

**What is Jewish Studies?
Methods and Approaches**

Jewish Studies 2801F

Tuesdays, 1:30-4:30pm (AHB-1B02)

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Office: Lawson Hall 2245

Office hours: Mondays, 2-3pm and Thursdays 10-11am

Course Description:

Jewish Studies is by its nature multidisciplinary. This course is intended to introduce students to the interpretive frameworks necessary for understanding Jewish history, culture, and sacred and literary texts. It is intended to provide a structure, an overview, that will serve as a foundation for further exploration. The course examines the role played by sacred Jewish texts and the different ways in which they have been interpreted in the course of Jewish history; larger interpretive frameworks for understanding Jewish history; and the many forms taken by Jewish culture, including Jewish literature composed in numerous languages, works of philosophy and music.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course students will be able to:

explain the nature of debates regarding the different Jewish sacred texts and commentaries at different points in the history of the Jewish people;

explain the principal questions that have been posed regarding different periods of Jewish history; and

explain in very general terms the ways in which the distinctive characteristics of the Jewish tradition and the historical experiences of the Jewish people have influenced the larger culture of Jews, including works of literature, philosophy, and art produced by Jews.

Grading rubric:

Presentation:	15%
Primary Source analysis:	20%
Weekly Journal:	30%
Final Essay:	35%

Required text (for purchase at the bookstore):
***JPS Tanakh* (students must bring to class!)**

The remaining readings are available online via OWL.

** Over the course of the semester, students will be EXPECTED to attend the occasional lecture and event outside of our regular class time. These are inherent and critical aspects of our course and to be treated with the same seriousness and consideration as regular class time.

All assignments must be typed, double-spaced, use 1" margins, 12-point font.

Assignments handed in late will be penalized 2% per day. Extensions will be granted only in extreme circumstances. Late assignments will not be accepted after two weeks past the due date.

N.B. Students are required to turn off ALL electronic devices prior to the start of class. Cell phones, laptops, tablets, etc are not to be used during lecture. No electronic devices will be allowed during tests and examinations.

Assignments:**Presentation:**

Each week one or more students will be responsible for presenting the secondary source to the class. The presentation will: 1. Identify the methodology of the article/chapter; 2. Identify the main argument; 3. Consider the sources used to make the argument. 4. Assess the article – identify strengths and weakness; 5. Ask 1-2 questions for class discussion.

Primary Source analysis: In 2-3 pages, students will be asked to reflect on both the context and the meaning of a short text to be distributed mid-semester.

Weekly Journal:

In one-two pages, students will reflect critically on the readings, discussion and presentations from each class (with the exception of the last two meetings). **They will be due the following class.** These are opportunities for you to assess and synthesize the material, make sense of the larger theme and use 1-2 examples from class or readings to explore these larger ideas.

Final Essay:

Please pick a theme or topic within the field of Jewish Studies, and read three *academic* books on the subject that approach the topic from different perspectives and/or methods. In 8-10 pages, present the main arguments of each book; compare and contrast how these different works of scholarship explore the same overall topic. What do the different methodologies and approaches tell us about the subject?

You MUST consult with me about your topic and the choice of books by the beginning of November.

Possible topics include:

Gender, commerce, halakhah, leadership, Reform Judaism, the Ultra-Orthodox, emancipation...

Approaches (again, these are only suggestions):

History, anthropology, sociology, literature and literary studies, art history, political science, philosophy, etc,

Grading rubric:

Based on Western's grading scale (see,

http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/student_records/transcripts/grading_scale_gpa_conversion.html

l):

A+ 90-100%

A 80-89%

B 70-79%

C 60-69%

D 50-59%

F Below 50% or assigned when course is dropped with academic penalty.

The Teaching Resource Centre suggests that following general guidelines for essays. From: http://www.uwo.ca/tsc/resources/resources_graduate_students/ta_handbook/marking_practices/essay_characteristics.html

Characteristics of an "A" Paper:

Excellent, with perhaps, one forgivable flaw.

- Challenging thesis and clearly developed.
- References used intelligently in argument.
- Correct sentence/ grammatical structure.
- Sophisticated writing style.
- Appropriate documentation.
- Subtlety and complexity in approach to subject.
- Independence of thought.

Characteristics of a "B" Paper:

Good overall (i.e., does many things right).

- Some minor errors in factual content OR
- Some errors in terminology or general writing skills OR
- Some lapses in clarity (i.e., vagueness, incompleteness, flaws in structure).

Characteristics of a "C" Paper:

Generally correct, with more than a few flaws.

- Inconsistent or superficial.
- Weakness in line of argument.
- Dull thesis.
- Mechanical approach to argument.
- Lack of support.
- Problems with basic grammar or matters of style.
- Simplicity of thought, structure, or expression.

Characteristics of a "D" or Failing Paper

- Does not make its case.
- Severe difficulties in logical structure or mechanics of expression.
- Illogical, unsupported thinking without a line or argument.
- Inadequate thinking about the topic.
- Incoherent writing.

Weekly Topics and Readings:

Sept. 15	Rosh Hashanah – NO CLASS – distribution of syllabus by email
Sept. 22	Introduction: Jewish Studies and Questions of Knowledge
Sept. 29	<p>The Bible (<i>Tanakh</i>): Multiple Starting Points</p> <p>Readings: Primary Sources: The Book of Genesis.</p> <p>Secondary text: Finkelstein and Silberman, <i>The Bible Unearthed</i>, 10-24, 27-47.</p>
Oct. 5	<p>People of the Books: <i>Mishnaic</i> and <i>Talmudic</i> culture and their impact on the Jewish people</p> <p>Readings: Primary Sources: Pirke Avot Chapter 1, first three verses. The Oven of Akhnai. Talmudic excerpt. Bereshit rabba (excerpt)</p> <p>Secondary text: Rosenblum, “Why do you refuse to eat pork?”</p>
Oct. 13	<p>Medieval ethics and philosophy</p> <p>Readings: Primary Sources: Saadia Gaon, <i>The Book of Beliefs and Opinions</i>, excerpts. Yehuda Halevi, <i>Kuzari</i>, excerpts. Rambam (Maimonides), <i>Mishneh Torah</i>, excerpts.</p> <p>Secondary text: Barry Kogen, “Judah Halevi and his use of Philosophy”</p>
Oct. 20	<p>Sources in Jewish Studies – how to conduct academic research</p> <p><i>PRIMARY SOURCE ESSAY DUE TODAY IN CLASS</i></p>

<p>Oct. 27</p>	<p>Gender and everyday life</p> <p>Readings: Primary Sources: <i>Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln</i> (excerpts) Pauline Wengeroff, <i>Rememberings</i> (excerpts) Puah Rakovsky, <i>My life as a radical Jewish women</i> (excerpts)</p> <p>Secondary text: Robert Liberles, “On the Threshold of Modernity”, 11-40.</p>
<p>Nov. 3</p>	<p>Judaism and critical study of religion</p> <p>Readings: Primary Sources: Geiger, “Judaism and its history” 177-186. Samson Raphael Hirsch, <i>Judaism External</i> (excerpts) W. Gunther Plaut, <i>Writings</i> (excerpts)</p> <p>Secondary text: Batnitzky, <i>How Judaism became a religion</i>, 32-51.</p>
<p>Nov. 10</p>	<p>Music and Art</p> <p>Readings: Secondary texts: Richard Cohen, <i>Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe</i> (excerpts) Bohlman, <i>Jewish Music and Modernity</i> (excerpts)</p>
<p>Nov. 17</p>	<p>Antisemitism</p> <p>Readings: Primary Sources: Sartre, <i>Anti-Semite and Jew</i>, excerpts Arendt, <i>The Origins of Totalitarianism</i>, excerpts</p> <p>Secondary text: Chad Alan Goldberg, “The Jews, the Revolution, and the Old Regime in French Anti-Semitism and Durkheim's Sociology”</p>
<p>Nov. 24</p>	<p>Israel Studies and Ethnic Politics</p> <p>Readings: Primary Sources: Almog Behar, “Ana min al Yahoud” Sami Shalom Chetrit, selected poetry</p> <p>Secondary Text: Ella Shohat, “Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims” in <i>Social Text</i> 19/20 (1988): 1-35.</p>

Dec. 1	The Shoah – Bystanders Readings: Secondary texts: Saul Friedlander, “The Holocaust” Doris Bergen, “Social Death and international Isolation” in <i>Nazi Germany, Canadian Responses: Confronting Antisemitism in the Shadow of War</i>
Dec. 8	Final Discussion and concluding thoughts <i>FINAL ESSAY DUE IN CLASS TODAY</i>

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

Prerequisites and Antirequisites:

Unless you have either the requisites for this course, as described in the Academic Calendar description of the course, or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites. The Academic Calendar description of each course also indicates which classes are considered antirequisites, i.e., to cover such similar material that students are not permitted to receive academic credit for both courses.

Academic Offences:

Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitute a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of Publication and page number. Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and

indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writer's ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source; these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction, your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases, in their suspension from the University.

Medical Issues:

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Please go to https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_accommodations_link_for_OOR.pdf to read about the University's policy on medical accommodation. This site provides links to the necessary forms. In the event of illness, you should contact Academic Counselling as soon as possible. The Academic Counsellors will determine, in consultation with the student, whether or not accommodation should be requested. They will subsequently contact the instructors in the relevant courses about the accommodation. Once the instructor has made a decision about whether to grant an accommodation, the student should contact his/her instructors to determine a new due date for tests, assignments, and exams.

SUPPORT SERVICES:

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western, <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact, Morgan Sheriff, Undergraduate Program Advisor, Department of History, 519-661-2111 x84999 or msherif5@uwo.ca