JUDAISM

Rel/JSP 135
Fall 2015
T/Th 11:00-12:20, 202 HL

Zachary Braiterman

office: HL 509
office hours: W 11:00-12:00 (or by appointment)
zbraiter@syr.edu

The course provides a broad (but selective) survey of Jewish religious thought and practice from the biblical period through the modern. Readings focus on the way diverse Jewish thinkers have reshaped Jewish identity by reconfiguring the way in which they imagine the divine, interpret texts, and structure community. We pay particular attention to how Jewish interpreters have constructed a changing textual tradition as an integral part of that process. This class introduces students to the Hebrew Bible, Talmud and Midrash, medieval philosophy and mysticism, and to German Jewish existentialism and American Jewish feminism in the 20th century. Special note is paid to the modern period and the role of women.

Texts: (available at bookstore):
   TANAKH (Hebrew/"Old Testament") (at bookstore or bring your own)
   Friedman, Who Wrote the Bible?
   Michael Brenner, A Short History of the Jews
   Heschel, The Sabbath
   Plaskow, Standing Again at Sinai
   Course Reader (#1022 at Campus Copies @ Marshall Sq. Mall)

Requirements:
   Active class participation
   1 page weekly critique of course readings (due Tues) (mandatory, but not for
     grade)
   3 take-home writing exercises (5 pages each)
   take-home class final exam essay

Please note:
   All written work for credit is to be submitted by hardcopy to the instructors and
electronically to "Turnitin"
   No laptops, cellphones, or any electronic device in class w/o prior permission from
   the instructor
Readings:

INTRODUCTION TO THE CLASS
9/1 (no assignment)

THE HEBREW BIBLE

9/3 Family Saga:
Bible: Genesis chapters 12, 16-22, 27-35
Klagsburn, "Ruth and Naomi, Rachel and Leah" in *Reading Ruth* in COURSE READER

9/8 Liberation, Revelation, & Law
Bible: Exodus chapters 1-23, 35
Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, p.33-49, 86-8

9/10 Priests and Cult
Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, p.188-92 & 196-8 & 201-2

9/15 NO CLASS: ROSSH-HA-SHANNAH

9/17 Covenant & Prophecy
Deuteronomy chapters 27, 28, 30. Jeremiah chapters 1, 7, 11, 17, 31

9/17 NO CLASS: YOM KIPPUR

RABBINIC JUDAISM

9/24 Rabbinic history:
Brenner, chps.3-5

9/29 Rabbinic texts: Talmud
TBA
Selections from Bava Kama in COURSE READER

**** 1st PAPER DUE ****

10/1 Rabbinic texts: Talmud
A.J. Heschel, *God in Search of Man* in COURSE READER
Selections from Shabbat in COURSE READER

10/6 Rabbinic texts: Midrash
TBA
Neusner, "Genesis and Genesis Rabbah" in *The Midrash: An Introduction* in COURSE READER
Selections from Genesis Rabbah in COURSE READER
10/13 Themes in rabbinic literature: Revelation
Scholem, Gershom “Revelation and Tradition” in The Messianic Idea in Judaism in COURSE READER
Selections on Rabbinic Theology in COURSE READER

10/15 Themes in rabbinic literature: Politics
Rachel Adler, "The Jew Who Wasn't There" in On Being a Jewish Feminist in COURSE READER
Selections on Rabbinic Politics in COURSE READER

MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY & MYSTICISM

10/20 Introduction to medieval Judaism
Brenner, chps. 6-7, TBA

10/22 Philosophy: God and the Hebrew Bible:
TBA
Maimonides, Guide of the Perplexed, material on “God” in COURSE READER

*** 2nd PAPER DUE TODAY ***

10/29 Mysticism: The Structure of God
Seltzer, Jewish People, Jewish Thought, pp.419-50 in COURSE READER
Selections from Zohar, "Account of the Chariot" in COURSE READER

11/3 Mysticism: The Commandments
Selections from Zohar, "Sabbath & Holidays" in COURSE READER
Arthur Green, "Bride, Spouse, Daughter" in On Being a Jewish Feminist in COURSE READER

MODERN JUDAISM (I): 19th CENTURY ORIGINS OF JEWISH MODERNITY

11/5 Emancipation:
Brenner, chps.8-11

*** 3rd PAPER DUE ***

11/10 Reform Judaism
Brenner, chps. 12-13
Abraham Geiger in COURSE READER

11/12 Modern Orthodox Judaism
Samson Raphael Hirsch in COURSE READER
Conservative Judaism
Zecharias Frankel in The Jew in the Modern World in COURSE READER

11/17 Jewish Prayer and Modernity
The Siddur in COURSE READER
Reuven Hammer, Entering Jewish Prayer, chp.9 in COURSE READER
MODERN JUDAISM (II): 20th CENTURY JEWISH THOUGHT AND CULTURE

11/19 Kaplan: selection from Judaism as a Civilization in COURSE READER
12/1 Heschel, The Sabbath
12/3 Plaskow, Standing Again at Sinai, chapter 2
12/8 Plaskow, Standing Again at Sinai, chps. 3-4
12/10 Greenberg, selections from On Women and Judaism and Hartman, A Living Covenant in COURSE READER

FINAL EXAM: TAKE HOME ESSAY, DUE LAST DAY OF EXAM WEEK