

RS 3320 - Introduction to Judaism
RS 3320 (CRN 24297), JS 3300 (CRN 27707), HUMN 3302 (CRN 22303)
Religious Studies Program
The University of Texas at El Paso
Spring, 2024

Instructor: Dr. Clayton Bench

Time: 10:30 – 11:50 am

Room: CCSB 1.0204

Office: 210 Worrell Hall

Office Hours: M/W/F – 8:30 – 9:15AM; T/Th – 8:30 – 9:30AM

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Course Description:

This course provides an introductory overview of the history, beliefs, and practices of Judaism. The course is structured in a way that first addresses the historical background of Judaism followed by an exploration of the beliefs and practices of Judaism.

Course Objectives:

After successfully completing the course, students will be able to:

- 1) Locate Judaism within a historical critical framework and be able to answer historical critical questions such as:
 - a. What is the basic history of Israel and Israelite religion within the context of the Ancient Near East?
 - b. What is the relationship between Israelite religious tradition and Judaism?
 - c. How were the Jewish scriptures produced?
- 2) Discuss:
 - a. The emergence of Judaism in the post-Exilic Second Temple Period.
 - b. The development of competing Jewish sects at various times in Jewish history.
 - c. The emergence of Jewish literature (Tanakh, Rabbinic Literature, Jewish Liturgical texts, Shulchan Arukh, Responsa, Mystical Texts, etc.)
 - d. Topics such as the Exile, diaspora, persecution, the Jewish Messiah(s), covenant, return, the Holocaust, etc.
- 3) Explain the basic forms of belief and worship in contemporary Jewish communities (the Temple, the synagogue, festivals, rituals within the cycle of life, family relationships, community relationships, eschatology, the afterlife, etc.)

Required Textbooks and Readings:

de Lange, N. *An Introduction to Judaism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002
(available for free via UTEP Library access at

<https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmx1YmtfXzcxwNjc3X19BTg2?sid=d198a514-5757-41a4-be59-fd7f4e071172@redis&vid=2&format=EB&rid=1>)

*Additional required readings will be provided in Blackboard (see the schedule below)

Assignments and Grade Distribution

30% Participation (group discussions)

30% Research Essay (5 - 7 pages not including title page and bibliography)

20% Midterm Exam

20% Final Exam

Assignment Notes

Participation: Participation points will be given if the student actively participates in the weekly in class discussions and submits the weekly class discussion summary (done in class). This part of your grade is worth 30%. You cannot afford to miss out on the participation assignments. To effectively participate in the group discussions, students must do the readings and attend the lectures.

Research Essay: Students are required to submit a 5 - 7 page research essay assignment following these instructions: (1) choose a topic from the Research Essay Topics document in the Research Essay course content folder; (2) write a 5 - 7 page essay that contains the following; a) a clear and concise research question; b) a clear and concise thesis statement (i.e., reform your research question into a statement); c) an introduction that includes your thesis statement and a brief summary of the facts/evidence behind why you are taking the position you are taking; d) a paper body that explains and justifies the facts/evidence stated in the introduction; e) a conclusion that summarizes and restates the facts/evidence supporting the position you've taken. (3) You must use the Society of Biblical Literature Style Guide; I have provided the Society of Biblical Literature Style Guide Student Supplement in the Research Essay folder. (4) You are also required to *use at least four academic/peer-reviewed sources* (not including the textbook) in your paper. (5) For questions about the structure of the Research Essay, review the sample essay and Research Essay Rubric in the Research Essay folder.

Midterm Exam: The midterm examination will be based on your readings from the beginning of the course up to the midterm. It will include multiple-choice questions and two essay questions.

Final Exam: The final exam will have the same format as the midterm but will be based on the readings assigned in the second half of the semester (i.e., the readings assigned after the midterm).

Course Outline:

The following schedule/outline is tentative. Time constraints, unforeseen events, and class interest may result in slight alterations. Jewish holidays that will occur throughout the semester are given in **(bold parentheses)**.

Week 1	Topic	Readings
M – 1/15/24	MLK Jr. Day	
W – 1/17/24	Introduction to the Course Syllabus	
Week 2		
M – 1/22/24	The Origins of Judaism within the History of Israel	Collins – “Introduction” in <i>Introduction to the Hebrew Bible</i> (in the week 2 folder); Collins “The Near Eastern Context” in <i>Introduction to the Hebrew Bible</i> (in week 2 folder); M. Smith, “Yahweh and El” in <i>The Early History of God</i> (in the week 2 folder); Van der Toorn, “Yahweh” in <i>The Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> (in the week 2 folder)
W – 1/24/24	Jewish Texts: The Tanakh (Tu Bishvat – sunset, Wed, 24 January – nightfall, Thu, 25 January)	
Week 3		
M – 1/29/24	Founding Stories and Themes in the Tanakh: The Patriarchs and Covenants (Abraham, Israel/Jacob, Moses, David); Disobedience and Exile (Judges, Kings, Covenants, Disobedience, Prophecy, and Exile)	I. Finkelstein, “Searching for the Patriarchs” in <i>The Bible Unearthed</i> ; “Abraham” Anchor Bible Dictionary; “Isaac” Anchor Bible Dictionary; “Jacob” Anchor Bible Dictionary; “Canaan” Anchor Bible Dictionary (all of these readings are in the week 3 folder); Kuhrt, A. “Israel: the formation of a small Levantine state c. 1200 – 900” (in the week 3 folder)
W – 1/31/24	In Class Group Discussion	
Week 4		
M – 2/5/24	The Emergence of Judaism out of Israelite Religion and Culture: Post-Exilic Yehud/Judaea and the Emergence of Judaism	Grabbe, “Introduction: Historical Overview and Sources” in <i>Introduction to Second Temple Judaism</i> (in week 4 folder); Grabbe – Religion I and

		Religion II (optional reading - in the week 4 folder)
W – 2/7/24	Second Temple Period Judaism: Greco-Roman Rule, Hasmoneans, Herodians and Jewish Sectarians	“Temple, Jerusalem” Anchor Bible Dictionary (in week 4 folder)
Week 5		
M – 2/12/24	The Talmudic Era: The Mishna, Gemara, and the Talmud	Video – History of the Talmud, Part 1 (link in the week 5 folder); Video – History of the Talmud, Part 2 (link in week 5 folder); “Mishnah” Anchor Bible Dictionary (in week 5 folder); “Talmud” Anchor Bible Dictionary (in week 5 folder);
W – 2/14/24	Rabbinic and Geonic Periods	Strack and Stemberger “Historical Framework...” (in week 5 folder)
Week 6		
M – 2/19/24	Rishonim, Crusades, and Persecutions (Purim Katan – sunset, Thu 22 Feb – nightfall, Fri 23 Feb)	Sloyan “Christian Persecution of Jews” (link in the week 6 folder)
W – 2/21/24	Scholars and the Shulchan Arukh (Aruch)	“Caro, Joseph” Jewish Encyclopedia (link in the week 6 folder)
Week 7		
M – 2/26/24	Acharonim, Pogroms, and Massacres	
W – 2/28/24	The Holocaust and the Modern State of Israel	Memory of the Camps – Frontline PBS documentary (link in the week 7 folder)
Week 8		
M – 3/4/24	Midterm Examination Review – In Class	
W – 3/6/24	Midterm Examination – In Class	
Week 9		
M – 3/11/24	Spring Break – No Classes	
W – 3/13/24		
Week 10		
M – 3/18/24	Modern Jewish Sectarianism: Traditionalist, Modernist, and Radical Jewish Movements	de Lange, Chapter 4 “The Jewish Religion”
W – 3/20/24	(Ta’anit Esther/Fast of Esther – dawn to nightfall, Thu, 21 March; Purim – sunset, Sat 23 March – nightfall, Sun 24 March)	
Week 11		

M – 3/25/24	The Jewish Family: Family Unit, The Jewish Home, Jewish Time, and Rites of Passage	de Lange, Chapter 5 “The Family”
W – 3/27/24	Group Discussion	
Week 12		
M – 4/1/24	The Jewish Community, Part 1: The History of the Synagogue; The Architecture of the Synagogue;	de Lange, Chapter 6 “The Community” p. 119 - 126
W – 4/3/24	Group Discussion	
Week 13		
M – 4/8/24	The Jewish Community, Part 2: Worship in the Synagogue; Religious Services and Associated Texts (Siddur and Makhzor); The Yearly Cycle of Worship and Associated Texts (The Haggadah)	de Lange, Chapter 6 “The Community” p. 127 - 154
W – 4/10/24	Group Discussion	
Week 14		
M – 4/15/24	Jewish Theology and Life Objectives: Holiness, Obedience, Righteousness, Faith, Fear, Love, The Messiah(s), Repairing the World and Peace, The Afterlife	de Lange, Chapter 7 “God and the Jewish People”; de Lange, Chapter 8 “Objectives”
W – 4/17/24	Group Discussion	
Week 15		
M – 4/22/24	(Ta’anit Bechorot/Fast of the First Born – dawn to nightfall, Mon, 22 April; Passover Week, sunset Mon, April 22 – nightfall Tues, April 30) Judaism and the Future: Social Pressures, Trends, and Developments	de Lange, Chapter 9 “Judaism and the Future”
W – 4/24/24	Group Discussion	
Week 16		
4/29/24	Final Examination review	
5/1/24	Final Examination – In Class	

Grading:

Marks for assignments, tests, and exams are given in percentages, to which letter grades are also assigned, according to the table below. The percentage mark resulting from the entire term work and examination then produces the final letter grade for the course.

Grading Scale

Percentage Grade	Letter Grade	Grade Points
90-100%	A	4.0
80-89%	B	3.0

70-79%	C	2.0
60-69%	D	1.0
0-59%	F	0.0

Academic Standing and Integrity:

“Academic Integrity: the University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence. In all matters of intellectual pursuit, UTEP faculty and students must strive to achieve excellence based on the quality of work produced by the individual. In the classroom and in all other academic activities, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any form of scholastic dishonesty is an affront to the pursuit of knowledge and jeopardizes the quality of the degree awarded to all graduates of UTEP. It is imperative, therefore, that the members of this academic community understand the regulations pertaining to academic integrity and that all faculty insist on adherence to these standards.

Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Proven violations of the detailed regulations, as printed in the [Handbook of Operating Procedures](#) (HOP) (available through the [Dean of Students Office](#)) may result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation, to failing a grade on the work in question, to a failing grade in the course, to suspension or dismissal, among others.” (“Academic Standing,” for more information, please visit <http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=61879&submenuheader=1>)

Policy for Late Assignments:

Students who consult with me in advance regarding expected issues preventing the timely completion of an assignment may, at my discretion, be granted an extension. Students who are prevented from submitting an assignment due to a personal emergency should inform me as soon as possible.

Special Needs

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Students who become pregnant or have parenting responsibilities may also

request reasonable accommodations. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. The UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) will process requests for accommodations based on a disability, pregnancy, or parenting. Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.