

# Judaism

**Instructor: Rick Rogers**

**Office: 701-H Pray-Harrold**

**Course Times: TR 11:00-12:15**

**Course Location: 112 Roosevelt Hall**

**Office Hours: TR 10:00-10:45, 12:30-1:30**

**Office Phone & Voice Mail: (734) 487-3067**

**Cell Phone & Voice Mail: (734) 546-5557**

**E-mail: [RRogers@emich.edu](mailto:RRogers@emich.edu)**

**Home Page: <http://people.emich.edu/rrogers>**

**DESCRIPTION:** This course is an historical survey of the religion of Judaism and of Jewish civilization, and includes an introduction to Jewish institutions, practices, customs, and current expressions. It assumes no prior knowledge of the Jewish religion and culture. The course's lectures, discussions, texts, DVD clips from documentaries and feature movies, and first-hand encounters with guests (and on field trips) will provide students with in-depth and up-to-date information regarding one of history's greatest monotheistic traditions. Judaism has deeply influenced its two larger siblings, Christianity and Islam (religions that collectively lay claim to the hearts and minds of over half the world's population). Organized topically into three sections, the course will cover 1) Sacred Story and Historical Context, 2) Dialogue, Texts and Theology, and 3) Ritual and Ethics. To help integrate academic analysis with personal experience, students will attend three religious services and write a formal paper comparing visits, and will participate in class interviews with several special guests. Furthermore, students will write two analytical book reviews, the first based on an autobiographical account of a professor's ten-month survival in a German death camp during WW II and the second based on an anthropological study by a journalist during her yearlong sojourn with a Crown Heights' Hasidic family. This is a reading- and writing-intensive course.

**TEXTS:** Leo Trepp's *Judaism: Development and Life*, Jacob Neusner's *The Blackwell Reader in Judaism*, Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*, and Liz Harris's *Holy Days: The World of the Hasidic Family*. In addition, daily lecture and discussion outlines will be provided.

**EVALUATION:** Two Exams (a take-home Midterm and a take-home/in-class Final, 20% each), a Comparative-Analysis Paper (based on three field trips, 20%), two Book Reviews (15% each) and Class Participation (based in part on attendance, 10%). Students in the Honors Program are welcomed to consider doing an additional project for Honors credit. Students who have taken History 300, "Research and Writing History," may replace both the Comparative-Analysis Paper and the two Book Reviews with a negotiated Research Paper (50%). Extra-credit is available for attending a Jewish movie festival and/or reviewing a classic documentary series. (See below.)

**EXAMS:** Both exams are based on the lectures, the reading assignments and class discussions. The take-home Midterm (distributed on 2/21) will consist of several essays reflecting primary discussions and is due in class no later than 2/23. The Final Exam will cover only the material from the second half of the course and will consist of an in-class part with many identifications and short-answer questions, and a take-home part of two essay topics (distributed on 4/20). The essays are due in class no later than 4/27. (See Procedure below.)

**COMPARATIVE-ANALYSIS PAPER:** Three field trips will be arranged for students to attend Jewish worship services at an Orthodox Shul, a Reform Temple, and a Conservative Synagogue. This paper is to reflect a student's first-hand observations and experiences, thus notes and bibliography are not needed. This paper, due on 4/20, must be at least six pages long and at a minimum include the following elements:

1. Field Information—Give the full names of the institutions visited and their denominational affiliation (Orthodox, Reform and Conservative, or perhaps Hasidic and Reconstructionist). Give the exact date and time of the visit, and the name of the presiding official. (One short paragraph)
2. Placing Information—Describe the outside and inside appearance of each building, the way visitors are greeted at each service, and the sorts of people in each community, i.e., social class, ethnic background, dominant gender, average age, number present. Were you comfortable sitting with and talking to those attending each service? Why or why not? (Three short paragraphs)
3. Description of Activities and Symbolism—Give an entertaining anecdotal account of what happened during each visit or at each service. What was the emotional tone of each service? Consider the following questions for each service: Was the opening dramatic or casual? Was congregational participation emotional or reserved? Was the service spontaneous or ritualistic? How did the service end? What art and symbolic images did you notice in and around each site? (Approximately two pages)
4. Analysis—Compare the visits in terms of the following question: As far as you could tell from these experiences, how are these communities similar and different? (Three or more pages)

**BOOK REVIEWS:** The first review, on Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*, is due on 2/16, and the second review, on Liz Harris's *Holy Days*, is due on 3/30. Each review must be no less than four full pages long. Students should begin reading both books and outlining their impressions as soon as possible. Students are encouraged to discuss those impressions, and any procedural questions they may have beyond the instructions in the next paragraph, with the instructor during office hours or by e-mail. However, class time will be set aside for discussion and analysis of each book during the due period.

**PROCEDURE FOR ALL DOCUMENTS:** All student-generated documents, the take-home Exams, the Comparative-Analysis Paper, and the Book Reviews, will be graded on substance, grammar and on how well these style instructions are followed, which must be adhered to precisely. No exceptions! All documents must be left-justified and double-spaced, with a clear 12-point font (Times New Roman preferred) and one-inch margins all around (including the first page). After document titles, which may be in 18-point font, the student should single space and type their name in 14-point font. After the author's name, the student should double space and begin the first paragraph of the paper. Only the final page of the document may come up a little short of one inch. All documents must be stapled in the upper left-hand corner. No title page! If a student hands in a review or paper with a title page, it will be returned and treated as late. It is imperative that students work diligently to ensure written work is turned in on time to avoid being downgraded by one full grade per day (i.e., an A- demoted to a B- and a C+ to a D+).

**COURSE WEB SITE:** Students will discover on this web site an extensive bibliography and some of the best links to Judaism online, both of which might be useful for research work in this and other courses. At the top of this web site, there is an Adobe Acrobat file link, labeled Course Grades. To access, simply go to Rogers' Home Page via the address above and click on the History 379 blue-link in the winter schedule.

## **SCHEDULE:**

- 1/10 Syllabus and Orientation  
1/12 Introduction: The Fabric of Judaism  
Assignment: Trepp 1-9, Neusner 3-18

### **Section I: Sacred Story and Historical Context**

- 1/17 The Biblical, Hellenistic and Talmudic Periods  
Assignment: Trepp 10-35  
1/19 The Impact of Christianity  
Assignment: Trepp 36-53, Neusner 86-100  
1/24 The World of “Jewish Middle Ages” I  
Assignment: Trepp 54-78, Neusner 105-13  
1/26 The World of “Jewish Middle Ages” II  
Assignment: Trepp 78-93, Neusner 114-126  
1/31 Jewish Mysticism and Hasidism  
Assignment: Trepp 94-108, Neusner 126-7, 237-9, 241-3, 251-3  
Guest: Dr. Gene Schramm  
2/2 Emancipation and Western Europe  
Assignment: Trepp 109-124, Neusner 139-44  
2/7 The American Destiny I  
Assignment: Trepp 125-145, Neusner 217-20  
2/9 The American Destiny II  
Assignment: Trepp 145-156, Neusner 227-31, 234-7, 256-9  
Guests: Rabbis Rob Dobrusin & Bob Levy  
2/14 Zionism and the State of Israel  
Assignment: Trepp 157-176, Neusner 398-9, 403-5, 407-9  
2/16 The Holocaust  
Assignment: Trepp 177-186  
**Levi Book Review Due**  
2/21 Jews Outside Israel and North America  
Assignment: Trepp 186-200  
Mid-term Essay Topics Distributed  
2/23 **Mid-term Essays Due**

### **SPRING BREAK**

### **Section II: Dialogue, Texts and Theology**

- 3/7 Restored Christian-Jewish-Muslim Dialogue  
Assignment: Trepp 201-223  
Guest: Dr. Carol Ann Martinelli  
3/9 Tanakh I  
Assignment: Trepp 224-239, Neusner 19-25, 33-41, 159-172  
3/14 Tanakh II  
Assignment: Trepp 239-259, Neusner 25-33, 42-59  
3/16 Oral Torah  
Assignment: Trepp 260-275, Neusner 60-85  
3/21 Definitions and Symbols: God, Humanity and Eternity  
Assignment: Trepp 276-291, Neusner 173-186

- 3/23 Theological Issues  
Assignment: Trepp 292-313
- 3/28 Attempting Holocaust Theology  
Assignment: Trepp 313-22, Neusner 246-7  
Guests: Rabbi Richard Weiss

## **Section II: Ritual and Ethics**

- 3/30 Pray and the House of the Lord  
Assignment: Trepp 323-339, Neusner 145-56  
**Harris Book Review Due**
- 4/4 The Mitzvah of Physical Consecration and the Sabbath  
Assignment: Trepp 340-349, Neusner 260-2, 363-73
- 4/6 The Jewish Calendar and Holy Days I  
Assignment: Trepp 350-365, Neusner 373-77
- 4/11 The Jewish Calendar and Holy Days II  
Assignment: Trepp 366-377, Neusner 268-83
- 4/13 The Years of Life  
Assignment: Trepp 378-393, Neusner 378-96
- 4/18 The Position of Women  
Assignment: Trepp 394-404, Neusner 262-7, 316-32  
Guest: Rabbi Marla Feldman
- 4/20 Conclusion: Retrospect and Prospect  
Assignment: Trepp 405-420, Neusner 411-31  
**Comparative-Analysis Paper Due**  
Review for Final Exam & Student Evaluations  
Final Exam Essay Topics Distributed
- 4/27 **Final Exam Essays Due & In-class Exam**

**JEWSIH MOVIE FESTIVAL:** Students, whether interested in extra-credit or not, may want to see a series of movies at a Hillel sponsored festival. The extra-credit movies are **The Chosen**, **Left Luggage**, **The Quarrel**, **Project Greenlight's Stolen Summer** and **Munich**. Other movies of interest that might be included in the festival are **Fiddler on the Roof**, **Yentl**, **Schindler's List**, **The Pianist**, **Life Is Beautiful**, **Jacob the Liar**, **A Price Above Rubies** and **Keeping the Faith**. There will be an organized post-screening discussion after each movie with the instructor and local rabbis in which students may want to participate.

**LIBRARY DOCUMENTARY SERIES:** Students, whether interested in extra-credit or not, may screen a nine hour classic documentary series called **Heritage: Civilization and the Jews** and hosted by Abba Eban, a former Israeli Ambassador to the United States. This monumental documentary won the coveted Peabody Award and spans three millennia of Jewish history and culture. This documentary tour will take students from the stony heights of Sinai, to the shores of the Dead Sea, from a Greek amphitheater in Delphi to the Forum of ancient Rome, out of the ashes of concentration camps to the rebuilt cities and villages of modern Israel. If interested, see me soon for procedural information.