

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Jewish Studies 01:563:340

Religion 01:840:340

Fall 2020

*** * * DUE TO THE COVID-19 SITUATION, * * *
THIS COURSE WILL USE A MIX OF
ASYNCHRONOUS RECORDED VIDEO LECTURES
AND SYNCHRONOUS WEBEX MEETINGS.**

Tues / Thurs 1:10 – 2:30

Miller Hall, room 115

Professor Gary A. Rendsburg

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Office Hours: to be determined

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Course Description:

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls represents one of the most dramatic archaeological finds of the twentieth century. Since their discovery in 1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls have been the subject of intense study and debate, and have profoundly influenced the way in which we understand the Jewish sects of the Second Temple period, the origins of Christianity, and the rise of Rabbinic Judaism. In this class we will examine a number of the Dead Sea Scrolls, attempting to understand them within their original historical context, as well as their significance for later Jewish and Christian traditions. All readings are in English.

Textbooks:

Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 7th edition
(Penguin, 2012) – Paperback

- List price: \$23.00
- www.bn.com: \$21.50
- ISBN-13: 9780141197319

James Vanderkam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, 2nd edition
(Eerdmans, 2010) – Paperback

- List Price: \$23.00
- www.bn.com: \$20.70
- ISBN-13: 9780802864352

(Note: The books are available at the Rutgers University Bookstore.)

Canvas Materials:

There are a host of readings posted at Canvas, under two modules:

- a) Articles – JHR
- b) Articles – Others

The former are a series of essays which appeared in a special issue of the *Journal of Religious History* devoted to the Dead Sea Scrolls. The latter are a series of other essays. I will assign these readings at selected times throughout the semester. In addition, you will find the very extensive Course Packet posted at Canvas.

Course Flow:

Students are expected to read the assigned material, both from the textbooks and from the Canvas website. The “Class Schedule” below does not list the readings for each class or for each week. Rather, I will notify you at least once per week (at the end of class maybe and always via email to be sure) of the upcoming readings.

I encourage class participation as much as possible. I do not take attendance, but please note the following. The class lectures frequently present material not covered in the readings, and (one hardly needs to add) this material will be included on the exams.

To Bring to Class:

Students must bring to each class session the Vermes book (with the actual Dead Sea Scrolls translated therein) and the Course Packet (with a variety of important materials that we will consult on a regular basis). You do not have to bring the Vanderkam book to class each time, but since it is a rather slender volume, you should feel free to do so.

Course Learning Goal:

The student will gain a clear understanding of the contents, importance, and historical significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Grading:

- Class participation, preparedness, and engagement (15%)
- Midterm exam (30%) – October 20
- Final exam (35%) – per the official final examination schedule
- Quiz (10%) – September 24
- Short paper (3-5 pages) (10%) – due December 1

Attendance:

A major portion of the educational experience in this course takes place in the classroom. While attendance *per se* is not an official component of your course grade, you will be at a great disadvantage if you are not present in class on a regular basis.

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 come see me during office hours 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.

Academic Integrity:

Please note the University's academic integrity policy:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers>

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/students/registration-form>.
- Full disability policies and procedures are at <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

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.

I can say the following, though. We will begin the semester with the essential historical and religious background material, required to fully comprehend the importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This will include, for example, a look at the main sources for the history of Judaism during the crucial period of c. 200 B.C.E. – c. 200 C.E., the main Jewish sects of the time period, the early Christian movement, and the rise of Rabbinic Judaism.

We begin our course, on day one, with the remarkable story of the discovery of the Scrolls, their publication and dissemination, and the excavations of Qumran – presented via PowerPoint.

Once we have a firm grounding in these subjects, we will commence our reading of the most important Dead Sea Scrolls (see list below).

The Primary Texts to be Read:

My present plan is to read selections from the following texts in the following order:

- 1QS – Community Rule
- CD – Damascus Document
- MMT – Miqṣat Ma‘ase ha-Torah
- 11QT – Temple Scroll
- 1QpHab – Peshar Habakkuk
- 1QM – War Scroll
- 1QH – Hodayot

I anticipate, however, that we still will have plenty of time remaining in our course to read and study still other Qumran documents. As you can see from the Vermes book, there are literally hundreds to choose from, though except for the ones listed above, they are mainly very fragmentary.