



**FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS AND RELIGION
COURSE OUTLINE
Winter 2023**

COURSE: RELS 369

COURSE NAME: Introduction to Judaism

PRE/CO-REQUISITES: None

CLASSROOM LOCATION: SS 541

CLASS DAYS & TIMES: MWF 12:00pm - 12:50pm

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Mark Novak (mark.novak1@ucalgary.ca)

OFFICE HOURS: Friday, 9:00am - 11:30am; or by appointment. SS 502

INSTRUCTOR EMAIL POLICY: All course communications must be sent through your @ucalgary.ca email address, and I will respond to these emails within 48 hours. I strongly encourage you to communicate with me face-to-face, whether before or after class, or in my office hours. If the answer to your question(s) can be found in the syllabus or University website, I will not respond to your email.

COURSE CALENDAR STATEMENT: An introduction to the major practices, beliefs, institutions and religious literature of the Jewish religion, as developed from antiquity to modern times.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will introduce Judaism, looking first at its origins in the biblical period and continuing through to its various forms today. We will encounter major themes (e.g., creation, covenant, Torah, prophecy) and figures (e.g., Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Esther) from the biblical period. Judaism will be examined as it develops through the Mediaeval and Modern periods, including the major divisions of Judaism today. Guest speakers will include Rabbis from the three major traditions in Calgary, which will provide students with the opportunity to interact with representatives of Judaism and see how it is practiced contemporarily in their city.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

“It is not so very important for a person to learn facts. For that [a person] does not really need a college. The value of an education in a liberal arts college is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think something that cannot be learned from textbooks.” — Albert Einstein (1921), quoted in Philipp Frank, *Einstein: His Life and Times* (1947)

This is a liberal arts course. It is not intended to provide students with information or data and test their memories. A basis of contextualizing information will be established whenever necessary and assumed in our analyses and interpretations of the course materials. The primary pedagogical purpose of the course is to cultivate literacy in the traditional sense and, more ambitiously, to promote better insight, understanding, and moral judgment by encouraging students to reflect on intrinsically meaningful, challenging, or at least interesting books and articles. A liberal arts course, at its best, is a forum in which topics and disagreements can be raised and clarified through discussion and reflection. In this course we will discuss Judaism with our authors – for reading is fundamentally a discussion with an author – and we will discuss things among ourselves as well, in as much as that’s possible in a classroom setting. To use a term favoured by administrators, the “content” of this course is discussion – informed and mindful

discussion in the shared circumstance of a classroom. The content is also the engagement with the course texts and other materials; and the content might also be said to be the assignments. But the content of this course is most definitely not information or data that can be accessed, delivered, and reproduced in one way or another indifferently. If a course were nothing but the delivery of known information, there'd be no reason for a university; it would be sufficient for each of us to scroll through web searches and watch videos on our own.

Thus, upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. Understand the historical background and development of Judaism.
2. Reflect critically – via in-class discussion and in written assignments – on content from both primary and secondary sources.
3. Explain the sectarian division within Judaism, and some of the differences between Judaism and the other Abrahamic and world religions.
4. Demonstrate the ability to understand the argument that an author is making, and respond to it in a meaningful way in their own voice.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2005).
- Eliezer Segal, *Introducing Judaism* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
- Coursepack.
- Tanakh/Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. I recommend *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014), but any edition/translation will suffice.
- Please get paper copies of all these texts, and bring the corresponding text to the class that we will be engaging with it. It is a good practice and highly beneficial for one's learning to mark on paper when reading it (highlighting, underlining, starring, writing a few notes/reflections/ideas in the margins, etc.).

CLASS SCHEDULE:

This schedule is subject to change, with sufficient notice given to students.

Week 1 (Jan. 9, 11, 13) – Introduction; What is Judaism? Who are the Jews?

- Eliezer Segal, *Introducing Judaism*, "Introduction"
- Gershom Scholem, "Judaism"
- Gershom Scholem, "Revelation and Tradition as Religious Categories in Judaism"

Week 2 (Jan 16, 18, 20) – History, Creation, Torah, Covenant/Election

- Segal, *Introducing Judaism*, "Chapter 1: The Biblical Legacy"
- Genesis 1-3, 11-12, 15-22; Exodus 1-24, 32-34; Joshua 24

Week 3 (Jan 23, 25, 27) – Covenant/Election cont., Prophets

- Segal, *Introducing Judaism*, 163-70, 197-209
- 2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17; Hosea; Jonah

Week 4 (Jan 30, Feb 1, 3) – Law in Judaism, Rabbinic Law

- Segal, *Introducing Judaism*, "Chapter 2: The Second Temple Era" and "Chapter 3: Judaism of the Talmud and Midrash"

- Heather Miller Rubens, “‘Something has gone wrong’: The JFS Case and Defining Jewish Identity in the Courtroom”

Week 5 (Feb 6, 8, 10) – Sacrifice, Worship, Holy Days, Festivals; 15 Shevat (New Year for Trees)

- Segal, *Introducing Judaism*, “Chapter 17: Judaism and Daily Life” and “Chapter 18: The Sacred Calendar”
- Ruth Langer, “Jewish Worship and Liturgy”

Week 6 (Feb 13, 15, 17) – Guest speakers

- February 13: Ruth Spivak (PhD. Cand. in Religious Studies, UofC) – Hebrew language
- February 15: Rabbi Glickman, Temple B’nai Tikvah (Reform Judaism)
- February 17: Rabbi Ilana Lapidés, Beth Tzedec (Conservative Judaism)

Week 7 (Feb 20, 22, 24) – READING WEEK

Week 8 (Feb 27, Mar 1, 3) – Guest speaker; Sabbath

- February 27: Rabbi Andrews, House of Jacob Mikveh Israel (Orthodox Judaism)
- Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*
- Segal, *Introducing Judaism*, 279-80

Week 9 (Mar 6, 8, 10) – Esther and Purim; Medieval and Mystical Judaism; Guest speaker

- Esther
- Segal, *Introducing Judaism*, “Chapter 4: Medieval Judaism”, “Chapter 5: Medieval Jewish Philosophy”, “Chapter 6: Kabbalah”, and “Chapter 12: The Mystic Path”
- March 10: Rabbi Groner (Chabad)

Week 10 (Mar 13, 15, 17) – Modernity; Field trip (optional)

- Segal, *Introducing Judaism*, “Chapter 7: The Modern Era”
- Daniel Gordis, “Conservative Judaism: The Struggle Between Ideology and Popularity”
- March 13: Field trip to Beth Tzedec, 7pm-8pm. This is OPTIONAL.

Week 11 (Mar 20, 22, 24) – Diaspora, Zionism, Statehood

- Segal, *Introducing Judaism*, pp. 173-78
- Arnold Eisen, “Exile”
- David Biale (ed.), “Zionism and the State of Israel”

Week 12 (Mar 27, 29, 31) – Antisemitism and the Holocaust; Guest Speaker

- Zygmunt Bauman, “The Uniqueness and Normality of the Holocaust”
- March 31: Rabbi Lapidés (former Holocaust Educator for the Calgary Jewish Federation)

Week 13 (Apr 3, 5) – Feminist and Queer Views; Exodus and Passover

- Rachel Adler, “Queer Jews Talking Their Way In”
- Judith Plaskow, “The Right Question is Theological”
- Exodus

Week 14 (Apr 12) – Passover ends; Recap, questions

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-schedule.html>.

ASSIGNMENTS:

A physical copy of each paper is to be handed to the professor in-class on the day that they are due.

- Jan 30. Response 1 (15%). Write a 2–3-page engaged response to one of the texts from January 9-27. You need not use additional sources, and will not get a better grade just because you do.
- Feb 27. Response 2 (20%). Write a 3–4-page engaged response to one of the texts or guest lectures from January 30-February 17. You need not use additional sources, and will not get a better grade just because you do.
- Mar 20. Review assignment (30%). Write a 5–7-page critical review of Heschel’s *The Sabbath*, especially reflecting on how (the idea of) the Sabbath might respond to some of the issues in our world today. You need not use additional sources, and will not get a better grade just because you do.
- April 12. Final paper (35%). Choose an aspect of Judaism – ideally one that we have covered in this class – that you find interesting and worthy of further research. Write an 8–10-page research paper on this topic. You can use source texts from this course, but you must also find three (3) additional sources for your paper. It is recommended that you discuss your idea with me by the end of March in order to help guide you in this process.

You will lose a letter grade for each day that your assignment is late, starting immediately after the class it is due. Thus, an assignment that is given a B, will become a B- if one day late, a C+ for two days late, etc. Please discuss with me early on (i.e., days or weeks before, not hours before, an assignment is due) if you need help. Please also consult the resources on campus to help with writing. It is not necessary to pass each assignment separately in order to pass the course, but you still must complete each assignment.

GRADING:

A numerical mark will be given for each course requirement. A letter grade will be assigned on the following number and letter grade scheme, standardized within the Department of Classics and Religion. A student’s final grade for the course is the sum of the separate assignments.

A+	100-96	A	95 - 90	A-	89 - 85
B+	84 - 80	B	79 - 75	B-	74 - 70
C+	69 - 65	C	64 - 60	C-	59 - 55
D+	54 - 53	D	52-50	F	Under 50

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/f-1.html>

EXPECTATIONS FOR WRITING:

The English term *essay* is derived from the Old French verb *essayer*, to attempt or try. You might say that an essay is having a go at it, with the connotation giving it your best effort. So, an essay – or a response paper, which is a very short essay – aspires to something. It’s an attempt to come to an understanding of something that interests the writer and to present that understanding in reasonable and persuasive written form for a reader. The open nature of essay writing, and particularly its aspirational character, can’t quite be captured in a rubric. The English term *rubric* has a different connotation. It’s derived from

a term for (red lettered) directions in a religious service, and we now use it to mean something like a checklist to be followed precisely, to the letter, “religiously”; and to take the metaphor a bit further, we might even assume that following the rubric precisely is the path to salvation – understood as the successful completion of an assignment, of course.

The writing assignments for this course encourage you to aspire, not to demonstrate that you can follow a rubric. You should aspire to come to your own understanding of the assigned course texts and to find your own voice and writing style. That can seem a daunting challenge, I know. But fear not. There is no firm, fixed rubric to master; so, there’s no need to worry about not having one. Still, some guidelines would be helpful, even if they’re not completely reassuring, given that the assignments are graded (unfortunately, I have to give you grades). To that end, here’s an aspirational grading rubric. You’ll see right away that it cannot be satisfied mechanically, as if it were a checklist. Keep in mind, though, that it also cannot be applied mechanically. All assignments will be graded with expectations appropriate for a first-year course and for students who are just beginning to essay.

Essay marks in this course are based on clarity, reflective depth, originality, and good writing.

A) You will receive an A-range mark if your paper is beautifully written and error-free, you show a strong sense of what the texts are saying, you appear to be responding in some way to themes raised in class, and you make an interesting, compelling argument.

B) You will receive a B-range grade if your paper is well written, more or less error-free, you grasp the main sense of the texts, your paper has something to do with something raised in class, and your argument, while perhaps not breathtakingly original, seems to work.

C) You will receive a C-range grade for any of the following reasons: your paper is not tremendously well written; its interpretation is inadequately based in the text; your engagement with class content is minimal; the paper is scattered in its argumentation.

D) You will receive a D-range grade for any of the following reasons: your paper is poorly written, and seems to have been written in a rushed manner; you overtly ignore relevant ideas and themes discussed in class; the paper's argument is very hard to follow or missing; the sentence structure and grammar make it very hard to understand.

Plagiarism will be punished to the extent of the law, and you should familiarize yourself with the relevant definitions and University policy.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION EXPECTATIONS:

You are expected to attend and be fully present in every class; while I will lecture, I will also engage with you and your colleagues in discussion. I also expect you to be prepared for every class – which is necessary in order to have discussion – which primarily includes having read the assigned readings and having the physical text with you.

CONDUCT: Students, employees, and academic staff are also expected to demonstrate behaviour in class that promotes and maintains a positive and productive learning environment. As members of the University community, students, employees, and academic staff are expected to demonstrate conduct that is consistent with the University of Calgary Calendar, the Code of Conduct and Non-Academic Misconduct policy and procedures, which can be found at: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>. We will have some guest speakers in this class; they also must be treated with utmost respect. You may ask them critically evaluative questions, but you may not criticize or harass them.

USE OF INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION DEVICES IN CLASS:

Please silence your phones and do not look at them for the duration of each class; I will do the same. I highly recommend that – unless you need to use a laptop for accessibility reasons – you do not use a laptop. Research makes clear that reading on physical paper and taking notes via pen and paper provide much better learning outcomes, and leads to the development of many important qualities (e.g., internalized knowledge, insight, reasoning and analysis capabilities, memory, and empathy). There are no PowerPoints to follow and all your texts are to be in print form. If you will be using a laptop anyway, you must sit in the back row of the classroom to eliminate your being a distraction to anyone behind you.

- A 2013 article about a research study on laptop multitasking in class shows that both the laptop-user and students in view of them both performed worse. ([Laptop multitasking hinders classroom learning for both users and nearby peers - ScienceDirect](#))
- A 2014 article in Scientific American by psychologist Cindy May makes clear that taking written notes by hand has significant learning advantages compared to taking notes on a laptop. ([A Learning Secret: Don't Take Notes with a Laptop - Scientific American](#))
- This 2017 Brookings' Institution article by Susan Dynarski (Professor of Public Policy, Education, and Economics) makes clear that students' learning is worse when they use laptops in class. ([For better learning in college lectures, lay down the laptop and pick up a pen \(brookings.edu\)](#))
- Neuroscientist Maryanne Wolf's 2018 article in The Guardian highlights the negative effects of skim-reading and digital reading, and the positive effects of reading on print. ([Skim reading is the new normal. The effect on society is profound | Maryanne Wolf | The Guardian](#)) Confer this research, that May cites, that shows that even when students are NOT multitasking on a laptop during class, they still do not learn as well as students who take written notes. ([The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking - Pam A. Mueller, Daniel M. Oppenheimer, 2014 \(sagepub.com\)](#))

COURSE EVALUATIONS AND STUDENT FEEDBACK:

Student feedback will be sought at the end of the course through the standard University Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) and Faculty course evaluation forms. A midterm evaluation may also be included to provide students an opportunity to provide feedback, for the instructor to adjust their approaches to teaching and learning, and to continuously improve the course. Students are welcome to discuss the process and content of the course at any time with the instructor.

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY POLICIES AND SUPPORTS

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

Academic Misconduct refers to student behaviour which compromises proper assessment of a student's academic activities and includes: cheating; fabrication; falsification; plagiarism; unauthorized assistance; failure to comply with an instructor's expectations regarding conduct required of students completing academic assessments in their courses; and failure to comply with exam regulations applied by the Registrar.

For information on the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure please visit:
<https://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-academic-misconduct-policy.pdf>
<https://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-academic-misconduct-procedure.pdf>

Additional information is available on the Academic Integrity Website at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/learning/academic-integrity>.

ACADEMIC ACCOMODATION:

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations according to the University policies and procedures listed below. The Student Accommodations policy is available at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/access/prospective-students/academic-accommodations>.

Students needing an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/procedure-for-accommodations-for-students-with-disabilities.pdf>). Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than Disability should communicate this need in writing to their instructor. SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

INSTRUCTOR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY:

Course materials created by instructors (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the course at the same time may be allowed under fair dealing.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY:

Student information will be collected in accordance with typical (or usual) classroom practice. Students' assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty. Private information related to the individual student is treated with the utmost regard by the faculty at the University of Calgary.

COPYRIGHT LEGISLATION:

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright-policy.pdf>) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorised sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE POLICY:

The University recognizes that all members of the University Community should be able to learn, work, teach and live in an environment where they are free from harassment, discrimination, and violence. The University of Calgary's sexual violence policy guides us in how we respond to incidents of sexual violence, including supports available to those who have experienced or witnessed sexual violence, or those who are alleged to have committed sexual violence. It provides clear response procedures and timelines, defines complex concepts, and addresses incidents that occur off-campus in certain

circumstances. Please see the policy available at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/sexual-violence-policy.pdf>

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Please visit the Registrar's website at: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for additional important information on the following:

- Wellness and Mental Health Resources
- Student Success
- Student Ombuds Office
- Student Union (SU) Information
- Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points
- Safewalk