

Jewish Studies: An Introduction

Dr. Amelia Rosenberg Weinreb

JS 311 * ANT 310L * MES 310 * RS 313

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MEZ 2.124

M/W/F 12pm-1pm

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1. Course Description

This survey course aims to expose students to major themes in Jewish Studies through guest lectures by UT faculty who work in the field. It is recommended for motivated undergraduates in any discipline with an intellectual curiosity about Jewish Studies, but requires no previous knowledge of Jewish religion, ethnicity, or culture. The material in the course is not designed to be comprehensive, but rather provides a curated sample of lectures and core topics. This semester, the course is organized around three thematic units: 1) **Exile and Diaspora**, 2) **Jewish Identity**, and 3) **Jewish Ethics**.

The weekly rhythm of the course is generally as follows: On **Mondays** and **Wednesdays**, various faculty associated with Jewish Studies will visit the classroom and deliver lectures concentrating on their period, geographical area, and field of research as they relate to the thematic unit at hand. **Fridays** are a series of lively, fast-paced, interactive meetings, led by students. Students are encouraged to consider course materials comparatively, in view of both their distinct features and their overarching threads, and defend positions through evidence based both on lectures and the course reader. Student discussion leaders, designated in advance, will raise questions, stimulate debate, and integrate ideas into our collective analysis.

2. Course flags

This course carries both a *Global Cultures* and *Ethics* flag. Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of non-U.S. Jewish groups, past and present. Courses carrying the Ethics Flag equip you with the tools necessary for making ethical decisions in your adult and professional life. Courses carrying this flag expose you to ethical issues and to the process of applying ethical reasoning. This course exposes students to Jewish Ethics and its application.

3. Required Course Materials

a) A required course pack is available for purchase online at Paradigm books

<https://squareup.com/store/paradigmbooks>

This pack contains hard copies of all of the short readings assigned by guest lecturers. It is for your convenience, so you have all readings in one place, complete with your underlining, markings, and marginalia. More importantly, students are expected to bring their packs with them each Friday or

student led seminar so everyone can refer directly to the text during discussion. There are no other required readings outside of this pack.

b) One clearly labelled notebook exclusively to taking hand-written notes related for this course.

c) A pen that is satisfying to write with, and always easy to locate at the beginning of class.

4. Course objectives

Upon completion of the course, students will have developed the written, oral and recall skills to be able to:

- Produce relevant notes during lectures
- Engage comfortably in discussion and debate in the seminar classroom
- Articulate central themes of the Jewish experience over time
- Place course units within in a wider context of Jewish Studies as a field
- Converse, with historical and ethnographic accuracy, about a range of contemporary social issues for Jews
- Write short, clear, detailed essays that connect diverse lectures and readings, displaying a command of facts and examples to support arguments

5. Important note on classroom etiquette and vibe:

Regular attendance is not only the key to your own success as a student in this course, but also for the quality of the course as a dynamic whole. Arriving late and leaving early disrupts guests lecturers and class flow, so make every effort to arrive to class a few minutes early so get situated with a notebook and pen. This is a low-tech, highly interpersonal seminar. Students place their phones on silent and deposit them at the front of classroom when they enter each day, and all course notes are taken by hand in a notebook unless you provide a note from SSD. Please do not eat or make distracting, crinkly snacking noises during guest lectures. Fridays (or on student-led discussion days), are more informal, however, and food and drink is welcome!

6. Overview of Grade Distribution

25% Attendance and participation

15% Discussion leadership and memo

20% Short paper (2-3 pages) unit 1: Exile and Diaspora

20% Short paper (2-3 pages) unit 2: Jewish Identity

20% Short paper (2-3 pages) unit 3: Jewish Ethics

7. Explanation of Grade Distribution

Attendance and participation (25%) Students are permitted 4 absences, no questions asked. After that, their total overall grade is reduced by 2% following each, subsequent absence. In addition to being polite, attentive audience members during guest lectures, students will be graded on their regular, active, intellectually rigorous contribution to the seminar component of the course, and on displaying evidence of careful reading of assigned texts.

Discussion leadership and response memo (15%): A group of 3 students, delegated in advance, facilitate the discussion or an activity based on their reading memos. Each student will do this **once** during the semester. I will generally provide the group with a shared grade unless there are individuals who contributed significantly less or more to leadership and discussion. Take the time to communicate with fellow group members to produce a smooth, organized, meaningful dialogue.

How to write a reading response memo (V+, V, V- evaluation)

On the day that you lead discussion with your group, **each individual in that group** will write a separate,

1-page "memo" in response to the day's reading. Completing the memo properly includes the following steps :

a) **Memo:** A **200-250-word**, clear, focused response to **one** of these prompts: What theme leapt out to you? What bothered you in the reading or lecture? How was the reading or lecture related to more general course themes, other course material and how? What content interested you most and why? What quote stood out in your mind, and why? **Your response must refer directly to both the week's lecture and reading, including page citations.**

b) **Questions:** At the bottom of the page, **include two questions** for discussion, debate, or further thought, related directly to themes in the reading. Come prepared to share your ideas in class.

c) **Proofread and cite:** Remember, even if the assignment is short, **write clearly and proofread as carefully** as you would for any graded assignment. Include page citations and a literature cited at the bottom of the page.

D) **Submission:** Send your memo to me via email at amy.weinreb@austin.utexas.edu by 9pm, the night before you lead discussion, and bring a hard copy to class for your reference.

3 short papers (20% each). For each of the three short papers in this course, the prompt is the same: In 500-700 words, pose a question that can be addressed/answered by material in **two** of the lectures and their readings in the unit. Please follow these requirements:

a) **State your question clearly in bold font.** These questions should be designed to be engaging, thought-provoking or informative.

b) **Address your question.** The answer can be creative, and include reflections, reactions, critical commentaries or overviews. However, the short papers will be rigorously graded on their writing quality, as well as their **attention to facts, examples and details** from two lectures and their accompanying readings, citing page numbers

d) **Cite all references** following the Chicago Manual of Style, and include a literature cited section.

8. Grading

Grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

A	95-100%	<u>Excellent</u> grasp of subject matter; explains concepts clearly; provides relevant details and examples; draws clear and interesting connections, exceptionally original, coherent and well-organized; ideas clearly written/stated, outstanding classroom participation
A-	90-94%	<u>Very good</u> grasp of subject matter; explains concepts clearly; provides relevant details and examples; draws clear connections; ideas clearly written/stated
B+	85-89%	<u>Good</u> grasp of some elements above, others need work
B	83-84%	<u>Satisfactory</u> grasp of some elements above
B-	80-82%	<u>Uneven, spotty</u> grasp of the elements above
C+	75-79 %	<u>Limited</u> grasp of the above
C	73-74%	<u>Poor</u> grasp of the above
C-	70-72%	<u>Very poor</u> grasp of the above
D	60-69%	<u>Little evidence</u> of grasp of material, having done readings, attended class, or completed assignments
F	0-59%	<u>No evidence</u> of having done readings, attended class, or completed assignments, or plagiarized.

9. Notes on Grading Policy and Support for Students:

Complete written assignments on time: I am committed to returning assignments to you promptly so you can benefit from my feedback while material is fresh in your mind. I do not grade papers or exams

until I have the entire printed set in front of me. For these reasons, **I do not accept late assignments**. Bring a hard copy at the beginning of class on the day it is due. If you anticipate a problem, or have a history of deadline problems, meet with a consultant at the learning or writing center to help you plan ahead.

The UT Learning Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/>

Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

Grading policy: I am very happy to discuss how you may improve your work, and will read early drafts, but **I will not reconsider grades on papers**. I grade all the papers in a set to ensure that I am applying the same standards, and I make every effort to be fair.

Plagiarism and copying: Although this course is designed for creative, individual work and synthesis of ideas from various sources, any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit must be the student's own work. Should copying occur from another student, both the student who copied work and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment.

Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action. Here are University statements about plagiarism and the consequences of plagiarizing: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/faculty/plagiarism/preventing.html>
<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism/>

Using office hours, getting help: I check email regularly, will usually reply to emails within 24 hours for basic questions. Feel welcome to take advantage of office hours (by appointment).

10. University Notices and Policies

University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

In this course, that means we will all work to ensure that the discussion space is shared relatively equally among the participants, and to maintain an atmosphere of respect for each other's perspectives and arguments, especially when there are strong disagreements.

Students with disabilities

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at (512) 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). Please contact me as early in the semester as possible to let me know if you need anything to participate fully.

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, students are required to notify me of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will certainly give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

11. Course Schedule: The syllabus below represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.

Note 3 Paper Deadlines

(Submit stapled hard copies in class)

Monday 10/15

Monday 11/12

Monday 12/10

Date	Topics	Reading: complete <i>prior</i> to class	Assignments
Unit 1: Exile and Diaspora			
W 8/29	Intro to the course and its structure, sign up for discussion leadership		
Fri. 8/30	Student Discussion 1: on Simon Schama's parts 1-2, "The Story of the Jews."	Watch "Lecture" 1: Simon Schama's "The Story of the Jews" (2014). Parts 1 and 2. Links available on Canvas	Student discussion group 1 on Schama series: Email memo by 9pm Thu. night
M 9/3	Labor day	Good opportunity to watch Schama	
W 9/5	Student Discussion 2, on Simon Schama's 5-part, "The Story of the Jews."	Complete Schama, Parts 3-5. Links available on Canvas.	Student discussion group 2 on Schama series: Email memo by 9pm Tue. night
F 9/7	Lecture 1: "The Sephardim: Diasporas within a Diaspora." with Dr. Miriam Bodian	"The Historical Background of the Caribbean Sephardi Diaspora" (Bodian 2013)	
M 9/10	Rosh Ha Shana		
W 9/12	Student discussion group 3 on Bodian		Student discussion group 3 on Bodian Lecture: Email memo by 9pm Tue. night
F 9/14	Things you've always wanted to know about Jews and Judaism but were afraid to ask.		
M 9/17	Lecture 2: "Jewish Latin American Writing and Film" with Dr. Naomi Lindstrom	"Latin America" in Cambridge Dictionary of Judaism and Jewish Culture (Lindstrom 2011)	
W 9/19	Yom Kippur		
F 9/21	Student discussion group 4 on Lindstrom		Student discussion group 4 on Lindstrom Lecture: Email memo by 9pm Thu. night
M 9/24	Sukkot		
W 9/26	Lecture 3: "Global Antisemitism" with Dr. Alex Weinreb	"Forward:	

		3D Test of Anti-Semitism: Demonization, Double Standards, Delegitimization" (Natan Sharansky 2004).	
F 9/27	Student discussion 5 on Weinreb		Student discussion group 5 on Weinreb Lecture: Email memo by 9pm Thu. night
M 10/1	Schmini Atzeret/Simhat Torah		
W 10/3	Lecture 4: "The Galveston Movement" with Dr. Suzy Seriff	"Galveston and Palestine: Immigration and Ideology in the Early 20 th Century" (Alroey 2004). "When the Jews Came to Galveston" (Brawley 2009).	
F 10/5	Student discussion group 6 on Seriff		Student discussion group 6 on Seriff: Email memo by 9pm Thu. night
M 10/8	Lecture 5: "Questions of Indigeneity" with Dr. Amy Weinreb	"Are Jews Indigenous to the Land of Israel?" (Bellrose 2017). "The struggle for indigenous rights extends to Palestine" (Salhani 2016). "Official Definitions of Indigeneity" (a compiled list).	
W 10/10	Lecture 6: "Jews in America: 1940-41" Dr. Bob Abzug	Selections from <i>The Atlantic Monthly</i> 1941	
F 10/12	Student discussion group 7 on Weinreb and Abzug lectures		Student discussion group 7 on Weinreb and Abzug lectures: Email memo by 9pm Thu. night
M 10/15	Unit 1 wrap-up		PAPER #1 DUE Submit stapled hard copy Each student bring 1 comment or reflection from your paper to share regarding exile and Diaspora.

Unit 2: Jewish Identities			
W 10/17	<p>"Jewish Student Voices."</p> <p>To kick off this unit, we will host a volunteer panel of Jewish students to take questions from the audience.</p>	Links to be supplied on Canvas	
F 10/19	Student discussion group 8 on Jewish Student voices		Student discussion group 8 on Jewish Student Voices: Email memo by 9pm Thu. night
M 10/22	Lecture 7: "Beyond Blood: Cross-Cultural Encounters in Inquisitorial Mexico" With Dr. Ronnie Perelis	NOTE location: RLP (CLA) 1.302E (public lecture)	
W 10/24	Lecture 8: "Mizrahi Jews and Poetry" with Dr. Karen Grumberg	<p>"Confronting an 'Impossible' Identity: Poetry by Arab Jews in Israel" (Poems by Chetrit 1960 and Behar 1978)</p> <p>"Revisiting Bialik: A Radical Mizrahi Reading of the Jewish National Poet" (Chetrit 2010).</p>	
F 10/26	Student discussion group 9 on Perelis and Grumberg lectures		Student discussion group 9 on Perelis and Grumberg lectures: Email memo by 9pm Thu. night
M 10/29	Lecture 9: "Jewish Identity in American Dance" with Dr. Rebecca Rossen	"Moving Metaphors: Jewishness in American Modern and Postmodern Dance," (Jackson 2011).	
W 10/31	Lecture 10: "The Development of Modern Hebrew" with Mr. Agbaria	<p>"Hebrew: Eliezer Ben-Yehuda & the Revival of Hebrew" (Fellman).</p> <p>"The Past and Future of Hebrew" (from <i>Fair Observer</i>).</p>	
F 11/2	Student discussion group 10 on Rossen and Agbaria		Student discussion group 10 on Rossen and Agbaria: Email memo by 9pm Thu. night
M 11/5	Lecture 11: "Jewish Folklore" with Dr. Itzik Gottesman	"Problems and Tasks of Jewish Folklore and Ethnology" (Patai 1946).	

W 11/7	Lecture 12: "How Judaism Became an American Religion" with Dr. Rachel Gordon	Note location: RLP (CLSA) 1.302E (Public lecture). "Three Religious Communities: Unity and Tension" in Protestant, Catholic, Jew" (Herberg 1955).	
F 11/9	Student discussion group 11 on Gottesman and Gordon		Student discussion group 11 on Gottesman and Gordon: Email memo by 9pm Thu. night
M 11/12	Unit wrap-up		PAPER #2 DUE hard copy, stapled Each student bring 1 comment or reflection from your paper to share regarding Jewish Identity
Unit 3: Jewish Ethics			
W 11/14	Lecture 13 with Dr. Tatjana Lichtenstein: "Background on the Holocaust in Eastern Europe"	Watch: <i>Ethical dimensions of the Holocaust</i> (film, posted on Canvas).	
F 11/16	Lecture 14 with Dr. Tatjana Lichtenstein "Considering Ethical Dimensions of the Holocaust"		
M 11/19	Student discussion group 10 on Lichtenstein lectures		Student discussion group 12 on Lichtenstein lectures: Email memo by 9pm Sun. night
W 11/21	NO CLASS Thanksgiving BREAK		
F 11/23	NO CLASS Thanksgiving BREAK		
M 11/26	Lecture 15 on Exodus and Ethics with Dr. Jonathan Schofer	Selections from the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh): Exodus. 20; Exod. 21:28-29; Exod. 21:35-36; Exod. 21:33-34; Exod. 22:4; Exod. 22:5 Mishnah Baba Qamma 1:1, Mishnah Sanhedrin 7:4 and 9:1; Mishnah Avot 1:1-4 and 2:11	

W 11/28	Lecture 16 on Ethical Character and the Jewish Concept of the "Evil Impulse" with Dr. Jonathan Schofer	"The Redaction of Desire," 28-38. 45-46 (Schofer 2003)	
F 11/30	Student discussion group 13 on Schofer		Student discussion group 13 on Schofer: Email memo by 9pm Thu. night
M 12/3	Lecture 17: "Moral Agency in Biblical Literature" with Dr. Jonathan Kaplan	Selections from the book of Deuteronomy	
W 12/5	Lecture 18: with Dr. Jonathan Kaplan	Selections from the book of Jonah	
F 12/7	Student discussion group 14 on Kaplan		Student discussion group 14 on Kaplan: Email memo by 9pm Thu. night
M 12/10	FINAL PARTY with food, course evaluation, unit wrap up		PAPER 3 DUE hard copy, stapled Each student bring 1 comment or reflection from your paper to share regarding Jewish ethics