

## Religious Studies 222: Origins of Judaism

Term: Fall 2016

Credit: 3.0 hr. credit, lecture-discussion

Instructor: Mr. Vehse  
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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 11:30 a.m.–12:45 p.m.

Course Objectives: Judaism is the religion of millions of people in our world. Its rituals are compelling and its theology profound. How is it possible, then, that in our time hardly any two groups practice Judaism exactly the same way, that no two people think of it in exactly the same terms, and yet we conceive of Jewish religious traditions as highly unified? The answers to these contemporary questions are to be found in the origins of Judaism in the ancient Mediterranean world. Specifically, they are to be located in the principle texts that informed Jewish life during the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman periods. This course will investigate those texts, seeking to situate the formative period for contemporary Judaism in historical context. We will trace out the path that Second Temple Judaism followed to become the Judaism of the Dual Torah. We will investigate how a relatively common sacrificial system became the most uncommon esoteric temple of the mind. How shall we proceed with this investigation? The historian of religions, Jonathan Z. Smith has observed (Map is not Territory): “Religion is a distinctive mode of human creativity, a creativity which both discovers limits and creates limits for human existence. What we study when we study religion is the passion and drama of man discovering the truth of what it is to be human.” (pp. 290–91) We will approach the origins of Judaism from a humanistic perspective. This approach is not like learning the traditions of thought and practice you might learn in a church, a mosque, a temple, a reading room, a synagogue, or any other “religious” environment. The activity is academic. It is not religious. The goal is not to fortify belief but to ask questions about and probe religion as a form of human experience. We will describe and analyze a living religious tradition of our own time on the basis of relevant, historical evidence concerning its beginnings.

Learning Outcomes: Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- 1) Define Judaism uniquely and in contrast to other major religious traditions throughout the world;
- 2) Identify major epochs in the historical origins and development of this tradition;
- 3) Explain transitional moments between ancient and modern forms of Jewish religious life;
- 4) Describe the historic centrality of practice in Judaism;
- 5) Discuss the significance of the concept of the Dual Torah;
- 6) Situate the study of Judaism within the broader historical-critical study of religion.

## Overview of Coursework & Attendance Policy:

The work for this course will include a midterm, a final, two critical film reviews, and class participation.

Note that the instructor considers attendance the foundation of class participation. A student who does not *attend* class cannot participate. (This means also that if you leave early without the instructor's permission, you will be marked absent!) For this reason, every absence, *beginning with the third*, will affect the individual student's final grade. Beginning with *the third absence*, the instructor will deduct twenty (20) points from class participation for each class missed. For the following types of absences *only*, there will be a credit of ten (10) points: incapacitating personal illness of the student concerned; family emergency in the immediate family of the student concerned; or official, University-sponsored activity involving direct participation by the student concerned. No other type of absence will be considered for the 10-point credit. (Under no circumstances will schedule conflicts for work or conflicting academic obligations—labs, tests, meetings with advisors, etc.—qualify for the credit!) *Everyone taking this class for credit is individually and personally responsible, regardless of any outside factor, for knowledge of all the required material. What we cover in lecture and discussion each class period is part of that material.*

Of the class participation points remaining at the end of the semester, the instructor will award an earned percentage based on attentiveness, insight, and relevance of contributions to class discussion.

### Texts:

Englander, Nathan. *For the Relief of Unbearable Urges*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999. (Cited below by "Englander" plus the title of the story, for example "the Gilgul of Park Avenue.")

Yehoshua, A. B. *Mr. Mani*, San Diego, New York, London: A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1992. (Cited below as "Mr. Mani.")

(Following title recommended only)

Berlin, Adele and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., Michael Fishbane, Consulting Editor, *The Jewish Study Bible*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. (Cited below as "TANAKH.")

Neusner, Jacob. *Method and Meaning in Ancient Judaism*, Second Series, Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1981.

Neusner, Jacob, ed. *Understanding Rabbinic Judaism from Talmudic to Modern Times*, New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1981.

Nickelsburg, George W. E. *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981.

<u>Grading:</u>	Midterm	200 points	<u>Grade</u>
	1 <sup>st</sup> Film Review	150 points	<u>Assignment:</u> <b>A:</b> 900 points and up
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Film Review	150 points	<b>B:</b> 800 points and up
	Final	300 points	<b>C:</b> 700 points and up
	Class Participation	<u>200 points</u>	<b>D:</b> 600 points and up
		1000 points	<b>F:</b> 599 points or less

### Tardiness & Class Participation:

Class begins every day promptly at the officially scheduled time. My attendance and class participation policies make *no allowance* for tardiness. I take attendance once at the beginning of class each day. If you are not on hand when I mark down names, it is your responsibility to inform me you were present. Please do so as soon as class is over for that day and *only* at that time. It is inappropriate to interrupt class once the lecture has begun. A late arrival is disturbance enough. If you absolutely must arrive late—I *strongly* discourage tardiness which I consider, as a rule, exceedingly impolite!—please enter the room with minimal fanfare and take your seat as quietly as possible.

Should you have reason to believe I did not mark you present, you must notify me before I leave the room on that day. Under no circumstances will I *ever* go back and change the official attendance record once I have left the room. I make no exceptions to this rule. Please do not ask me to do so. If you are charged with an absence in circumstances of this kind, no retroactive correction will be possible. *Late is as good as absent*, as far as I am concerned, if you neglect to inform me before I leave. Again, my class participation and attendance policies make no allowance for tardiness!

Attendance is more than a technicality in this class. I will not count someone present who simply appears at the last minute or who leaves shortly after daily attendance check-in. To be counted present, a student must be in the room for a substantial portion of lecture and discussion. As noted in the section on grades above, attendance is the basis for class participation, so I reserve the right to decide according to circumstances and on a case-by-case basis whether an individual was or was not in class long enough adequately to participate.

We will discuss details of the two film review papers in class. They need be no more than 750 to 1250 words in length, but they are to be diligently and independently completed according to usual academic standards. The deadlines for the film reviews are firm. Students who fail to turn them in on time will have the full point value of a letter grade (15 points) deducted automatically from the paper grade. There will be no exceptions to this rule! The instructor can take no responsibility for work which a student fails to complete or fails to complete on time. If you have any questions about scheduling or the content of the class, please see Mr. Vehse right away. He is available during office hours and for brief consultations immediately following class, as time allows.

The midterm and the final will be timed. Once you begin, you will have one hour and fifteen minutes in which to complete the midterm and two hours in which to complete the final. There are no second chances. I provide a study guide for both consisting of all the required questions but none of the answers. The study guides, like the exams themselves, are to be located on the class' WVU eCampus website. The best approach is to read and study the books or other material carefully in advance, find and record the answers to the questions and be prepared with study guide in-hand to respond as efficiently as possible once you begin the online exam. Midterm and final scores are automatically generated, reported back to you, and recorded in the WVU eCampus gradebook system. Once the original active window for each exam closes, the study guide for that exam will disappear from eCampus and **WILL NOT RETURN AT ANY POINT LATER IN THE SEMESTER!**

### Miscellaneous Important Information

WVU eCampus login: <https://ecampus.wvu.edu/>

WVU Final Exam Schedule: [http://registrar.wvu.edu/current\\_students/finals](http://registrar.wvu.edu/current_students/finals)

### Inclusion:

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Disability Services (304-293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see, <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

### Academic Honesty:

Academic dishonesty is defined by the WVU Student Handbook or "Mountie" under Section 3 as: plagiarism, cheating, dishonest practices, forgery, misrepresentation, or fraud. (Handbook available on-line at <http://www.arc.wvu.edu/>) For details, see paragraph 3.1.1.3. Procedures for addressing academic dishonesty are set forth in paragraphs 3.5.2.6. ff. I support this definition and abide by these policies and procedures. *I expressly reserve the right to impose the maximum penalty of an unforgivable F in cases of academic dishonesty.* At all times, it remains the student's exclusive responsibility to know and abide by all the requirements of academic honesty in my classroom and at WVU.

### Use of Cell Phones and Outside Material:

Cell phones *must* be turned off during class, unless they connect the bearer to a legal dependent—i.e. a minor or family member—for emergency purposes. Anyone who answers a cell phone or attempts to carry on a cell-phone conversation during class for routine purposes or purposes other than those above specified will be asked immediately to leave. Of course, cell phones also *must be turned off* during quizzes.

No material unrelated to the course, printed or otherwise—including the DA or any of its components—may be read, studied, worked-on, or used in any fashion or manner not related *directly* to the course and with the instructor's *explicit authorization* during the scheduled class period.

(Summary of themes, topics, and reading assignments begins on following side)

## Daily Topics and Reading Assignments

### PLEASE BRING ASSIGNED BOOKS TO CLASS EVERY DAY!

Today's Date

- 8/18/2016 **Handing-out of the Syllabus**, eCampus reading, Smith, *Imagining Religion*, "Introduction," pp. xi xiii; Neusner, *Take Judaism, For Example*, pp. 215–225.
- 8/23/2016 **The Study of Judaism, the Study of Religion**, eCampus reading, Trepp, *Judaism: Development and Life*, pp. 66–81.
- 8/25/2016 **The Study of Judaism: Modern Forms**, eCampus reading, Neusner, *The Way of Torah*, pp. 32–48.
- 8/30/2016 **The Study of Judaism: Central Doctrines and Beliefs**, eCampus reading, Smith, *Imagining Religion*, "Fences and Neighbors," pp. 1–18; Englander, "The Twenty-seventh Man."
- 9/1/2016 **The Study of Judaism: Practice**, eCampus reading, Trepp, *Judaism: Development and Life*, pp. 160–168; Englander, "The 'Tumblers.'"
- 9/6/2016 **The Calendar**, eCampus reading, Trepp, *Judaism: Development and Life*, pp. 168–183; Englander, "Reunion."
- 9/8/2016 **The Calendar, cont.**, eCampus reading, Ahlström, *Who Were the Israelites?*, "Foreword" and pp. 1–9; Englander, "The Wig."
- 9/13/2016 **Who Were the Israelites?** Nickelsburg (1 & 2), "Introduction," pp. 1–8; "Prologue Exile–Return–Dispersion," pp. 9–18; Isaiah 40–55, TANAKH pp. 860–895; Englander, "The Gilgul of Park Avenue."
- 9/15/2016 **Exile and Return to the Land**, Nickelsburg (3), "Tales of the Dispersion," pp. 19–42; Daniel 1–6, TANAKH pp. 1640–1655; eCampus reading: Susanna, OAB, Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, pp. 194–197; Bel and the Dragon, OAB, Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, pp. 198–200; Tobit, OAB, Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, pp. 12–31.
- 9/20/2016 **Cyrus and the Persian Context**, Ezra 1–10, TANAKH, pp. 1666–1687; Isaiah 56–66, TANAKH, pp. 895–916; Malachi 1–4, TANAKH, pp. 1268–1274; Englander, "Reb Kringle."
- 9/22/2016 **Ezra**, Nehemiah, TANAKH, pp. 1688–1711; Zechariah 1–14, TANAKH, pp. 1249–1267; Englander, "The Last One Way."
- 9/27/2016 **Nehemiah**
- 9/29/2016 Midterm Examination  
Nickelsburg (4), "Palestine in the Wake of Alexander the Great," pp. 43–69; eCampus reading: Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach 1–23, OAB, Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, pp. 101–133; Englander, "For the Relief of Unbearable Urges."
- 10/4/2016 **Alexander the Great and the Origins of Hellenistic Judaism**, Nickelsburg (5), "Israel in Egypt," pp. 161–193; eCampus reading: The Wisdom of Solomon 1–19, OAB, Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, pp. 71–99; Englander, "In This Way We are Wise."  
(First film review due!)
- 10/6/2016 **Judaism in the Hellenistic Kingdoms**, Nickelsburg (6), "Reform–Repression–Revolt," pp. 71–99; Daniel 7–12, TANAKH pp. 1655–1665; eCampus reading: 1 Maccabees 1–8, OAB, Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, pp. 202–223; Yehoshua, "First Conversation," pp. 3–38.

- 10/11/2016 **God of the Maccabees**, Nickelsburg (7), “The Hasmoneans and Their Opponents,” pp. 101–121 and 195–198; Yehoshua, from the “First Conversation,” pp. 39–73.
- 10/13/2016 **Jewish Identity, Ancient and Modern**, Nickelsburg (8), “The Romans and the House of Herod,” pp. 198–230; Yehoshua, “Second Conversation,” pp. 75–109.
- 10/18/2016 **Judaism and Empire**; Nickelsburg (9), “Revolt–Destruction–Reconstruction,” pp. 277–309; eCampus reading: The Acts of the Apostles 3, OAB, New Testament, pp. 190–191; The Gospel of Mark 12–13:8, OAB, New Testament, pp. 80–83; The Gospel of Matthew 22:7, OAB, New Testament, pp. 42; Yehoshua, from the “Second Conversation,” pp. 110–143.
- 10/20/2016 **Rising against Rome: the Great Revolt**; eCampus reading, Neusner, *Messiah in Context*, pp. 1–16; Yehoshua, “Third Conversation,” pp. 145–173.
- 10/25/2016 **Apocalypse and Salvation: Messianic Conceptions & the Second Temple**, Nickelsburg (10), “The Second Revolt,” pp. 311–318; Yehoshua, from the “Third Conversation,” pp. 174–201.
- 10/27/2016 **Bar Kokhbah and the End of Sacrifice**, Neusner (1), “‘Judaism’ after Moore: A Programmatic Statement,” pp. 19–33; Yehoshua, “Fourth Conversation,” pp. 203–246.
- 11/1/2016 **Pharisaic Judaism and Rabbinic Judaism**, Neusner (4), “Ritual without Myth: The Use of Law for the Study of Judaism,” pp. 55–65; Yehoshua, from the “Fourth Conversation,” pp. 247–289.
- 11/3/2016 **Pharisaic Judaism and Rabbinic Judaism, cont.** Neusner (5), “History and Purity,” pp. 67–81; Yehoshua, “Fifth Conversation,” pp. 291–327.  
(Second film review due!)
- 11/8/2016 **No Class**: Election Day
- 11/10/2016 **The Early Rabbinic Era**; Neusner (6), “The Description of Formative Judaism: The Social Perspective,” pp. 83–97; Yehoshua, from the “Fifth Conversation,” pp. 328–368.
- 11/15/2016 **Talmud**, Neusner (2), “Redaction, Formulation, and Form: The Case of Mishnah,” pp. 35–44.
- 11/17/2016 **Midrash and Other Rabbinic Genres**, Neusner (3), “Logic, Chronology, and the History of Mishnah’s Ideas,” pp. 45–51.
- 11/19–11/27 **Fall (Thanksgiving) Recess**
- 11/29/2016 Flex Day
- 12/1/2016 Flex Day
- 12/6/2016 Wrap Up & Conclusions

**Sole make-up opportunity for the midterm:**

Tuesday, December 6, 2016 (12/6/2016) beginning at 5:30 p.m.  
and running until  
midnight Monday, December 12, 2016 (12/12/2016).

