

Judaism: From Exile to Talmud (RELI 352/HIST 387)

Spring 2024

Mon and Wed 1:30-2:45 pm

Instructor: Prof. Alexandria Frisch

Office Hours in Horizon 3117: Mon and Weds 12:00-1:00 pm and by appointment

Email: afrisch@gmu.edu (please allow 24 hours for a response)

Course Description

This course will trace almost 1000 years of Jewish history (mid-sixth century BCE - fifth century CE) in order to examine the development of early Judaism and the formation of diverse Jewish communities. In locales as disparate as Egypt, Babylonia and Rome, Jews turned Judaism into a global religion, distinct from the biblical tradition that rooted its worship in the central Jerusalem Temple. Prayer and study, as mobile forms of religious practice, replaced sacrifice and enabled the Diaspora to become a vital alternative to life in Judea. Our course of study will include the many religious developments of the period such as the appearance of different sects – Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, the Dead Sea sect, and Christians – and numerous literary inventions, including the formation of the biblical canon, the advent of apocalyptic literature, and the redaction of the Talmud. Attention will also be paid to Jewish life within different imperial contexts—such as that of the Persians, Greeks and Romans—that resulted in both the absorption of foreign ideas like Greek philosophy and the rejection of foreign power through numerous revolts. This course will, therefore, give students both an introduction to Judaism as well as a broad survey of Ancient Mediterranean history.

A Note about our Historical Approach

This course will touch on texts and issues that may be important to you on a personal level for a variety of reasons (especially related to the authority of biblical texts and notions of Jewish peoplehood). Yet, please keep in mind that this course adopts a historical approach to its subject matter. It does not presume that early Jewish or Christian history operates any differently than any other type of history. You should be prepared to subject all the materials we will be studying in this course to critical historical investigation using the full range of academic tools available. Special emphasis will be placed on the careful and critical use of ancient texts and artifacts. But it will also be our job to assess critically the interpretations that the scholars we are reading have offered of these sources. What types of historical questions should we be asking? What types of historical information do different types of evidence provide? And, perhaps most importantly, what are the limits of what we can know about this period of history?

Course Objectives

- 1. Learn the basic chronology and geography of ancient Jewish history, highlighting important events, figures, groups, and trends within the larger history of the Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern world.** All primary material is contextual and that context is comprised of dates, themes, names, terms, and locations. Without this knowledge, the primary texts will not make sense.
- 2. Develop your critical thinking, reading, and writing skills through the process of analyzing primary sources.** The use of primary sources to reconstruct history is essential. It is imperative, therefore, that students learn to critically evaluate the credibility of any source. At

a minimum this would involve answers to the following questions: What do we know about the source (date, authorship, provenance)? Does the author have an agenda? Is this an accurate translation? How does it relate to other primary sources and what we know of the time period? Can we glean anything factual from the source? How might the intended audience have reacted to the source? Can we even determine who the intended audience was? It is important to question the primary source in such a way without the influence of secondary literature, because it your reading of texts can be as legitimate as those of published scholars.

3. **Expose you to the wide range of scholars, scholarship, and scholarly tools in the field of ancient Jewish history.** Secondary sources, similarly, should be evaluated in the same way. The total effect, therefore, is to disabuse students of the notion that what is written down is always correct, and to simultaneously instill a confidence in their own well-thought-out opinions.

Course Materials

1. Lawrence Schiffman, *Texts and Traditions: A Source Reader for the Study of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism* (SR)
2. James C. VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism* (2022) (VK)
3. Bible with Apocrypha – I recommend *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, but you are welcome to use other translations
4. Other handouts/articles will be posted on Blackboard (BB)

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Grading Structure

A	94 -100	C+	79-77
A-	93-90	C	76-74
B+	89-87	C-	73-70
B	86-84	D	64-69
B-	83-80	F	63 and below

Class participation	15%
Weekly Responses (10)	10%
Scholarly Article Reviews (5)	10%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	25%
Paper	20%

Course Requirements

1. Attendance, Participation and Reading – are all key components to having a valuable learning experience in class. I will be taking attendance at every class session, and participation grades will reflect attendance records as well as engagement in class discussion. Class discussion will take up a significant portion of each class session. IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU BRING THE BIBLE AND/OR SOURCE READER WITH YOU TO EVERY CLASS. Participation is also dependent on you doing the assigned reading before class. See the schedule below for reading assignments. Reading

assignments should be completed by the corresponding class date. Also both exams will reflect material dealt with in class.

2. Exams – A Part 1 Exam will be given in class on February 28th and cover material from both class and readings. A Part 2 Exam will be given online during class time on April 22nd and will cover material from the second half of the course.

3. Paper - You will be responsible for writing one paper during the semester (**due end of day, May 5th**). You will have a choice of 1) evaluating an online source, 2) creating your own midrash, or 3) writing a research paper. Further instructions will be handed out.

4. Written Responses – You are responsible for 10 short (1-2 paragraph) written responses to the readings. You should respond to one of the assigned reading questions prior to the class for which it was assigned. The weeks and questions are your choice. The purpose of these responses is to practice close reading and to improve your writing.

5. Scholarly Article Reviews – You are responsible for 5 reviews. Each of these focus on a different scholarly argument as well as showcase different forms of methodologies. This is your chance to understand what it is that Judaic Studies scholars do! The review entails answering specific questions that will be posted on Blackboard. There are more than five opportunities to do this, so it's your choice what articles. *They are marked with an asterix*.*

Class Policies

Technology: Regarding electronic devices (such as laptops, cell phones, etc.), please be respectful of your peers and your instructor and do not engage in activities that are unrelated to class. Such disruptions show a lack of professionalism and may affect your participation grade.

Policy on late assignments: Please make every effort to contact me if you think your work will not be submitted on time. Unexcused late work will be accepted at my discretion and, if accepted, will result in a lowered grade.

Honor Code: All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find a copy of the Honor Code at academicintegrity.gmu.edu. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. Instances of plagiarism will receive a strict penalty, which includes the possibility of a grade of "F" for the course. Plagiarism consists of presenting the writing, research, or analysis of others as one's own. It applies not only to the lifting of the verbatim text of another author's work without quotation marks and accurate citation, but also to the taking of specific information, analysis or opinions—even if not in the exact words of the author him/herself—and presenting them without citation in one's own paper. This applies both to material in printed format and to material found on internet sites. Any instance of outright plagiarism, as described above, or cheating on an exam will be reported to the Honor Council.

Any text generated by an artificial intelligence (AI) text-generation tool (such as ChatGPT) is not accepted in this class as "the student's own work," and so will be considered similarly to text published on paper or online or text composed or significantly edited/alterd by another person. The use of such text without proper attribution is a violation of academic integrity.

Disability Services: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see the professor and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

Inclusion Statement: in class, we will work to create an environment that lets everyone feel safe, welcome, and respected. We place great importance on considering the mindset and values of the ancient world but that is not an endorsement of that mindset and those values. Your participation is valuable, as is that of your peers. Please let that inform your behavior.

Religious Observances: If a class session or due date conflicts with your religious holidays, please notify me so we can make alternative arrangements. Look over the schedule carefully now and let me know if this is the case at least two weeks prior. <https://ulife.gmu.edu/religious-holiday-calendar/>

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Primary Source Reading	Secondary Source Reading
Weds, Jan 17	Introduction – Periodization, Terminology, Sources		
Mon, Jan 22	Background 1: History of Biblical Period	In Bible - Genesis 12; Exodus 1, 12:37-50; Joshua 1; 1 Samuel 8; 2 Kings 17, 2 Kings 24-25	(BB) Raymond Scheindlin, "Israelite Origins," 1-23
Weds, Jan 24	Background 2: Biblical Religion	In Bible - Genesis 17; Exodus 19-21; Kings 12:25-33; 2 Kings 18:1-8; Amos 2:6-8; Hosea 11:1-7; Isaiah 1:10-21; 58:6-7	(VK) p. 203-208 "The Sacrificial System" and "Festivals" *(BB) Jeffrey L. Cooley, "Astral Religion in Ugarit and Ancient Israel," <i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i> 70 (2011): 281-287 (BB)
Mon, Jan 29	Exile and Return	In Bible – Jeremiah 29:1-14, Psalm 137, Ezra 1-3, Nehemiah 1-2 SR 3.1.2	(BB) Raymond Scheindlin, "Judea and the Origins of Diaspora," 25-33 (VK) p. 1-6 "Beginnings" and "Events in Judah (Yehud)"
Weds, Jan 31	Elephantine	SR 3.2.1, 3.2.2	(VK) p. 7-8 "Events in Egypt," and p. 152-155, "The Elephantine Papyri"
Mon, Feb 5	Literary Legacy of Persian Period – biblical interpretation & canonization	In Bible – Ezra 6-7, Nehemiah 8 and 10	(VK) p. 51-56 "Second Temple Texts in the Hebrew Bible," p. 213-217 "Scriptures"
Weds, Feb 7	The Arrival of the Greeks and Hellenism	In Bible – Ecclesiastes 1, Prologue of Ecclesiasticus (also called Wisdom of Ben Sira or Sirachus), and chapter 24, SR 4.2.1	(VK) p. 11-12 "The Hellenistic Age," (stop after Ptolemy I and Judea), p. 14-15 "The Tobiad Romance" and p. 119-123 "The Wisdom of Ben Sira" *(BB) Elias Bickerman, "The Greeks Discover the Jews" 13-19 and "The Jews Discover the Greeks," 20-25
Mon,	The Maccabean	In Bible –	(VK) p. 16-23 "Seleucid Control/Influence in

Feb 12	Revolt	1 Maccabees 1-4, 2 Maccabees 3-10	Judea"; p. 60-67 "1 Maccabees" and "2 Maccabees," p. 208 "Hanukkah" *(BB) Gerry Wheaton, "The Festival of Hanukkah in 2 Maccabees: Its Meaning and Function," <i>CBQ</i> 74 (2012): 247-262
Weds, Feb 14	The Hasmonean State	In Bible – 1 Maccabees 5-16, 2 Maccabees 11-15 SR 6.1.4, 6.1.6	(VK) p. 24-31 "The Hasmonean State" (BB) Lee. I. Levine, "The Age of Hellenism: Alexander the Great and Rise and Fall of the Hasmonean Kingdom," 240-254.
Mon, Feb 19	Hellenistic Egypt and its literature	SR 5.2.2, 5.6.3, 5.6.4, 5.6.6 (read only "on the Liberty of Men," on p. 221, "The Way of Wisdom" on p. 223, and "The Symbol of the Burning Bush" on p. 227)	(VK) p 12-13 "Ptolemy II and the Greek Translation of the Torah," p. 78-82 "Letter of Aristeas," p. 141-146 "Philo of Alexandria" *(BB) Erich S. Gruen, "The Twisted Tales of Artapanus: Biblical Rewritings as Novelistic Narrative," in Ilaria Ramelli and Judith Perkins, <i>Early Christian Narrative: The Role of Religion in Shaping Narrative Forms</i> (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 31-44
Weds, Feb 21	Samaritans and Converts	In Bible – 2 Kings 17, Ezra 4, Ezra 9-10, Ruth 1 SR 4.2.2, 5.4.3	(VK) p. 6-7 "Jaddua and Alexander the Great"; p. 196-197 "Others"
Mon, Feb 26	Jewish Sects	In Bible – Matthew 22-23, Acts 23:6-10 / SR 6.2.1, 6.2.2, 6.2.3, 6.3.1, 6.3.3, 6.3.4, 10.1.10	(VK) p. 190-196 "Groups"
Weds, Feb 28	PART 1 EXAM	IN CLASS	
Mon, March 11	Qumran Sectarrians	SR 6.3.5, 6.3.6, 7.3.2	(VK) p. 155-172 "The Dead Sea Scrolls" (BB) Lawrence Schiffman, "Origins and Early History," 83-95
Weds, March 13	Qumran Sectarrians	SR 7.3.1, 7.3.3, 7.3.5	*(BB) Ari Mermelstein, "Love and Hate at Qumran: The Social Construction of Sectarian Emotion," <i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i> 20 (2013): 237-263
Mon, March 18	News Ideas – Messianism, Resurrection, and Martyrdom	In Bible – Daniel 6 and 7; Matthew 28 Re-read 2 Maccabees 6-7 SR 7.3.6	(BB) Lawrence Schiffman, "The Messianic Idea," 317-328 *(BB) Stephan Bedard, "Hellenistic Influence on the Idea of Resurrection in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature," <i>JGRCHJ</i> 5 (2008): 174-189
Weds, March 20	New Texts – Apocrypha Apocalypse, and Pseudepigrapha	SR 7.1.1, 7.2.1, 7.2.4	(VK) p. 89-100 "Rewritten Scripture" and p. 106- 113 "Apocalypses" *(BB) Alexandria Frisch, "The Apocalyptic Moses of Second Temple Literature," in <i>Essays on the Moses Tradition in Jewish</i>

			<i>Thought</i> , ed. Mark Leuchter and Zeb Farber (Cincinnati: HUC Press, 2019): 185-208
Mon, March 25	Herod, Roman Rule and the Great Revolt	SR 8.2.1, 8.3.1, 8.3.2, 9.1.1, 9.1.9, 9.1.10	(VK) p. 31-46 "The Roman Period", p. 172-179 "Masada", p. 188-190 "Sanhedrin" *(BB) Richard Horsley, "The Sicarii: The Ancient Jewish 'Terrorists,'" <i>The Journal of Religion</i> 59 (1979): 435-458
Weds, March 27	Jesus, Paul and Early Christianity	In Bible – Matthew 1-10, 24, Acts 9, 15	*(BB) Bart D. Ehrman, "Jesus: The Apocalyptic Prophet," in <i>Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium</i> (1999): 214-231 *(BB) David Carr, "The Traumatized Apostle," <i>Holy Resilience: The Bible's Traumatic Origins</i> (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 174-194.
Mon, April 1	Rabbinic Life in Palestine and the Mishnah	In Bible – Acts 5 SR 9.1.7, 10.3.2, 10.3.3	(BB) Shaye Cohen, "The Emergence of Rabbinic Judaism," pp. 205-223 *(BB) Jeffrey P. Garcia, "Matthew 19:30: 'What do I still Lack?' Jesus, Charity, and the Early Rabbis," in <i>The Gospels in First Century Judaea</i> , ed. Steven Notley and Jeffrey P. Garcia (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 20-43
Weds, April 3	Midrash	(BB) Midrashic sources	(BB) David Stern, "Midrash and Midrashic Interpretation," 1863-1872
Mon, April 8	The Ancient Synagogue	SR 9.3.1, 9.3.2, 9.3.3, 9.3.4, 9.3.5	(VK) p. 209-213 "Other Forms of Worship" *(BB) Geza G. Xeravits, "Goddesses in the Synagogue?" <i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i> 48 (2017): 266-276
Weds, April 10	Josephus and Jews in the Roman World	SR 5.4.3, 5.5.1, 5.5.2, 5.5.3, 5.5.4, 5.6.1, 5.6.2, 11.1.2, 11.2.4	(VK) p. 146-151 "Josephus"; p. 48-50 "Appendix on Egyptian Judaism"
Mon, April 15	The Bar Kochba Revolt	SR 9.6.1, 9.6.2, 9.6.3, 9.6.4	(VK) p. 46-47 "The Bar Kochba Revolt" *(BB) Shayna Sheinfeld, "Bar Kokhba and Leadership as Seen through the Revolt." <i>Religion Compass</i> (July 2019): 13.7: 1–10.
Weds, April 17	Rabbinic Life in Babylonia and the Talmud	SR 11.3.7, 11.3.8, 11.3.10, 11.3.11, 11.3.12, 12.2.1, 12.4.1	(BB) Isaiah Gafni, "The History of Babylonian Jewry," 792-804 (BB) Adin Steinsaltz, "What is the Talmud?" in <i>The Essential Talmud</i> (New York: Bantam Books, 1977), 3-9.
Mon, April 22	PART 2 EXAM	<u>ONLINE DURING CLASS TIME</u>	
Weds, April 24	Jews and Christians - the Parting of the Ways?	SR 8.5.2, 8.5.3, 8.5.4, 8.5.5, 8.5.6, 8.6.1, 8.6.3	*(BB) Adele Reinhartz, "John 8:31-59 from a Jewish Perspective," in <i>Remembering for the Future</i> , 787-797 (BB) James Charlesworth, "Christians and Jews in the First Six Centuries," pp. 316-325

Mon, April 29	Conclusion – Judaism going forward		
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