

RLST/JWST 3100: JUDAISM
Fall 2015 – T/TH 11-12:15
Humanities 250

Professor Elias Sacks

email: elias.sacks@colorado.edu

office hours: Tuesdays 1-3 or by appointment (Humanities 286)

GA: Kathryn Huether

email: kathryn.huether@colorado.edu

office hours: Thursdays 12:30-2 or by appointment (Humanities 216)

GA: Scott Meyers

email: scott.meyers@colorado.edu

office hours: Tuesdays 1-2 or by appointment (Humanities 216)

What is Judaism? What beliefs and practices have been associated with this tradition, and how have these ideas and customs developed over time? Is there such a thing as *Judaism*, or should we speak instead of various *Judaisms*? This course will explore such questions, surveying Jewish belief, practice, and literature from the biblical period to the present day. We will encounter diverse voices and explore the changing contexts in which these voices have emerged, paying special attention to the relationship between the beliefs that Jews have held and the rituals that Jews have performed. We will consider specific topics such as forms of worship associated with Jewish life, Jewish views on religious diversity, and attempts to reimagine inherited beliefs in light of developments such as the Holocaust. Exploring these topics will also lead us to reflect more broadly on the nature of religion.

Our sessions will involve lectures as well as class-wide and small-group discussions.

Course Materials

The following books are available for purchase at the CU Bookstore and will be available on reserve at Norlin Library:

- Michael Fishbane, *Judaism: Revelation and Traditions*, HarperCollins 1987
- Adele Berlin and Mark Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible*, Oxford 2004 (1st edition) or 2014 (2nd edition)

All other readings will be available through Desire2Learn (D2L). Go to “Readings” (in “Content”) and select the appropriate date.

Course Requirements

1. Attendance and Participation – 15% of final grade

Lectures and discussions are central components of this course, and will frequently cover material that is not included in the readings. Punctual attendance is mandatory: you are allowed to miss two classes with no questions asked, but further absences may require documentation from a doctor or other appropriate

source. Make sure to sign the attendance sheet each day in class. Active and responsible participation in small-group and class-wide conversations is also required: you are expected to listen open-mindedly to your colleagues and contribute meaningfully to our conversations, expressing your own views while being open to having those claims challenged with charity and humility. We will discuss the format of these conversations—which will involve what the Jewish tradition has termed *hevruta* learning, or learning with a study partner—during the first week of the semester.

2. Quizzes and Short Responses – 40% of final grade

We'll be covering a broad range of material, and it's crucial that you keep up with the readings. Therefore, you will be required to complete brief online quizzes and submit short response papers.

Quizzes (20% of final grade): Each week, you will be able to use D2L to access a five-question quiz on the readings assigned for our Tuesday session. The quiz will be active from the Friday of the previous week through 10 am on the Tuesday of the due date. (On weeks 4, 6, and 7, the quiz will be active until Wednesday at 10 am because of religious holidays: see the “Time in the Classroom” section below, as well as the course outline.) You may refer back to the readings as you complete each quiz; however, be sure to complete the readings before accessing the quiz, since you will have only 10 minutes to finish the quiz once you've started. The first quiz—on the readings for September 1—will be active on August 28. We will count only your ten highest quiz scores when calculating your grade.

Short Response Papers (20% of final grade): In addition to these quizzes, you will be required to submit four short (2-page) response papers on the readings (one for each unit). These responses are opportunities for you to formulate and test out your thoughts on course material—to offer interpretations, raise questions, draw connections, and develop critiques. Responses must be submitted through D2L by 10 am on the due date indicated in the course outline. One week before each due date, I'll post several guiding questions to help you formulate your response: you will be asked to address one of these prompts. (However, if you'd like to reflect on a different topic, send me an email, and we'll decide together whether the proposed topic is appropriate.) These responses are graded out of 10. You will receive a 0 if you do not complete the assignment by the due date or if you fail to show that you have done the reading, a 6.5 if you demonstrate that you have done the reading but do not understand the material, an 8.5 if you mostly offer an accurate summary of what's in the readings, and a 10 if you both offer an accurate summary and share some original insights. Unless you contact me in advance to discuss some special circumstances (such as illness), no late responses will be accepted.

3. Midterm – 20% of final grade

You will have a take-home midterm essay exam, which will ask you to synthesize material from the lectures and readings for Weeks 1-7. This exam will be available online before class on October 8, and must be submitted through D2L at some point between that time and October 16 at 11 am. Exams submitted after this time will be penalized 1 letter grade per day: for example, an exam that would ordinarily merit an A but was submitted one day late would receive an A-. No midterm will be accepted after 11 am on October 19. We will discuss the exam in greater detail as we get closer.

4. Final Exam – 25% of final grade

You will have a take-home final essay exam, which will ask you to synthesize material from the lectures and readings for Weeks 1-15. This exam will be available online before class on December 8 and must

be submitted through D2L at some point between that time and December 15 at 11 am. No late exams will be accepted. We will discuss the final in greater detail as we get closer.

For additional information on requirements and grading (including numerical equivalents for letter grades), see the documents posted throughout the semester on D2L in the folder “Course Documents.”

Communication

The more opportunities we have to speak with one another—to discuss issues relating to the course material, as well as your broader interests—the more productive our time together will be. The best way to speak with me is to meet during my office hours. If you have a prior commitment during that window, send me an email with three alternatives, and we will find a time to meet.

I am available via email, and I will do my best to respond within 36 hours. (If there are any times when I know that it is likely to take me more than 36 hours to respond to messages, I will inform the class in advance.) However, while email can be an excellent way to deal with administrative issues, it’s rarely an effective way to discuss substantive questions. For example, while email is a good way to let us know of an illness that will keep you out of class or to clarify the procedure for submitting responses, it’s not the best way to discuss questions such as “do some thinkers really hold that God has a body” and “why did I receive this particular grade on my midterm exam.” Therefore, for substantive matters, we ask that you attend office hours or set up an alternate meeting time.

Time in the Classroom

Laptop computers may not be used during class, and you should put away (and silence) phones and other electronic devices before each class begins. Of course, if you have a specific need for a computer during class, please speak with me. Similarly, if you have a compelling reason to keep a phone (or phone-like device) turned on, let me know, and we’ll work something out.

Three Tuesday meetings—September 15, September 29, and October 6—have been cancelled due to Jewish holidays. I will be holding optional make-up sessions—conversations, really—on the Wednesdays of each of these weeks for students who wish to explore material relating to the course. I encourage you to attend these sessions, since they offer an opportunity to delve into key readings and topics that are central to the course as a whole. Nevertheless, you will not be penalized if you are absent from these optional sessions. These sessions will take place from 1-2 pm on September 16, September 30, and October 7 in Humanities 230; these dates will also be announced in class, and reminders will be sent out via email.

Week 1: Introduction

August 25: Voices from a Tradition

August 27: Key Concepts

- Michael Fishbane, *Judaism: Revelation and Traditions*, 11-24
- Kiddush for Shabbat Evening, in *The Koren Siddur*

UNIT I: THE BIBLE AND BEYOND

Week 2: The Bible and its Religion

September 1: Ancient Israel (quiz due by 10 am)

- Fishbane, *Judaism*, 25-30
- Marc Zvi Brettler, “The Hebrew Bible and the Early History of Israel,” in *Cambridge Guide to Jewish History, Religion, and Culture (JHRC)*, 6-11, 14-22, 26-32

September 3: Biblical Religion I

- *Jewish Study Bible (JSB)*:* Genesis 1:1-4:16, 6:1-9:7, 12:1-12:7, 17:1-17:17, 18:1-18:33; Exodus 19:1-19:8, 33:1-33:23

Week 3: Biblical Religion Continued

September 8: Biblical Religion II (quiz due by 10 am)

- *JSB*: Genesis 32:25-32:33; Deuteronomy 4:1-4:40, 5:1-7:26, 12:1-12:7, 13:1-13:19, 30:11-30:20; Isaiah 2:1-2:4, 11:1-13:22; Micah 4:1-4:7

September 10: Biblical Religion III

- *JSB*: Exodus 1:1-1:13, 2:23-3:22, 13:17-15:18, 19:1-20:18; Leviticus 19:1-19:19

Week 4: Case Study – Biblical Practice

September 15: No Class – Rosh Hashanah (quiz due by 10 am on Wednesday, September 16)

- Edward Greenstein, “Biblical Law,” in *Back to the Sources*, 83-103
- *JSB*: Numbers 28:1-29:39; 1 Kings 5:9-6:12, 8:1-9:9; Exodus 21:12-23:22

➤ **RESPONSE 1 DUE ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, BY 10 AM**

September 17: Sacrifices and Civil Law

- *JSB*: Leviticus 11:1-11:46

UNIT II: THE EMERGENCE OF RABBINIC JUDAISM

Week 5: Beyond the Bible

September 22: Second Temple Judaisms: Pharisees, Jesus, and Others (quiz due by 10 am)

- Shaye Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 13-26
- Fishbane, *Judaism*, 30-36
- Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, selections
- New Testament selections: Matthew 4:23-5:30, 10:5-10:15; Acts 10:1-10:48, 15:1-15:21

* References to biblical texts follow this format: [BIBLICAL BOOK] [CHAPTER:VERSE]-[CHAPTER: VERSE]. For example, “Genesis 1:1-4:16” refers to Genesis chapter 1 verse 1 through Genesis chapter 4 verse 16. Similarly, “Genesis 12:1-12:7” refers to Genesis chapter 12 verse 1 through Genesis chapter 12 verse 7.

September 24: The Rise of the Rabbis

- Fishbane, *Judaism*, 36-49
- Genesis 4:1-4:16 (in *JSB*) and rabbinic discussion
- Exodus 21:22-21:25 (in *JSB*) and rabbinic discussion
- Rabbinic Passages 1
- Yaakov Elman, “Classical Rabbinic Interpretation,” in *JSB*

Week 6: The Rabbinic Imagination

September 29: No Class – Sukkot (quiz due by 10 am on Wednesday, September 30)

- Michael Satlow, *Creating Judaism*, Chapter 5
- Deuteronomy 21:18-21:21 (in *JSB*) and rabbinic discussion
- Genesis 1:26 (in *JSB*) and rabbinic discussion
- Rabbinic Passages 2

October 1: Constructing Judaism

- Rabbinic Passages 3, 4, 5

Week 7: Case Study – Worship

October 6: No Class – Simhat Torah (quiz due by 10 am on Wednesday, October 7)

- Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 62-69 (“Practices”), 111-115 (“The Synagogue”)
- Fishbane, *Judaism*, 85-89, 110-112
- Selection from the Weekday Liturgy, in *The Koren Siddur*

➤ **RESPONSE 2 DUE ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, BY 10 AM**

October 8: Prayer

- Rabbinic Passages 6

UNIT III: THE MIDDLE AGES

Week 8: Philosophy

October 13: Inheriting the Rabbinic Tradition (quiz due by 10 am)

- Fishbane, *Judaism*, 49-69
- Kenneth Seeskin, “Jewish Philosophy,” in *JHRC*, 381-386
- Maimonides, “Basic Principles of the Torah,” 1:1-2:2, 2:11-2:12; *Guide of the Perplexed*, 1.54
- Moses Maimonides, “Introduction to *Mishneh Torah*,” “Letter to Obadiah the Proselyte

October 15: Philosophers or Heretics?

- Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, 3.27-3.28; “Laws Concerning Idolatry and the Ordinances of the Heathens,” 1:1-1:2

➤ **TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE ON FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16, BY 11 AM**

Week 9: Mysticism

October 20: Kabbalah (quiz due by 10 am)

- Fishbane, *Judaism*, 69-76
- Lawrence Fine, “Kabbalistic Texts,” in *Back to the Sources*, 305-329, 340-347
- *Zohar* Passage 1

October 22: A Cosmic Drama

- *Zohar* Passages 2

Week 10: Case Study – Jewish Time

October 27: The Sabbath (quiz due by 10 am)

- Fishbane, *Judaism*, 89-94
- Selections from the Hebrew Bible (*JSB*: Exodus 20:8-20:11, 24:12-25:9, 35:1-35:29), rabbinic literature, Maimonides, and the *Zohar* on the Sabbath

October 29: The Holidays

- Fishbane, *Judaism*, 83-85, 94-101
- Selections from Maimonides and the *Zohar* on the holidays
- Selections from the Passover Haggadah

UNIT IV: MODERNITY

Week 11: New Challenges

November 3: Emerging Threats (quiz due by 10 am)

- Fishbane, *Judaism*, 76-79
- Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, selection
- August Friedrich Cranz and Daniel Ernst Mörschel, “The Search for Light and Right” (with Prefatory Note to Selection 6, Prefatory Note to Selections 7 and 8)
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §125, §319, selection from §357

➤ **RESPONSE 3 DUE ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, BY 10 AM**

November 5: New Responses

- Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem, or on Religious Power and Judaism*, 78-93, 112-116
- Mordecai Kaplan, “God as the Power that Makes for Salvation” (in *Contemporary Jewish Theology*)

Week 12: Reimagining Religious Life: Denominations and Gender

November 10: New Forms of Life (quiz due by 10 am)

- Dana Evan Kaplan, “Contemporary Forms of Judaism,” in *JHRC*
- Steven Cohen, “Non-Denominational and Post-Denominational: Beyond The Major Movements – Two Tendencies in American Jewry”

- Selections from denominational and post-denominational literature: (1) “A Statement of Principles for Reform Judaism”; (2) Bradley Shavit Artson, “Conservative Judaism: Covenant and Commitment”; (3) Jonathan Sacks, “Orthodox Judaism and Halakhah”; (4) Lester Bronstein, “What is Reconstructionist Judaism”; (5) Marcia Prager, “What is Jewish Renewal”; (6) “About Kehilat Hadar: Missions and Principles, FAQs”;

November 12: Visit by Professor Riv-Ellen Prell

- Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*, vii-xix, 1-13
- Blu Greenberg, “Confrontation and Change: Women and the Jewish Tradition”

Week 13: A Changed World?

November 17: The Holocaust and Post-Holocaust Theology (quiz due by 10 am)

- Raymond Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People*, 199-213
- Irving Greenberg, “Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust” (from *Contemporary Jewish Theology*)
- Hans Jonas, “The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice”

November 19: Zionism and Israel

- Bernard Reich, “The Founding of Modern Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict,” in *JHRC*, 258-272
- Selections from Zionist thinkers: Theodor Herzl, “A Solution of the Jewish Question”; Ahad Haam, “The First Zionist Congress”; The Mizrahi, “Manifesto” (in *Jew in the Modern World*)

Week 14: Fall Break/Thanksgiving – No Class

Week 15: Case Studies – Food and the Life Cycle

December 1: Food (quiz due by 10 am)

- review Leviticus 11:1-11:46 (in *JSB*)
- George Robinson, *Essential Judaism*, 247-256
- Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, selections
- “Label Says Kosher; Ethics Suggest Otherwise” (from the *New York Times*)

➤ **RESPONSE 4 DUE ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3, BY 10 AM**

December 3: The Life Cycle

- Fishbane, *Judaism*, 101-108
- Marriage texts: (1) traditional *ketubah* with Maurice Lamm, “The Ketubah Text”; (2) “Brit Ahuvim – Lovers’ Covenant” with Rona Shapiro, “Ketubah – Wedding Contract”; (3) Daniel Nevins, “Conservative Halakhah and Homosexuality” with Elliot Dorff, Nevins, and Avram Reisner, “Rituals and Documents of Marriage and Divorce for Same-Sex Couples”

Week 16: Conclusion

December 8: Judaism, Today and Tomorrow (quiz due by 10 am)

- Pew Research Center, “A Portrait of Jewish Americans”

- www.ritualwell.org (browse the website)

December 10: Review and Conclusions

- Leora Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion*, 1-4

➤ ***TAKE-HOME FINAL DUE ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15, BY 11 AM***

Additional Information

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner (for exam accommodations provide your letter at least one week prior to the exam) so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by e-mail at dsinfo@colorado.edu. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see Temporary Injuries guidelines (<http://disabilityservices.colorado.edu/quick-links/temporary-injuries>) under the Quick Links at the Disability Services website (<http://disabilityservices.colorado.edu>) and discuss your needs with me.

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, if you have a potential class conflict because of religious observance, you must inform me of that conflict within three weeks of the start of classes. See campus policy regarding religious observances (<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/observance-religious-holidays-and-absences-classes-andor-exams>) for full details.

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on classroom behavior (<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-classroom-and-course-related-behavior>) and the student code (<http://www.colorado.edu/osc/>).

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this CU-Boulder policy, "Protected Classes" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSC) at 303-492-5550. Information about the OIEC, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be found at the OIEC website

(<http://www.colorado.edu/institutionalequity/>). The full policy on discrimination and harassment (<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/discrimination-and-harassment-policy-and-procedures>) contains additional information.

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy (<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/academic-integrity-policy>) of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Additional information regarding the Honor Code policy can be found online (<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-honor-code-policy>) and at the Honor Code Office (<http://honorcode.colorado.edu>).