New York, Toronto, Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005.

Literary Readings

- George, Andrew R. *The Epic of Gilgamesh: The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian*, Penguin Classics. London: Penguin Books, 2003.

Recommended Reading: – These provide supplementary material, giving greater depth to the topics covered. At least one of these texts should be examined when preparing essays. They are available at the library.

- Seltzer, Robert M. *Jewish People, Jewish Thought: The Jewish Experience in History*. New York

(A study guide has been provided to help with the Seltzer, this can be found in the packet of course readings available at Stuyvesant Plaza, see below)

- Ben-Sasson, Haim Hillel, and Abraham Malamat. *A History of the Jewish People*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976.

(Page numbers have been provided for each lecture and these should be read if a class is missed.)

| |
|--|
| <p><u>Readings:</u> Lectures are given with the expectation that everyone has read the required material at the beginning of each week. Items from the Course Reader are marked with [R].</p> |
|--|

| WEEK | DATE | TOPIC | REQUIRED READING | OPTIONAL READING |
|---------------|---------------------|---|---|-------------------------|
| Week 1 | Monday 4 Sep | LABOUR DAY | <i>A Concise History of the Jewish People</i> pp. 1-16 <i>Imagined Communities</i> Benedict Anderson [R] <i>Civilization and its Discontents</i> Sigmund Freud [R] <i>Who Wrote the Bible?</i> Richard Elliott Friedman <i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i> pp. Tablets 1, 2 & 11. | Seltzer pp. 7-34 |
| | Wednesday 6 Sep | Introduction | | |
| | Friday 8 Sep | Civilization and Archaeology Gilgamesh | | |
| Week 2 | Monday 11 Sep | Noah and the Documentary Hypothesis | <i>The Story of Noah</i> Genesis 6:1-9:29 [R] <i>A Concise History of the Jewish People</i> pp. 17-26 Stuart A. Cohen “Kings, Priests and Prophet: Patterns of Constitutional Discourse and Constitutional Conflict in Ancient Israel” [R] | Seltzer pp. 47-154 |
| | Wednesday 13 Sep | Patriarchs and the Akeda | | |
| | Friday 15 Sep | David and the Succession of Kings, First Temple | | |
| Week 3 | Monday 18 Sep | Exile and Alphabet ESSAY REVISION | <i>A Concise History of the Jewish People</i> pp. 30-58 Arnold Eisen “Exile” [R] | Seltzer pp. 155-195 |
| | Wednesday 20 Sep | Exile | | |
| | Friday 22 Sep | NO CLASS | | |
| Week 4 | Monday 25 Sep | NO CLASS | <i>A Concise History of the Jewish People</i> pp. 59-69 | Seltzer pp. 195-233 |
| | Wednesday 27 Sep | Second Temple | | |
| | Friday 29 Sep | Apocrypha and Maccabees | | |
| Week 5 | Monday 2 Oct | NO CLASS | The Dead Sea Scrolls [R] | Seltzer pp. 234-243 |
| | Wednesday 4 Oct | Dead Sea Scrolls | | |
| | Friday 6 Oct | NO CLASS | | |
| Week 6 | Monday 9 Oct | Josephus, The Jewish Wars | <i>A Concise History of the Jewish People</i> pp. 78-81 Readings by and about Josephus [R] <i>A Concise History of the Jewish People</i> pp. 70-90 | Seltzer pp. 243-260 |
| | Wednesday 11 Oct | Christianity | | |
| | Friday 13 Oct | NO CLASS | | |
| Week 7 | Monday 16 Oct | Jewish Revolt | Gerald J. Bildstein, “‘Ideal’ and ‘Real’ in Classical Jewish Political Theory: From the Talmud to Abrabanel [R] Babylonian Talmud extract <i>Baba Metziah</i> [R] | Seltzer pp. 260-310 |
| | Wednesday 18 Oct | Pauline Christianity GUEST LECTURE PROF. STAN ISSER | | |
| | Friday 20 Oct | Mishnah and the Rabbinic Period | | |
| Week 8 | Monday 23 Oct | Talmud | <i>A Concise History of the Jewish People</i> pp. 111- 130 Samuel Ha-Nagid, Vizier of Granada [R] Travels of Benjamin of Tudela (extracts) [R] Maimonides [R] | Seltzer pp. 323-419 |
| | Wednesday 25 Oct | | | |
| | Friday 27 Oct | Rise of Islam | | |
| Week 9 | Monday 30 Oct | Jewish life in Spain | <i>A Concise History of the Jewish People</i> pp. 131- 154 Norman A. Stillman <i>The Jews of Arab Lands</i> (extracts) [R] | Seltzer pp. 454-474 |
| | Wednesday 2 Nov | The Ottoman Empire | | |
| | Friday 4 Nov | Suleiman the Magnificent, Safed - Mysticism and Kabbalah | | |

Essay due

| | | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|--|--|--|
| Week 10 | Monday 7 Nov | Midterm | Pope Gregory the Great and the Jews [R] The Crusaders in Mayence [R] The Accusation of the Ritual Murder of St. William of Norwich [R] The Ritual Murder Accusation at Blois [R] Gluckel of Hamelyn extract [R] | Seltzer pp. 419-513 |
| | Wednesday 9 Nov | Persecution in Europe 1300-1600 (Ashkenaz) | | |
| | Friday 11 Nov | Shabbetai Zvi: The False Messiah | | Ben-Sasson pp. 593-612 |
| Week 11 | Monday 13 Nov | Europe 1600-1800 Hassidim and Mitnagdim GUEST LECTURE: PROF. JOEL BERKOWITZ | <i>A Concise History of the Jewish People</i> pp. 155-188 Spinoza Readings [R] Christian Wilhelm Von Dohm <i>Concerning the Amelioration of the Civil Status of the Jews (1781)</i> [R] | Seltzer pp. 513-570 |
| | Wednesday 15 Nov | Spinoza, Enlightenment and Haskalah | | |
| | Friday 17 Nov | 19 th Century Russia to the Kishniev Pogrom 1903 | | |
| Week 12 | Monday 20 Nov | Emancipation and Assimilation | <i>A Concise History of the Jewish People</i> pp.189-202 Solomon Maimon, <i>My Emergence from Talmudic Darkness</i> [R] Karl Emil Franzos <i>Every Country has the Jews that it Deserves</i> [R] Franz Kafka <i>My Father's Bourgeois Judaism</i> [R] | Seltzer pp. 580-613 |
| | Wednesday 22 Nov | NO CLASS | | |
| | Friday 24 Nov | NO CLASS | | Ben-Sasson pp. 800-853 |
| Week 13 | Monday 27 Nov | Religious Reforms | <i>A Concise History of the Jewish People</i> pp. 236-239 Ludwig Boerne <i>Because I am a Jew I love Freedom</i> [R] Rahel Levin Varnhagen <i>O How Painful to Have Been Born a Jewess</i> [R] Rosa Luxemburg <i>No Room in My Heart for Jewish Suffering</i> [R] Eduard Bernstein <i>How I Grew Up a Jew in the Diaspora</i> [R] Zecharias Frankel <i>On Changes in Judaism</i> [R] Samson Raphael Hirsch <i>Religion Allied to Progress</i> [R], <i>Awaiting a Pogrom</i> , [R] N Tchaiykovsky <i>The Massacre of the Jews at Kishinev</i> [R] | Seltzer pp. 626-709 |
| | Wednesday 29 Nov | Migration | | |
| | Friday 1 Dec | Yiddish Socialism and Hebrew Nationalism | | Ben-Sasson pp. 790-800 Demographic changes |
| Essay due | | | | |
| Week 14 | Monday 4 Dec | Immigration to Palestine before 1880 Yishuv and Early Aliyot | <i>A Concise History of the Jewish People</i> pp. 207-232 AND 240-256 Jonathan Frankel, "Modern Jewish Politics East and West (1840-1939) Utopia, Myth, Reality" [R] Ahad Ha-am, "The Wrong Way" [R] The Bund <i>Decision on the Nationality Question</i> [R] Bartal, Israel "From 'kollel' to 'neighbourhood': Revisiting the Pre-Zionist Ashkenazi Community in Nineteenth-Century Palestine [R] | Seltzer pp. 665-671 |
| | Wednesday 6 Dec | Fin De Siecle World War I, Twentieth Century Jewry | | |
| | Friday 9 Dec | Holocaust and World War II | | Ben-Sasson pp. 1063-end |
| Week 15 | Monday 11 Dec | Holocaust and State of Israel | <i>A Concise History of the Jewish People</i> pp. 260-304 Manya Shohat, "The Collective" [R] The Beilis Trial [R] Martin Buber and Hermann Cohen <i>A Debate on Zionism and Messianism</i> [R] The Balfour Declaration [R] Adolf Hitler on <i>The Jewish Question</i> [R] | |
| Final Class | | | | |

General Education Course: JST 150/REL 150

UAlbany GenEd categories: This course satisfies the old CHP requirement and the new Global and Cross-Cultural Requirement.

• Characteristics of GenEd courses: Gen Ed.

1. offers explicit understandings of the procedures and practices of disciplines and interdisciplinary fields.
2. provides multiple perspectives on the subject matter, reflecting the intellectual and cultural diversity within and beyond the University.
3. emphasizes active learning in an engaged environment that enables students to become producers as well as consumers of knowledge.
4. promotes critical thinking about the assumptions, goals, and methods of various fields of academic study and the interpretive, analytic, and evaluative competencies central to intellectual development.

• Learning Objectives for GenEd Global & Cross-Cultural Studies Courses

These course enable students to demonstrate:

1. an understanding of the impact (e.g. economic, political, historical, cultural) of nations, regions, and cultures upon other nations, regions, and cultures
2. an understanding of the reciprocal interactions between individuals and global systems
3. an ability to see cultural groups from their own points of view
4. an ability to use the analytic tools of a specific discipline to engage in comparative analyses of cultures, nations, and regions

• How does the course aim to fulfill the learning objectives?

While providing students with the critical skills to understand historical processes, this course teaches students to understand the various ways that Jews responded to the demands of the modern world in a variety of geographical regions and eras. At the same time, we engage in close textual and literary analyses of fictional, primary, and secondary sources to fully understand the range of Jewish actions in modern times.

1. Throughout this course we examine the ways in which the development of various national models was created in part through their relationship with the Jews in their midst and how Jews developed many of their own models in terms of these relationships.
2. This course examines many case studies of major Jewish figures who sought to come to terms with the anti-Jewish expressions of their society.
3. By reading memoirs, students gain powerful insights into the lives of Jews who lived in the times that we study.
4. Regularly, we compare and contrast the various experience of Jews in different societies across borders and continents.