

JEWISH SOCIETY AND CULTURE I (Ancient and Medieval)

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

Professor Gary A. Rendsburg

Office: 12 College Avenue, room 203
Phone: 732-932-3573
Email: grends@rci.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.

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

Core Learning Goals:

Via this course, students will be expected to:

- Understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place. (B.h)
- Explain the development of some aspect of a society or culture over time, including the history of ideas or history of science. (B.k)
- Employ historical reasoning to study human endeavors. (B.l)

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.

Assessment Methods

(forthcoming)

Course Requirements: Students are expected to read the material assigned in the Efron textbook and at the Sakai website and to bring the course packet to class every day. I also encourage class participation as much as possible. I do not take attendance, but please note the following. The class lectures will present material not necessarily covered in the Efron textbook and other readings, and this material will be included on the exams.

To supplement our course material, you are required to view three online mini-courses offered through the Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life: "The Bible and History", "Rabbinic Literature", and "Jews under Islam" (details to follow).

There are three exams, two midterms and a final, each covering approximately one-third of the course material. The exams will include a mixture of short answer questions and short essay questions.

Grading: Each of the three exams will be worth 1/3 of the course grade (which is to say, the final exam is not weighted any differently than the two midterm exams). At the same time, the course grade can be adjusted slightly based on class participation, progress, and other subjective factors.

Textbooks:

- *The Jews: A History*, ed. John Efron et al. (Prentice Hall, 2009). ISBN: 0131786873. \$53.33. Available at the Rutgers University Bookstore (Ferren Mall, One Penn Plaza, 732-246-8448) and on reserve at Alexander Library

- Course Packet (in two parts, available at the Sakai course website)

From time to time you may need to consult an English translation of the Bible (the 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 aforementioned 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).

Additional Comments: Lateness is disruptive to the instructor, to the students, and to the overall rhythm of the class. Please come to class on time.

If you 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 come see me during office hours for further clarification.

While I do not take attendance (as noted above), you may want 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.

CLASS SCHEDULE

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 2500 (!) 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

Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 1-24

CP, 1.4-13, 1.16-38, 1.49-59

Rendsburg, "The Early History of Israel" (Sakai)

Rendsburg, "Twelve Tribes" (Sakai)

Exodus 12-15

Numbers 20-21

Deuteronomy 1-3

Joshua 1-12

Judges 1

1 Samuel 8

2 Samuel 7

Online Course, "Bible and History"

Israelite Religion

CP, 1.39-48

Rendsburg, "An Essay on Israelite Religion" (Sakai)

Hosea 1-3

2 Kings 17:7-23

Isaiah 44:24-45:22

Persian Period

Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 25-30

CP, 1.60-64

2 Chronicles 36

Ezra 1-2

Nehemiah 8, 13

The Bible

Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 30-48

CP, 1.14-15, 1.65-66
Rendsburg, “JEDP Theory” (Sakai)
Jaffee, “Text and Canon” (Sakai)

Hellenism and Judaism

Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 49-62
CP, 2.4-13

Jewish Sects of the Second Temple Period

Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 62-69
CP, 2.14-38
Jaffee, “Samaritans” (Sakai)
“Samaritans” – Hadassah Magazine (Sakai)

Jews under Roman Rule

Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 70-91

Rabbinic Judaism

Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 92-115
CP, 2.39-47
Fine, “Synagogue” (Sakai)
Levine, “Synagogue” (Sakai)
Online Course, “Rabbinic Literature”

Jews under Islam

Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 116-136
CP, 2.48-51, 2.60-64
Geller, “Karaites” (Sakai)
Rustow, “Baghdad in the West” (Sakai)
Somekh, “Jews under Islam” (Sakai)

Medieval Jewish Thought

Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 136-146
CP, 2.74-76

Jews under Christendom

Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 147-173
CP, 2.52-59, 2.65-73

Expulsion from Spain

Efron, *The Jews*, pp. 179-183