

Judaism 253 – Fall, 2006
Rabbi Harry K Danziger

The course is a survey of the Jewish people and its religious and cultural heritage. We will deal in history, sociology and culture as well as religion because, in the experience of Judaism and the Jewish people, they are intertwined. I hope this syllabus is helpful and that you will find the course valuable.

Since I am not regularly part of campus life, please note that my home phone is 754 4487. I will be able to make appointments on some Tuesdays and Thursdays before or after class. If you want to email me, please send to rabbi@hkd38.com rather than my Rhodes address. I will more surely see the email on that address. Don't hesitate to contact me with any concerns or questions. I'm here as your resource on Judaism.

READINGS AND RESOURCES:

The only textbook is *Settings of Silver* by Wylen. It is indicated as **SET** in the syllabus. **HD** indicates handouts for the course. If our classroom has computer capability, there will be notes and "handouts" used in class on screen. I do not have a website currently. There will be other handouts or websites noted as the term progresses.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

There will be three tests each counting 20% of the total grade. They are take home and handed out on September 26, October 31, and December 7.

There are three assignments beyond the tests in the term. They are:

1. You are a book reviewer. Choose two of the following books, and write a review and reaction. The reader should get a sense of how this book reflects an element of Jewish life past or present. The reader should also get a clear sense of the impact of the book on you as reader. It should be 3-5 pages long for each book. You should include a synopsis or characterization of the book as well as your reaction to it and what it says about Jews and Judaism.

The books are:

- a. *The Red Tent* by Anita Diamant - novel – contemporary woman's view of Biblical period
- b. *The Plot Against America* by Philip Roth – fiction with many non-fictional characters – premise is that Charles Lindbergh and not Franklin Roosevelt wins the presidency in 1940; seen through the eyes of a Jewish child.
- c. *Night* by Elie Wiesel – autobiographical Holocaust work by greatest Holocaust writer from the Holocaust and Nobel Peace Prize winner
- d. *The Chosen* by Chaim Potok - novel - Orthodox Jewish teens in Brooklyn in the 1940's and the conflicts between tradition and modernity.
- e. *Walking the Bible* by Bruce Feiler - non-fiction - journalist's physical and spiritual travels in the Biblical world

Your reviews are due on October 13 and count 15% of your final grade.

2. You are to attend a synagogue service. I will give you information on when and where Memphis synagogue services are available. Write a personal reaction including observations and reactions to the worship service based on your own expectations and your own worship experience in the past.

Your report is due on December 5 and counts 5% of your final grade.

2. You are writing a magazine article on the following topic:
Issues for American Jews and American Judaism in the 21st Century.

Using our class, discussions with others, and, especially, websites of Jewish content, write an article of 4-6 pages that will give the reader a sense of the issues, concerns, challenges and resources of Jews and Judaism today.

Here are some websites that will be helpful:

JTA.org – the Jewish equivalent of CNN (includes links to numerous Jewish media websites)
Forward.com – a longstanding liberal Jewish weekly
Jewish Week – major Jewish newspaper
Jerusalem Post – Israeli newspaper
Haaretz – Israeli newspaper
Shamash.org – collection of Jewish sources

Union for Reform Judaism; United Synagogue of America; Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations websites (the major religious movements)

I am glad to be helpful in pointing you toward sources. Some likely subjects are: Israel and the Middle East, Intermarriage and Demographics, Who is a Jew?, religious observance and commitment, Jewish education, etc.

Your article is due on November 16 and counts 20% of your grade.

In addition, regular class attendance is expected.

The grading scale is A = 100-94 B=93-84 C=83-74 D= 73-65. I use pluses and minuses where they are applicable. I do not grade on a classic curve, but I consider the best answer in the class on any question to be as much as could be expected of anyone in the class. Yes, I know that the cutoffs are higher than in some other classes, but I find that my grading is lenient and scores are high.

SCHEDULE OF CLASS SESSIONS AND RESOURCES

Th 8/24 1	Overview; Your Questions; The Jewish Faith-Family SET 1,2,4; HD Whole View	What is a Jew? What is the "Jewish phenomenon"? When someone says, "I am a Jew," what have you learned?
Tu 8/29 2	Covenant, Mitzvah, Values HD Jewish Values SET 1,2,4 again	What is the essential Jewish religious question? How is Judaism best expressed? What is mitzvah? What are Jewish values for Jews and for all people?
Th 8/31 3	Two Torahs: A Jewish Way of Seeing the World SET 13, 14; HD Halakha/Aggadata/Midrash, Telushkin; HD The Oral Law, Telushkin	What is the source of the Jewish religion? What is Torah? Is Judaism "the religion of the Old Testament"?
Tu 9/5 4	Doing Torah: Halacha and Aggada HD Binding of Isaac HD What is Midrash?, Pitzele	How do Jews read the Bible? What are the two kinds of Jewish religious literature?
Th 9/7 5	Origins: Bible I – From Patriarchs to Nation SET 1,4 again	How did the Jewish people and religion develop?
Tu 9/12	No class or substitute	
Th 9/14 6	Development: Bible II – Prophets, Kings and Exile SET 1 again	What were prophets? What kinds were there? What revolutions were prompted by the Babylonian exile? The return?
Tu 9/19 7	The Turn of the Millenium: The Four Sects SET 12,13; HD The Start of the Rift, Cook; HD Sects, Bard	What were the four sects in that period? What was the Maccabean revolt? How did Greek and Roman encounters influence Judaism? What is the meaning of "creative adaptation"?
Th 9/21 8	Judaism and Christianity I SET end of Ch. 4; HD Judaism and Christianity	Why does Judaism "believe in Jesus"? What are the differing presuppositions of Judaism and Christianity? How does the use of the same language differently influence Jewish-Christian relations? What is asymmetrical?
Tu 9/26 9 1st TEST OUT	Judaism and Christianity II	See above
Th 9/28 10 1st TEST DUE	The Middle Ages SET 15,16,17,18 (parts) HD Oath of a Jew; Martin Luther	What was the ideological basis for persecution of Jews? How did the rise of Christianity in Europe affect Jews? What were Jewish devices for coping in Christian Europe? How did Jews relate in the Muslim world? What Jewish institutions or literature came out of this age?
Tu 10/3 11	The Emancipation in the West SET 19,20; HD Napoleon's Questions and Answers	What was the meaning and impact of Judaism becoming "voluntary" in the West? What were the central challenges of modernity and what were the choices?

Th 10/5 12	Responses to Modernity: Religious Movements SET 19, 20 again; WEB Segal on Varieties of Orthodox Judaism; Conservative; Reform	How did the modern movements emerge from the Emancipation? What were they affirming/preserving?
Tu 10/10 13 BOOK REVIEWS DUE	Responses to Modernity: Zionism SET 22	What was the presupposition of Zionism? What were the various types of Zionism and what prompted them?
Th 10/12 14	The Jews in America SET 23,24; HD Sarna	How is America unique in Jewish history? How was the Jewish community developed? What were the waves of immigration? How did the "Jewish agenda" change over the decades?
Tu 10/17	No class – Break	
Th 10/19	No class or substitute	
Tu 10/24 15	Modern Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust SET 21	What are the various types of anti-semitism? How did the Holocaust develop? What were its three stages? What was its impact on Jews around the world
Th 10/26 16	Holocaust: Survivor stories Video: Tranported Lives;	
Tu 10/31 17 2nd TEST OUT	The Birth and Meaning of Israel SET 22 again	Why did someone call Israel "the Jewish Jesus"? What is the history of the Israeli-Arab conflict? Recent events. What is the impact of Israel on Jewish identity and feelings?
Th 11/2 18 2nd TEST DUE	Worship and Observance, Calendar SET 5,6	What is the meaning of observance? What is kashrut? How does the calendar work? What are the elements of Jewish worship?
Tu 11/7 19	Sabbath and High Holy Days SET 8,9	Be able to explain basic Jewish holidays, holy days and festivals to a fifth grader.
Th 11/9 20	Holidays and Festivals I SET 10,11; HD Jewish Festivals and Holy Days; WEB My Jewish Learning on various holidays	
Tu 11/14	No class or substitute	
Th 11/16 21 ARTICLE DUE	Holidays and Festivals II SET 10,11 again	
Tu 11/21 22	Life Cycle I SET 5 HD Terms for Life Cycle	Know basic elements of birth to death and mourning observances.
Th 11/23	Thanksgiving – no class	
Tu 11/28 23	Life Cycle II SET 5 again	
Th 11/30 24	Issues of Life and Belief I SET 3,24 HD National Jewish Population Study	What are Jewish ideas of life after death, God, salvation, mitzvah, etc.? What are issues of demographics, identity, anti-semitism, post- modernity, etc.?
Tu 12/5 25	Issues of Life and Belief II SET 3,24 again	
Th 12/7 26	Complete and Review THIRD TEST HANDED OUT	

