

HISTORY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE
HIST 3275

Dr. Sara Abosch

University of Memphis, Spring 2010

Class: Tuesday & Thursday 11:20-12:45 Mitchell Hall 307

Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 9:30-11:00, and by appt., Mitchell Hall 422

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Course Description:

This course will survey the history of the Jewish people and religion from their origins in the ancient Middle East, as tribal Israelites, to the rise of Christian Europe and Islam, the later Middle Ages, through to the modern era. The basic tenets of the Jewish religion will be explored briefly. The themes of exile and return and pre-modern and modern nationhood will be considered. Additional topics may include the condition of Jewish life at the end of the Middle Ages, messianism, Hassidism, Jewish emancipation, modern 'scientific' or 'biological' Antisemitism, Zionism, mass migration, the Holocaust, the creation of the State of Israel, and the rise of the 'new' Antisemitism of the 21st century. The positive aspects of Jewish history and cultural response to the societies in which Jews dwelt will also be covered, as too often Jewish history is presented as predominantly a long series of persecutions and tribulations.

Course Objectives:

The aim of this course is to expose you to some of the major themes and developments in Jewish history, as they relate to the Jewish people, through readings, lectures, discussions, and film. **No prior knowledge of Jewish history or religion is required.** Emphasis will be placed upon improving students' analytical and conceptual skills through discussion, analysis of primary and secondary sources, and reflection and writing on topics related to the subject matter.

Course Requirements:

We will have several in-class discussions. Where appropriate, original documents or website links will be provided for supplemental reading. Students are expected to have read the assigned materials **before** each class. Regular attendance and participation count toward the semester grade. The written requirements include 4 response papers (3-4 pages each); occasional 1 page summary essays—topics assigned in class (these will count toward participation grade), and a final exam. Guidelines for the review papers will be given out in class.

The final grade will be calculated as follows: class participation (20%), response papers (5 x 10%=50%), final exam (30%). Late assignments will be penalized. You must hand in all written work to be assigned a grade for the course. Cheating and/or plagiarism will **NOT** be tolerated and will be grounds for failing the particular assignment and the course. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, ask!

Attendance & Participation: Regular attendance and participation in class and reading discussions count toward the semester grade. Class begins at the scheduled time and attendance is taken at the beginning of class. More than 2 unexcused absences will affect your course grade. As a general rule, make-up exams/assignments are not given. Students are responsible for any work missed.

Electronic devices & In-class Etiquette: **Turn off all electronic communication devices before class begins and put them away.** Texting, tweeting, IM'ing, emailing, surfing the web, etc. are not permitted during class—doing so is both rude and distracting to the instructor and your classmates. Notes are to be hand-written. Note-taking is a skill that students need to master. Students must get instructor's permission for computer use in class.

Grading Scale:

The course grading scale is as follows: A=100-93; A-=92-90; B+=89-87; B=86-83; B-=82-80; C+=79-77; C=76-73; C-=72-70; D+=69-67; D=66-63; F=62 or below (the university does not grant a D-).

Assignments and lecture topics may be modified during the course of the semester as the instructor determines class interests and needs.

Required Books:

The following books will be available for purchase at the university bookstore. They may also be purchased used from: www.amazon.com, www.alibris.com, www.abebooks.com, www.biblio.com, etc.

- Desbois, Father Patrick. *The Holocaust by Bullets: A Priest's Journey to Uncover the Truth Behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews* (2008).
- Gerber, Jane S. *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* (1992).
- Glückel. *Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln*. (1977).
- Scheindlin, Raymond. *A Short History of the Jewish People: From Legendary Times to Modern Statehood* (2000)—Course textbook.

[Optional] •Herzl, Theodor. *The Jewish State*, is available on-line at Google Books and in our library.

Original documents & supplemental material:

Additional material (particularly original documents) will sometimes be discussed in lecture. This material will be available online or provided by the instructor. Primary source material may be found at the following internet site:

- Internet Jewish History Sourcebook: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/jewishshook.html>
Includes documents on the People of Israel, Emergence of Judaism, Medieval Jewish Life, Jewish Life after the Enlightenment, etc.

Class Schedule:

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| January 13 | Initial impressions: Introductory remarks. What is Jewish history? Why do we study it? Is the Bible reliable as an historical source? What can we learn from it?
Class Exercise: Taking a history—How historical events and group membership shape our lives. |
| January 18 | Covenants & Patriarchs: The Worlds of Noah, Abraham, Isaac & Jacob
Scheindlin, 1-24; Genesis 9: 1-29 and 15: 1-19 at:
www.mechon-mamre.org/e/et/et0.htm (click on Genesis & Chapter #s) |
| January 20 | Conquest of Canaan? Canaanites, Judges, and the Problematics of Monarchy
Joshua 5: 1-15 and 6: 1-27 at:
www.mechon-mamre.org/e/et/et0.htm (click on Joshua & Chapter #s) |

- January 25** Davidic & Solomonic Kingdoms: Unification, Jerusalem & the Temple Cult
Susan Niditch, “Women in the Bible” in *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective (JW)*, ed. Judith Baskin (via UM drive)
First Response Paper Due: Guidelines will be given out in class 1/18.
- January 27 Babylonia & Prophetic Exhortation: Judah in Exile
Scheindlin, 25-50; Isaiah 1: 1-31 and Jeremiah 29: 1-15 at:
www.mechon-mamre.org/e/et/et0.htm (click on Isaiah, Jeremiah & Chapter #s). You may want to look at the Book of Daniel too.
- February 1 Return and Second Temple Era
Esther 9: 1-10 at: www.mechon-mamre.org/e/et/et0.htm
(click on Esther & Chapter #)
- February 3 Rome and Judea: Religio-Cultural Turmoil, Destruction of the Second Temple & the birth of Christianity
Scheindlin, 51-70
Jews & Later Roman Law: www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/jews-romanlaw.html
- February 8 Beyond the Temple Cult: Growth of Rabbinic and Mishnaic Judaism
Judith Romney Wegner, “The Image and Status of Women in Classical and Rabbinic Judaism” in *JW* (via UM drive)
- February 10 Islam and Judaism, Arabs and Jews: Exercises in Toleration?
Scheindlin, 71-96;
Pact of Umar: www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/pact-umar.html
- February 15 Christian Europe and the Jews: Blood Libel & Ritual Murder Accusations
Scheindlin, 97-122
Judith Baskin, “Jewish Women in the Middle Ages” in *JW* (via e-mail)
Medieval Antisemitism: Blood Libel-Blois (1171), William of Norwich (1173), York Riots, 1190 (via UM drive)
Host Desecration: www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=938&letter=H
Black Death & Jews: www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/1348-jewsblackdeath.html
- February 17 Sephardic Jewry
Gerber, pp. 2-89
- February 22** *Reconquista* & Expulsion: Jews under Christian Control
Gerber, pp. 92-175, 285-289
French Expulsion: www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/1182-jewsfrance1.html
Second Response Paper Due: Guidelines will be given out in class 2/15.
- February 24 Legacies of the Middle Ages
Scheindlin, 149-172; Glückel, Books 1-3; Docs. sect. I: 1, 3, 4, 6, 9
Martin Luther & the Jews:
www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/Luther_on_Jews.html
Additional documents for semester will be provided via handout.
- March 1 Moving Toward the Modern Era—Traditional European Jewish Life in Transition
Glückel, Books 4-5; Docs sect. II: 1, 2, 4, 7
- March 3** Glückel of Hameln, Her Life and Times
Glückel, Books 6-7
Third Response Paper Due: Guidelines will be given out in class 2/24.

March 8	Spring Break
March 10	Spring Break
March 15	Jewish Responses to the Modern Era: Hasidism, Frankism & the start of the <i>Haskalah</i> Scheindlin, 149-172; Docs. sect. II: 15, 16, 19, 21, 23; sect. VIII: 10-12, 16-20
March 17	Responses to Problem of Jewish Identity in the Modern World (cont.) Docs. sect. IV: 1-4, -8, 10, 12-15; sect. VI: 1, 4-6, 8; sect. VIII: 13-15, 31
March 22	Era of Revolutions and Emancipation Docs. sect. III: 1-5, 9-11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22-26; sect. VII: 1-5
March 24	Revolutions (cont.)
March 29	Emancipation (cont.) Deborah Hertz, "Emancipation Through Intermarriage? Wealthy Jewish Salon Women in Old Berlin" in <i>JW</i> , via e-mail
March 31	Life in Eastern Europe Scheindlin, 173-198; John Klier, "What Exactly was a Shtetl?" from <i>The Shtetl: Image and Reality</i> , Estraiikh and Krutikov (eds.) via e-mail
April 5	Modern Anti-Semitism & the Emergence of the 'Jewish Question' Docs. sect. VII: 11-15, 17-24, 26, 27; sect. VIII: 21; J. A. Hobson, "For Whom are We Fighting?" from <i>The War in South Africa</i> (1900) UM drive; Richard S. Levy, "A Lie and a Libel: the <i>Protocols of the Elders of Zion</i> Since the Holocaust," from <i>Representations of Jews Through the Ages</i> , Greenspan & Le Beau (eds.) UM drive mail; "The Rabbi's Speech to the Jewish People" (1872, 1905) UM drive; Herman Bernstein, Chapter Two "The Stories from Which the Protocols were Fabricated" in <i>The History of a Lie</i> (1921) at: www.gutenberg.org/files/19200/19200-h/19200-h.htm
April 7	Modern Antisemitism, cont.. Fourth Response Paper Due: Guidelines will be given out in class 3/31.
April 12	Zionism: Theodor Herzl, Alfred Dreyfus and the Failure of Liberal Nationalism Scheindlin, 217-234; 123-148; Optional: Herzl, <i>The Jewish State</i> (online)
April 14	War and Peace? WWI, Bolshevism, National Socialism & the Interwar Years Scheindlin, 199-216; Desbois, 1-120; Docs. sect. X: 2, 4, 6-8, 14, 17, 20, 22-24, 27, 31-33
April 19	The Holocaust Desbois, 121-213; Docs. sect. XI: 1, 3, 4-18, 21-24, 29-36 Fifth Response Paper Due: Guidelines will be given out in class 4/12
April 21	Jews in the Post-War Era Scheindlin, 235-261
April 26	Course Wrap-up. Review for Final Exam: Bring any questions you may have. General essay topics will be given out in class.