

Introduction to Judaism  
Spring 2016  
EUH 3931 section 03C5  
JST 3930 section 0672  
REL 3938 section 1191

MWF 7 (1.55-2.45)  
Keene-Flint 101

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This course aims to provide students with a basic introduction to Judaism. The focus will be on religious beliefs and practices that over two thousand years (until the nineteenth century) were the defining elements of Jewish identity. Such rituals and practices were not uniform, since every Jewish community around the world developed interpretations and customs that suited their particular needs and demands. However, there was and is a core set of beliefs and practices to normative Judaism, and that is what this course will cover.

While we won't be able to cover every aspect of Judaism, the hope is that students will come away with 1) a fundamental knowledge and understanding of the core beliefs and rituals of what is known as normative Judaism, and the communities that lived by them; and 2) a working familiarity of those Jewish communities that have significantly challenged or "re-formed" those beliefs and practices, particularly in the modern world.

**Required Books:**

Michael A. Fishbane, *Judaism*

The text should be purchased as part of the course requirement.

There are also articles that are part of the required reading assignments. These have been uploaded to CANVAS. You have access to them through the e-learning site CANVAS.

**Course Requirements:**

Attendance is mandatory. You will be allowed to miss three class meetings without

penalty; anything beyond that will affect your final evaluation and grade.

Please try to arrive to class on time.

Like any and all classes at the University, the assumption in this one is that you and those around you are here to learn. For this to occur, students must respect one another. Disagreement and debate are healthy, but please be civil during class discussions.

There will be four in-class exams. Each exam will count 25% towards your final grade. The exams will consist of identifications and essays.

**These are the dates of the exams: January 30, February 27, March 27, April 22.**

**For each midterm please bring an exam book (blue book) to class. These can be purchased at the University bookstores around campus. Also, please use only a pen, no pencil.**

Grading Scale:

A = 100-92.5	C = 77.4-72.5
A- = 92.4-90	C- = 72.4-70
B+ = 89.9-87.5	D+ = 69.9-67.5
B = 87.4-82.5	D = 67.4-62.5
B- = 82.4-80	D- = 62.4-60
C+ = 79.9-77.5	Fail = Below 60

**Relevant University Policies:**

"Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office ([www.dso.ufl.edu/drp/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drp/)). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation."

Students with disabilities will of course be accommodated, so long as their requests are accompanied by an official letter from UF's Office of Disabilities.

"In writing papers, be certain to give proper credit whenever you use words, phrases, ideas, arguments, and conclusions drawn from someone else's work. Failure to give credit by quoting and/or footnoting is PLAGIARISM and is unacceptable." Please review the University's honesty policy in your student handbooks or on the University's webpage.

"Student records are confidential. UF views each student, not their parent(s), as the primary contact for all communication."

## **Lecture Schedule**

### **1. Introduction: What do we mean by Judaism?**

**Reading:** Michael Satlow, "Defining Judaism: Accounting for 'Religions' in the Study of Religions" (pdf file)

### **2. Modern Religious Movements: Reform, Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Hasidism**

**Reading:** Fishbane, *Judaism*, chapter IV, pages 114-140

### **3. Law (*Halacha*) and commandments (*mitzvot*)**

**Reading:** Fishbane, *Judaism*, chapter II, pages 11-82

### **4. Sacred Writings: Bible, Talmud, Commentaries**

**Reading:** Fishbane, continue reading from section 3.

### **5. God and Israel**

**Reading:** Carl Ehrlich, "Aspects of the Divine" (pdf file)

### **6. Sacred and Profane: Time and Space**

**Reading:** Fishbane, *Judaism*, pages 83-100.

## 7. Sacred and Profane: Food and Sexuality

**Reading:** Riv-Ellen Prell, “The Vision of Woman in Classical Reform Judaism” (pdf file)

Mark Solomon, “Sexuality,” in *An Oxford Guide to Modern Judaism* (pdf file)

## 8. The Jewish life-cycle: birth, bar/bat mitzvah, marriage and divorce, death, and the afterlife

**Reading:** Fishbane, *Judaism*, pages 101-113

George Robinson, “Birth to Death: A Jewish Life Cycle” (pdf file, in CANVAS in the Life Cycle Folder)

## 9. Israel and Exile

**Reading:** Arnold Eisen, “Exile,” from *Twentieth-Century Jewish Religious Thought* (pdf)

## 10. Messianism and mysticism (kabbalah)

**Reading:** Gilbert Rosenthal, “Messianism Reconsidered” (pdf file)

Boaz Huss, “The New Age of Kabbalah” (pdf file)