HRS 141  Introduction to Judaism  Fall 2014

Tuesdays & Thursdays, Noon – 1:15 pm
Mendocino Hall 4004

Catalog Description:
Survey and analysis of the fundamental tenets of Judaism set within the context of the historical and intellectual development of the Jewish People. GE Area C4.

Course Description:
Built on the three classic defining “pillars” of Judaism - G-d, Torah and the People Israel - Humanities 141 is a survey of Jewish ideology, practice, culture and historical development. The core of Judaism derives from the Hebrew Bible; particular emphasis will be placed on understanding the development of Jewish thought and practice, and Judaism’s impact on society, through exploration of its textual roots.

Required Texts


- Morinis, Everyday Holiness: The Jewish Spiritual Path of Mussar [Trumpeter]

- TANAKH: The Holy Scriptures
  The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text
  [The Jewish Publication Society]

- Course Reader (required)

Course Requirements:

- Punctual, regular attendance and class participation
- 1 reflection paper (3 page limit)
- Course journal
Term paper (minimum 8 pages)
Midterm (take home)
Final Exam
Attending a Jewish service, watching a Jewish movie, book report (extra credit)

Grading Policy:
Attendance and participation 20%
Reflection paper, journal and Midterm 30%
Term Paper 20%
Final 30%

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Yehoshua the son of Perachya says:
"Find yourself a teacher, acquire a friend, and judge all individuals charitably."

Pirke Avot 1:6

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Class Content and Reading Assignments

JEWS BELIEFS

SEP 2 – Getting acquainted: Welcome to the Yeshiva (class one)
Introduction to the study of Judaism; Kahal and Chevruta - the scholarly community; pooling our knowledge; setting a kavanaa.

- Reader, p.1-4, “Kavanah for Study”; “On Jewish Scholarship”; “Shehecheyanu” and “Study is Prayer”
- Reader, p.4-8, “Does Judaism Have an Essence?”

SEP 4 – G-d, Torah & Israel (class two)
The Nature of G-d; Good and evil; holiness.
- Living Judaism, pp.1-top of 31
- Exodus, Ch. 34:1-11, JPS TaNaKH, pp.138-139 (13 Attributes)
- Leviticus, Ch. 19, JPS TaNaKH, pp.185–186 (Golden Rule)
- Reader, p. 10, “Understanding the Shema”
SEP 9 – Bridging Heaven and Earth (class three)
Mitzvah; Ethical Monotheism; The Messianic Concept;
Repairing the World; shoresh.
- Living Judaism, pp. 31-54
- Deuteronomy, Ch. 5:1- 6:9, JPS TaNaKH, p. 284
  (Retelling of 10 Commandments & Shema/V’ahavata)
- Reader, p. 17-21 “What Does the Concept of Messiah Mean Today?”

THE JEWISH PEOPLE

SEP 11 – What’s Your Name? (class four)
Hidden Secrets of Names; Conversion to Judaism.
- Living Judaism, p. 55-71
- Genesis, Ch. 32: 23-33, JPS TaNaKH, p. 52 (Ya’akov-Yisrael)
- The Book of Ruth, JPS Tanakh, pp. 1419-1424
- Reader, p.22-25, “Are Names Really That Important?”

SEP 16 – Full Spectrum: Jewish Denominations (class five)
- Reflection paper due: Tikkun Olam

JEWISH LITERATURE

SEP 18 – Black Fire on White Fire: Torah (class six)
- Living Judaism, p. 73-91
- JPS TaNaKH, Preface, p. xv-xxi
- Deuteronomy, Ch. 30:11-20, JPS TaNaKH, pp. 322-323 and
  Ch. 31:7-13, p. 324 (“choose life!” & Moses writes the Torah)
- Reader, p. 36, “Torah Terms”
- Reader, p. 37-43 “The Torah Scroll”
- Reader, p. 44-45 “A Look at the Hebrew Alphabet” and
  optional Hebrew quiz (extra credit if you take it!)
SEP 23 – The Keys to the Garden (class seven)
Unlocking the Text: Hebrew, the Alef-Bet and the Ta’amim.
- Genesis Ch. 1:1-12:9, JPS Tanakh, pp. 3-18
- Reader, p. 46-77, “Sofer” and “Modern Day Scribe”
- Reader, p. 78-79 “A Modern Day Scribe”
- Reader, p. 80-81 – “A Sample Aliyah” - to be read in class

SEP 25 – Rosh HaShana – NO CLASS!

SEP 30 – Standing on the Shoulders: Commentaries upon Commentaries upon Commentaries . . . (class eight)
Prooftext; PaRDeS; the art of Biblical commentary.
- Reader, p. 82, “Study is Prayer, Prayer is Study”
- Reader, p. 83-85 “An Orchard of Delicious Words” & “PaRDeS”
- Reader, p. 86-90, “P’shat and Derash”
  (no need to read this last item; it will be studied in class!)

OCT 2 – Eat this Scroll! (class nine)
Prophets and Prophecy.
- Reader, p. 100, “Chart of the Hebrew Bible”
- Reader, p. 101-105 from The Prophets, R. A. Heschel
- Reader, p. 39-43, re-read “Haftarah”
- Ezekiel Ch. 1:1-3:27, JPS TaNaKH, pp. 893-897
- Isaiah 58: 1-14, JPS TaNaKH, pp. 741-743
  (Haftarah, YK Shacharit)
- The Book of Jonah, JPS TaNaKH, pp. 1037-1040
  (Haftarah, YK Mincha)

OCT 7 – To All Your Songs I am a Harp:
Novels, Love Stories, Songs & Wise SayingsT (class ten)
The Writings.
- 3 Psalms of your choice, JPS TaNaKH, pp. 1109-1284
- Proverbs, Ch. 31, JPS TaNaKH, p. 1337
- The Song of Songs, JPS TaNaKH, pp. 1405-1417
OCT 9 – Why Moses Was Up on the Mountain for So Long (class eleven)
The Oral Law: Mishna, Gemara, Talmud; Codes and Responsa.
- Living Judaism, pp. 93-113
- Reader, p. 106, “The Layers of Biblical Commentary”
- Reader, p. 107-110, “Moses received . . .” & “from Chapters of the Sages”
- Reader, p. 111-114, “A Talmudic Glossary”

OCT 14 – Huge Birds and Flying Chariots (class twelve)
Midrash; Zohar; Kabbalah; the Centrality of Story-Telling.
- Living Judaism, pp. 114-118
- Reader, p. 120-123 “Midrash and the Power of Storytelling”; “Why Noah Chose the Dove”
- Reader, p. 124, “Solomon and the Ant”
- Reader, p. 125-126 “The Ziz”
- Reader, p. 127-130 Advanced Midrash from Talmud
- Reader, p. 131 Zohar: “The Creation of Elohim”

OCT 16 – Holy Sparks and Invisible Pathways: A Closer Look at Kabbalah (class thirteen)
The Sefirot; Alphabet Mysticism; The Nature and Variety of Mystic Experience; Hasidism, Mussar.
- Reader, p. 132, “Chart of the Sefirot”
- Reader, p. 137-139, “Mystical Qualities of Lamed” and “Practical Kabbalah: How to Meditate on a Hebrew Letter”
- Reader, p. 140-142, “In the Beginning” & “The Life of a Mystic

JEWISH DAYS AND HOLIDAYS

OCT 21 – Wheels Within Wheels (class fourteen)
Jewish Time; the Sacred Calendar; The Importance of Rest: Shabbat.
- Living Judaism, pp. 119-top of 130
- Exodus Ch. 31:12-18, JPS TaNaKH, pp. 134-135 (Sabbath)
- Deuteronomy Ch. 5:12-15, JPS TaNaKH, p. 283 (4th Commandment)
- Reader, p. 143, “The 39 Categories of Sabbath Work”
- Reader, p. 144-145, “Sabbath Blessings”

- MIDTERM DUE: PaRDeS (take home)

OCT 23 – The Days of Awe (class fifteen)
- Living Judaism, pp. 130-top of 151
- Leviticus, Ch. 23:23-44, JPS TaNaKH, pp. 193-194 (G-d decrees the holidays)
- Reader, p. 146, “From the High Holy Day Liturgy”
- Reader, p. 147, “Vidui, Confession of Sin”
- Reader, p. 148-158, Full Orthodox Confession with commentary
- Reader, p. 159, Hasidic story, “Ten Letters”

OCT 28 – The Flaming Almond Tree (class sixteen)
Chanukah and Tu B’Shevat
- Living Judaism, pp. 151-top of 156
- Leviticus, Ch. 24:1-4, JPS TaNaKH, p. 194 (the Menorah)
- Numbers, Ch. 8:1-4, JPS TaNaKH, p. 220 (the Menorah)
- Reader, p. 160-161, “Lighting the Menorah” & melody
- Reader, p. 162, “On the Four Levels of Celebration”
- Reader, p. 163-167 “The Power of Light”; “Words to Live By”; “From the Talmud”
- Reader, p. 168-173, “A Tu b’Shevat Seder”

OCT 30 – Songs of the Bold Women (class seventeen)
Special Sabbaths, Purim
- Living Judaism, pp. 156-161
- Exodus, Ch.13:17-17:16, JPS TaNaKH, pp. 104-112 (Shirat HaYam)
- Judges, Ch. 4:4-5.31, JPS TaNaKH, pp. 382-387 (Haftarah for Sabbath of Song)
- The Book of Esther, JPS TaNaKh, pp. 1457-1468 (Purim)
- Reader, p. 174-176, “Queen Esther”

NOV 4 – From Slavery to Sinai: Every Exile Bears the Seeds of Redemption (class eighteen)
Passover; Counting of the Omer; Shavuot
- Living Judaism, pp. 162-top of 181
- Exodus 18:1-20:23, JPS TaNaKH, pp. 112-116 (The 10 Commandments)
- Leviticus 23:1-22, JPS TaNaKH, p. 191-192 (G-d institutes Passover, the Omer & Shavuot)
- Reader, p. 177-178, “In Every Generation . . . “

NOV 6 – The Dark Times (class nineteen)
Holocaust Remembrance Day; Tisha b’Av
- Living Judaism, pp.181-199
- The Book of Lamentations, JPS TaNaKH, pp.1425-1440
- Reader, p. 182-184, “The Three Eggs”

NOV 11 – Veteran’s Day – no class

JEWS WORSHIP

NOV 13 – Prayer: The Sacrifice of the Heart (class twenty)
History and Development of Jewish Prayer; The Bracha; The Prayer Service; The Four Types of Prayer; Communal and Personal prayer.
- Living Judaism, pp. 201-220
- Ezekiel, Ch. 11:16-20, JPS TaNaKH, pp. 905-906
- Reader, p. 185-187, “From the Hasidic Masters”
- Reader, p. 188, “The Reform Jewish Worship Service”
- Reader, p. 192-194, “On the Amidah”
NOV 18  -  Know Before Whom You Stand: The Synagogue (class twenty-one)
- Living Judaism, pp. 210-220
- Exodus Ch. 35:1-40:38, JPS TaNaKH, pp. 141-151 (Building the Tabernacle/Mishkan)

ALSO ON NOV 18 – The Threads of Light (class twenty-two)
Ritual Garments; Worship Practices
- Living Judaism, pp. 221-245
- Numbers, Ch. 15:37-41, JPS TaNaKH, pp. 233-234 (G-d commands the tzitzit)
- Reader, p. 199-202, Four Teachings on the Tallit
- Reader, p. 203-207, “Tallit”

JEWISH LIVING

NOV 20  -  Acts of Lovingkindness: Everyday Holiness (class twenty-three)
Mezuzah, Chanukat HaBayit, Tzedakah, etc.
- Living Judaism, pp. 247-256; 274-284
- Everyday Holiness, p. 3-42 and 249-281
- Choose your middah for term paper on Mussar
- Reader, p. 208, “Prayers inside the Mezuzah”
- Reader, p. 209, “Tzedakah Story”

NOV 25  –  Spiritual Disciplines: The Laws of Purity (class twenty-four)
Kashrut, Mikveh, Family Purity
- Living Judaism, pp. 256-273
- Leviticus, Ch. 11:1-47, JPS TaNaKH, pp. 168-170 (Kashrut)
- Reader, p. 210-213, “The Holiness of Sex”
- Reader, p. 214-216, “The Shekinah”

NOV 27  –  Thanksgiving Day
JEWISH LIFE CYCLE

DEC 2 – Childhood (class twenty-five)
Birth, Bar & Bat Mitzvah.


DEC 4 – The Intricate Twining of Two Souls (class twenty-six)
Marriage.

☐ *Living Judaism*, pp. 295–middle of 300
☐ Reader, p. 217-219 “Two Ketubot: Orthodox and Modern”
☐ Reader, p. 220-221 “Structure of a Traditional Jewish Wedding” & “The Seven Wedding Blessings”

DEC 9 – To Comfort the Bereaved: The Jewish Approach to Loss and Sorrow (class twenty-seven)
Divorce and Death.

☐ *Living Judaism*, pp. 300-322
☐ Reader, p. 222-226, “A Gathering of Memorial Prayers”

THE JEWISH LAND

DEC 11 – The Ideal: Living in a Higher State & Siyyum: Rejoicing in the Yeshiva (class twenty-eight)
A few words about Israel real and imagined; Review and Party!

☐ *Living Judaism*, pp. 323-355
☐ Deuteronomy, Ch. 26:1-19, *JPS TaNaKH*, pp. 313-315
☐ Deuteronomy, Ch. 30:1-20, *JPS TaNaKH*, pp. 313-315
☐ Term Paper due
☐ Reader, p. 227-228, Traditional prayers for a *siyyum*

FINAL

DEC 16 – Final exam, 12:45 - 2:45pm (This happens to be the eve of Hannukah - a time of great strength and rejoicing!)