RELIGIOUS STUDIES 225/JEISH STUDIES 200
THE JEWISH TRADITION
COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON
Fall 2012/5772-73

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course provides a window into the history, beliefs, and practices of Jewish tradition. Proceeding roughly chronologically, we begin with the Biblical foundations (Abraham) and continue up to the modern State of Israel. Particular emphasis will be given to “modern” Judaism (i.e., post-1800) and the various ways it has responded to changes in the world around it. As the survey progresses, we will examine the origins and rituals of the various Holy Days and select festivals celebrated or commemorated during the Jewish calendar year. Topics to be discussed include Rabbinic Judaism and the classic texts that emerged from it (Midrash, Mishnah, Talmud, etc.), the central role of study and debate in Jewish tradition, Jewish philosophy and mysticism, messianic movements, the emergence of non-Orthodox movements (e.g., Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Renewal, etc.), the origins of reform here in Charleston, Jewish responses to the Holocaust, and the never ending debates over Jewish identity in Israel vis-à-vis the role and future of the American Jewish community.

In written exams and papers, students will gain the ability to identify and analyze texts in their socio-historical and political context, to identify key passages central to the overall argument of the book or essay, and to articulate the multiple ways a particular text is read and interpreted by different Jewish communities.

REQUIRED TEXTS:
1) Philip S. Alexander (ed.), Textual Sources for the Study of Judaism (University of Chicago, 1990)


4) Primo Levi, Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity. Translated from Italian, 1958, with original English title If This is a Man (New York: Macmillan, 1966)

5) A collection of readings, available on OAKS (accessed via your MyCharleston account).

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:
1) Bible (Old Testament/Hebrew Scriptures only). We will be looking at various biblical texts, especially in the early part of the term. Students who do not own a Bible/Tanakh should borrow one from a friend or family member or, better yet, buy one. I recommend the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) or TANAKH: A New Translation of the HOLY SCRIPTURES According to the Traditional Hebrew Text (Philadelphia/New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985/1999). The last mentioned translation is

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SOME OTHER USEFUL VOLUMES


COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
1. *Two papers (15% and 20% respectively).* Over the course of the term, students will write two short analytical papers (4-6 pages) on two of the three books (Heschel is required, with Potok or Levi as the second paper). Separate sheets will be distributed with questions and requirements for content, format, and style.

2. *Mid-term Examination (20%).* This exam covers material presented and/or discussed up to the day of the exam. The exam consists of fill-in-the-blank, passage identification, and essays. Review sheets will be handed out prior to the exam containing material for which you are responsible. It is imperative that you notify me in advance if you are unable to attend an exam day. Should that be the case, call me at my office (953-4996) to explain your situation or, if I’m not in, leave a message on my voice mail that day. Make-up exams may be of increased difficulty and must be taken as soon as possible after the original exam day, within a day or two at most (unless you have been excused legitimately for a longer period). Make-up exams will be given only to those who provide what I deem to be a valid excuse.
3. *Final Examination (25%)*. This is not cumulative, but covers material subsequent to the mid-term and will be a bit longer. The format includes passage identification and essays (no fill-in-the-blank).

4. *Class Attendance and Participation (10%)*. Students are expected to attend class, ready and eager to discuss the material that they’ve *carefully read before coming to class*. If only a few participate, I will randomly call on individuals to answer questions. If you are consistently unable to respond and it is apparent that you’ve not done the readings, you will be assigned an obscure and indecipherable passage from the Talmud for class presentation (probably not, but I *will* note this in my determination of your final grade). I may also give brief writing assignments over particular readings or topics, plus I reserve the right to give pop quizzes over the readings to aid in the motivation of languid and lethargic students.

5. *Synagogue visit or website analysis (10%)*. Students have the option of doing a synagogue visit (attending a service outside your own denomination, where applicable) or analysis of a web site relating to a denomination or movement. Handouts will be distributed with specific questions and guidelines for the written assignment.

**GRADING SCALE**: Final grades are determined in accordance with the following scale.

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\begin{array}{ll}
A &= 100-94 & C &= 75-73 \\
A- &= 93-90 & C- &= 72-70 \\
B+ &= 89-86 & D+ &= 69-66 \\
B &= 85-83 & D &= 65-62 \\
B- &= 82-80 & D- &= 61-59 \\
C+ &= 79-76 & F &= 58- \\
\end{array}
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**LECTURE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS**

This schedule is subject to revision. Please bring all relevant materials to class!

**Aug. 22 -- Introduction**

Readings:
Satlow, "Introduction" (Oaks #1)

**Aug. 27 – Sept. 5 -- The Biblical Heritage: An Historical Survey from Abraham to ben-Zakkai**

Readings: (see Oaks #2 for time charts etc.)
- Hebrew Bible/Old Testament historical survey (handout)
- Segal, "The Biblical Legacy" (Oaks #3)
- Murphy, "Israel before the Second Temple Period" (Oaks #4)
  - "The Restoration" (Oaks #5)
  - "Hellenism, Judaism, and the Maccabees" (Oaks #6)
- First Maccabees, chapters 1-4 (Oaks #7)
- Murphy, "Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Sanhedrin" (Oaks #8)
Sept. 10-12 -- The Emergence of Rabbinic Judaism; the Synagogue, Prayer and Liturgy
Readings:
- Goldin, “The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan” (Oaks #9)
- Alexander, Textual Sources, 1.2 (Intro) and 3.1 (“Weekday Liturgy”)
- Trepp, “Prayer and the Prayer Book” (Oaks #10)
- Medwed, “Prayer” (Oaks #11; selections)

Sept. 17–24 -- In the Beginning was the Text: Midrash, Targum, Mishnah, Talmud
(Generally, Segal, “Judaism of the Talmud and Midrash” - Oaks #12)
Readings A:
- Alexander, Sources, 1.1 (Intro) and 4.3, 4.5, and 4.6
- Midrash “The Oral Law” (Oaks #13)
- Passover in three dimensions (Bible/Mishnah/Talmud) - handout

Readings B:
- Alexander, Sources, 2.3. (Genesis in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and Exodus in Mekhilta of R. Ishmael). PLEASE read the biblical texts carefully (Genesis 22:1-19 and Exodus 19-20) before looking at the commentary!

Readings C:
- Alexander, Sources, 1.4 (Intro) and 5.1.2 (Mishnah + gemara on work on Shabbat)
- Jacobs, “The Obligation of Studying Torah” (Oaks #14)

Sept. 26 - Yom Kippur (Film: “The Talmud and the Scholar”)

***Oct. 1 - Paper on Heschel’s The Sabbath due (in class)***

Oct. 1-3 -- Hallmarks of Traditional Judaism: Shabbat and Kashrut
Readings:
- Biblical texts: Leviticus 11, Deuteronomy 14:4-21
- Donin, “The Sabbath: An Island in Time” (Oaks #15)
- Alexander, 3.2 (“Sabbath Liturgy”) and review 5.1.2 (“Work Forbidden on Sabbath”)
- Greenberg, “Kashrut” (a modern Orthodox perspective; Oaks #16)
- Sasson, “Should Cheeseburgers be Kosher?” (Oaks #17)

***OCT. 22 -- MIDTERM EXAM***

Oct. 10, 17 -- The Jewish Calendar (see charts in Oaks #2)
A. The High Holy Days: Rosh Hashanah – Yom Kippur
B. Pesach (Passover), Hanukkah, and Purim
Readings:
- Biblical texts: Lev. 16 (Yom Kippur) and 23 (the calendar)
- Alexander 3.3 and The Passover Haggadah (Oaks #18)
- Lucas, “Holy Days and Holidays” (Oaks #19 - selections)
- Trepp, “Yamim Noraim, The Days of Awe” (Oaks #20)
Oct. 22 -- Philosophers and Mystics
Readings:
Alexander, 1.6 and 1.7 (Introduction) and 7.1 (Saadiah Gaon) 8.3.1 (on Ein Sof and Sefirot), 8.3.4 (on Tiqqun), and 8.3.6 (spiritual constitution of man)
Segal, “Kabbalah” (Oaks #21, up to p. 98)

Oct. 24 -- Hasidism and the Brooklyn Messiah (7th Lubavitch Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson)
Readings:
Segal, “Kabbalah” (p. 98 to end)
Dein, “Lubavitch and its Messianism” (Oaks #22), “The Death of the Rebbe” and “The Convert’s Zeal” (Oaks #23)

Oct. 29 -- Paper on Potok’s The Chosen due (in class)

Oct. 29-31 -- From Alien to Citizen: Anti-Semitism, Enlightenment, and Emancipation
Readings:
Alexander, 1.8 (all), 1.10, and 11.1 thru 11.4
French National Assembly documents (Oaks #24)
Seltzer, “The European State and the Jews, 1770-1880” (Oaks #25)
Alexander, 9.3.1 (Moses Mendelssohn)
Seltzer, “The 18th Century Enlightenment and Moses Mendelssohn’s Defense of Judaism” (Oaks #26)

Nov. 5-14, 26 -- Updating the Tradition: Modern Movements, Thinkers and the Problem of Identity
Readings A:
Alexander, 9.2 (Pittsburgh and Columbus Platforms)
Alexander, Sources, 9.3.2 (Hirsch) and 9.3.3 (Schechter)

Readings B (Reform in Charleston):
Plaut, “American Beginnings” (Oaks #27)
Liberles, “Conflict Over Reforms: The Case of Congregation Beth Elohim, Charleston, South Carolina” (Oaks #28)

Readings C:
Kaplan, “Principles of Reconstructionism” (Oaks #29)
Alpert and Staub, “Creation of an American Judaism” and “An Evolving Religious Civilization” (Oaks #30)
Alexander, 10.2 (“Laws of the State of Israel”) plus handout
Alpert and Staub, “Who is a Jew?” (Reconstructionist view; Oaks #31)
Jewish Renewal: http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/
Note especially interviews with Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Neil Gillman linked in the site.

Nov. 19 – Film or guest lecturer

Nov. 21 – Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 26 – Updating the Tradition continued (readings above)

Nov. 28 -- Paper on Levi’s *Survival in Auschwitz* due (in class)

Nov. 28 -- Discussion of Primo Levi and Jewish Responses to the Holocaust
Readings:
   Scheindlin, “The Holocaust” (Oaks #32)
   Katz, “Jewish Faith after the Holocaust: Four Approaches” (Oaks #33)
   Jacobs, “‘If There is No ‘Commander’...There are No ‘Commandments!’” (Oaks #34)

Dec. 3 -- Topics in the Current Debate: The Case of Peter Beinart and American Jewry
Readings:
   Peter Beinart, “The Failure of the American Jewish Establishment” (Oaks #35 - also available online). There are numerous responses to this article and also to the author’s recent book, *The Crisis of Zionism* (2012), which provides a fuller exposition of his views. We will look at a number of the more significant exchanges.

***Dec. 5 – Final Examination (Wednesday) @ 12:00 -2:00)***

Some Useful Websites:

Orthodox - http://www.ou.org/

Conservative - http://www.uscj.org/


Reconstructionist - http://jrf.org/

Habad - http://www.chabad.org/


Humanistic Judaism - http://www.shj.org/