

**JEWISH HISTORY I: ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL
SYLLABUS**

Graduate Seminar

Jewish Studies 16:563:501

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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 begin the course with the ancient Israelites as an independent people in its 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, medieval chronicles, etc.) are emphasized throughout. The course concludes with the Expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula.

Course Requirements: Students are expected to read all assigned material, including the Efron and Seltzer textbooks, along with the additional readings (both monographs and articles), many of which are on the Sakai website. The Course Packet (which contains maps, charts, timelines, and, most importantly, the primary sources) must be brought to class every day.

Textbooks:

John Efron, ed., *The Jews: A History* (Pearson)

ISBN: 9780131786875

Robert Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought* (Prentice Hall)

ISBN: 0024089400

Written assessments:

- Two take-home exams (essay format), at dates to be determined
- A semester-length research paper, on a topic to be decided between professor and student, due at the end of the semester

Grading:

- Exam One – 25%
- Exam Two – 25%
- Research Paper – 50%

Bible:

In the early parts of the course, you will need to consult an English translation of the Bible (Jewish canon only). Recommended volumes include *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures* (Jewish Publication Society), *The Jerusalem Bible* (Koren), and *The New Revised Standard Version* (published in several different versions, including such titles as *The New Oxford Annotated NRSV Bible* and *The Harper Collins Study Bible*).

You also can access various Bible translations online, though the aforesaid versions are not available. The best site is probably <http://www.biblegateway.com>, and the best translation available there is the *New International Version = NIV* (the first on the list of English translations).

Academic Integrity:

Our statement is as plain as can be: “Cheating of any kind – including plagiarism on the research paper, copying on the exams – will not be tolerated. Pure and simple.”

Style Guide:

Students are welcome to use any of the standard style guides (Chicago, MLA, social science method, etc.), as long as the style is followed consistently throughout.

Course Objectives, Learning Goals, and Assessments:

By course end, the student will possess both:

- a) a firm grasp on the large narrative of Jewish history from its ancient origins until the dawn of modernity, and
- b) a detailed knowledge of one particular aspect of this history (along with its historiography) derived from the final research project.

The learning goals (using the SAS list) that best define this course are:

- (h) understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place; and
- (i) explain and be able to assess the relationship among assumptions, method, evidence, arguments, and theory in social and historical analysis.

Learning outcomes will be assessed via essay questions on the exams and via the major research paper required of students in this course. The latter project will be judged not only for its content, but by the student's ability to write clearly and to express his/her ideas in a lucid fashion, along with the use of a wide array of both primary and secondary sources (essential to any history course).

JEWISH HISTORY I: ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL

CLASS SCHEDULE

Note: In addition to the materials listed here, all readings required for 01:563:201 Jewish Society and Culture I (the undergraduate survey course) should be read as well (available at Sakai) – though some of these items are listed below as well.

Week 1: Ancient Israel

- Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 1-24
- Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, pp. 7-43
- Rendsburg, “The Early History of Israel,” in G. D. Young, M. W. Chavalas, and R. E. Averbeck, eds., *Crossing Boundaries and Linking Horizons: Studies in Honor of Michael C. Astour on His 80th Birthday* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1997), pp. 433-453 (Sakai)
- Online Course, “Bible and History” available at <http://jewishstudies.rutgers.edu/component/content/165?task=view>
- Avraham Faust, *Israel’s Ethnogenesis: Settlement, Interaction, Expansion, And Resistance* (London: Equinox, 2007). ISBN 1904768989

Week 2: Israelite Religion

- Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, pp. 47-111
- Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 4-5
- Gary Rendsburg, “An Essay on Israelite Religion,” in Jacob Neusner, ed., *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, New Series, Volume 8 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), pp. 1-17 (Sakai)
- Moshe Weinfeld, “Israelite Religion” in Mircea Eliade, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 7, pp. 481–497. New York and London: Macmillan, 1987 (Sakai)
- Joshua Berman, *Created Equal: How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). ISBN 0195374703

Week 3: The Bible

- Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 30-48
- Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, pp. 43-46
- 2 Kings 22
- Gary Rendsburg, “JEDP Theory” (Sakai)
- William Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). ISBN 0521536227

Week 4: Persian Period

- Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 25-30
- Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, pp. 112-164
- Nehemiah 9-12
- Israel Knohl, *The Divine Symphony: The Bible's Many Voices* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003). ISBN 082760761X
- Martin Jaffee, *Early Judaism* (Bethesda, MD: University Press of Maryland, 2006). ISBN 188305393-5.

Week 5: Hellenism and Judaism

- Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 49-62
- Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, pp. 171-194
- 1 Maccabees 1-2, available at <http://www.livius.org/maam/maccabees/1macc01.html> and <http://www.livius.org/maam/maccabees/2macc01.html>
- Elias Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). ISBN 0674474910

Week 6: The Dead Sea Scrolls

- 1QS, Community Rule (Sakai)
- 1QpHab, Peshar Habakkuk (Sakai)
- 4QMMT, Halakhic Letter (Sakai)
- James VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994). ISBN 080286435X

Week 7: The Hellenistic Jewish Diaspora

- Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 62-69
- Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, pp. 195-242
- Philo, “On the Life of Moses,” sections 1-31 (Sakai)

Week 8: The End of the Second Temple Period

- Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 70-91
- Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, pp. 243-260
- Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, Book 15 (Sakai)
- Shaye Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006). ISBN 0664227430

Week 9: The Early Rabbis (Tannaim)

- Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 92-115
- Mishna selections (Berakhot, Shabbat, Pesahim, Avot) (Sakai)
- Online Course, “Introduction to Rabbinic Literature,” available here: http://jewishstudies.rutgers.edu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=266&Itemid=5
- David Kraemer, “The Mishnah,” in *Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 4, *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 299-315 (Sakai).
- Lee Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 135-210. ISBN 0300106289
- Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society: 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) ISBN 0691117810

Week 10: The Talmud

- Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, pp. 261-314
- Bavli Bava Metzia 58b-59a (Sakai)
- Robert Goldenberg, “Talmud,” in Michael Chernick (ed.), *Essential Papers on the Babylonian Talmud* (New York: NYU Press, 1994), 24-51. ISBN 0814715052 (Sakai)

Week 11: The Jews under Islam (I)

- Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 116-136
- Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, pp. 323-349
- Online course on “Jews under Islam”:
<http://jewishstudies.rutgers.edu/online-studies/jews-under-islam>
- Reuven Firestone, “Jewish Culture in the Formative Period of Islam,” in *Cultures of the Jews*, David Biale (ed.) (New York: Schocken, 2002), 267-302. ISBN 0805241310
- Mark Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). ISBN 0691139318
- Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). ISBN 0691054193.

Week 12: The Jews Under Islam (II)

- Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 136-146
- S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, an abridgment in one volume, edited by Jacob Lassner (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). ISBN 0520217349
- Ray Scheindlin, “Merchants and Intellectuals, Rabbis and Poets: Judeo-Arabic Culture in the Golden Age of Islam,” in *Cultures of the Jews*, David Biale (ed.) (New York: Schocken, 2002), 315-386. ISBN 0805241310

Week 13: Medieval Jewish Thought

- Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, pp. 373-450
- Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, 3.32 (Sakai)
- Maimonides, “Letter to Samuel ibn Tibbon” (Sakai)
- Joel Kraemer, “Moses Maimonides: An Intellectual Portrait,” in Kenneth Seeskin (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 10-57. ISBN 0521819741

Week 14: Jews under Christendom

- Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 147-183
- Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, pp. 350-372
- Ivan Marcus, “A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis: The Culture of Early Ashkenaz,” in *Cultures of the Jews*, David Biale (ed.) (New York: Schocken, 2002), 449-516. ISBN 0805241310
- Recommended: Robert Chazan, *The Jews of Medieval Western Christendom, 1000-1500* (Cambridge, 2006). ISBN: 978-0521846660

Week 15: Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah

- Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, pp. 419-453
- Zohar II, 20a-b (Noah) (Sakai)
- Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken, 1996). ISBN 0805210512