

Basic Concepts in Judaism (JST 103Y)

Syllabus Outline for FZY/Young Judea Year Course

This course will introduce students to the rich world of Jewish rituals, traditions and celebrations. Using a 'hands-on' approach, students will become familiar with Judaism taking note of its historical and religious significance. We will take an in-depth view of the daily, yearly and life cycles in Judaism. The goal of this course is to attain Jewish literacy by becoming familiar with Jewish concepts, vocabulary and points of view.

Students will be graded on a midterm examination (35% of the final grade) and a final research paper (35%). Additionally, students are expected to complete the readings and attend and participate in classroom discussions (15%). In-class assignment and quizzes make up the final 15% of the grade.

Class Sessions:

Classes 1-4

I. Introduction: An overview of the Jewish lifecycle.

A look at the origins and development of Judaism.

1. Overlapping cycles:
 - A. Jewish lifecycle
 - B. Jewish daily cycle
 - C. Jewish yearly cycle.
2. Where did the Jews come from?
 - A. A historical perspective
 - B. A geographical perspective
 - C. Demographical
 - D. Ashkenaz/Sepharad.

Readings:

- Hertzberg, Arthur and Hirt-Manheimer, Aron. Jews. HarperSanFrancisco: New York, 1998. p. 1-12.
- Steinsaltz, Rabbi Adin. Biblical Images. Basic Books, Inc.: New York, 1984. p. 13-19.

3. Streams of Judaism:
 - A. Ultra-Orthodox (Charedi)
 - B. Orthodox
 - C. Conservative
 - D. Reform
 - E. Reconstructionist Judaism.

Readings:

- Dosick, Rabbi Wayne. Living Judaism. HarperSanFrancisco: New York, 1995. p. 56-64.
- Robinson, George. Essential Judaism. Pocket Books: New York, 2000. p. 55-65.

Classes 5-6

II. Who is the Jewish God? A look at Judaism's perspective of the Deity.

Readings:

- Bokser, Ben Zion. Abraham Isaac Kook – The Lights of Penitence, The Moral Principles, Lights of Holiness, Essays, Letters, and Poems. Paulist Press: New York, 1978. p. 1.
- Hertzberg, Arthur. Judaism. Simon and Schuster Adult Publishing Group. New York, 1998. p. 63-84.
- Telushkin, Joseph. Jewish Wisdom. William Morrow and Company, Inc. New York, 1994. p. 283-289.

Class 7-8

III. Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur: A time for Repentance and Renewal.

1. The Philosophy Behind Repentance
2. High Holiday Prayers

Readings:

- Cohen, Jeffrey. Prayer and Penitence: A Commentary to the High Holiday Machzor. Jason Aronson: New Jersey, 1994. (classroom handout)
- Greenberg, Rabbi Irving. The Jewish Way. Touchstone: New York, 1988. p. 189-199.
- Robinson, George. Op. Cit. p. 92-99.

Classes 9-15

IV. The Jewish Lifecycle – an overview of Jewish life from birth to death.

1. In the Beginning
 - A. Brit
 - B. Simchat Bat
 - C. Pidyon HaBen
 - D. Adoption
 - E. Methods of Jewish Identification

Readings:

- Dosick, Rabbi Wayne. Op. Cit. p.285-291.
2. Crossing the Threshold
 - A. Bar and Bat Mitzvah
 - B. Confirmation

Readings:

- Hertzberg, Arthur. Op. Cit. p. 100-106.
- Hyman, Paula. "The Introduction of Bat Mitzvah in Conservative Judaism in Postwar America" in YIVO Annual, Vol. XIX, 1990. p. 133-145.

3. At the Altar
 - A. Marriage
 - B. Divorce

Readings:

- Lamm, Maurice. The Jewish Way in Love and Marriage. David, Jonathan Publishers, Inc., New York, 1992. p.3-9, 115-121.
4. Death and Mourning
 - A. Aninut
 - B. Aveilut
 - C. Yahrzeit and Yizkor

Readings:

- Dosick, Rabbi Wayne. Op. Cit. p. 303-313.
- Lamm, Maurice. The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning. David, Jonathan Publishers, Inc.: New York, 2000. p. 18-26.
- Robinson, George. Op. Cit. p. 192-193.
- Telushkin, Joseph. Op. Cit. p. 255-270.

Class 16 **Midterm**

Classes 17-23

V. The Jewish Day from Dawn until Dusk – A look at the daily structure of a Jewish life.

1. Morning Time

- A. Talit
- B. Tefillin
- C. Tzitzit
- D. Kippah

Reading:

- Dosick, Rabbi Wayne. Op. Cit. p. 221-225.
2. Prayer, the Synagogue, and the Jewish Bookshelf.
- A. Siddur
 - B. Sefer Torah
 - C. Beit Midrash

Readings:

- Dosick, Rabbi Wayne. Op. Cit. p. 201-209
- Steinsaltz, Adin. A Guide to Jewish Prayer Schocken Books: New York, 2000. p. 3-13; p. 288-305.
- Heschel, Abraham Joshua. Man's Quest for God. Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1954. p. 3-19.
- Telushkin, Joseph. Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People and Its History (Revised and Updated). William Morrow & Company, Inc.: New York, 2001. p. 23-25 and 148-150.

3. Eating – a Guide to Blessings and Jewish Dietary Laws

Readings:

- Welfeld, Irving. "You Shall Not Boil a Kid in its Mother's Milk" in The Jewish Bible Quarterly. 32,2 (2004). p. 84-89.
 - Lau, Rabbi Israel Meir. Op. Cit. p. 106-107.
4. Torah, Mitzvot and גמילות חסדים (Acts of Kindness) Mitzvot Bein Adam L'Makom and Bein Adam L'Chavero.

Readings:

- Borowitz, Eugene B. "Halakhah in Reform Jewish Usage" in the CCAR Journal, Fall 2002. p. 1-17.
- Telushkin, Joseph. Op. Cit. p. 495-496.

Classes 24-30.

VI. Jewish Celebrations – A look at the Sabbath and the Jewish Calendar.

1. Shabbat

Readings:

- Heschel, Abraham Joshua. I Asked for Wonder. Crossroad: New York, 1983. p. 34-37.

- Dresner, Samuel H., The Sabbath. The Burning Bush Press. New York, 1970. p.36-41.
- Hertzberg, Arthur. Judaism. Op. Cit. p. 170-178.

2. The Solar and Lunar Calendars

Reading:

- Telushkin, Joseph. Op. Cit. p. 561-563.

3. The Three Pilgrimage Festivals

- Succot
- Pesach
- Shavuot

Reading:

- Strassfeld, Michael. The Jewish Holidays – A Guide and Commentary. Harper & Row, Publishers: New York, 1985. p. 125-135.
- Dishon, David and Zion, Noam. A Different Night, The Family Participation Haggadah. Shalom Hartman Institute: Jerusalem, 1997. p. 34-48. (classroom handout).

4. Chanukah and Purim

Readings:

- Steinberg, Milton. "Judaism and Hellenism" in A Different Light. Devora Publishing: New York, 2000. p. 117-122.
- Hartman, David. "Greek Intellect and Jewish Body" in A Different Light. Devora Publishing: New York, 2000. p. 123-125.
- TANAKH – The Holy Scriptures. The Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia, 1985. p. 1457-1468.

5. Fast Days

- The Fast of Gedaliah
- The Tenth of Tevet
- The Fast of Esther
- The 17th of Tammuz
- The Ninth of Av

Readings:

- Excerpts from the Encyclopedia Judaica.

6. Modern Jewish Holidays

- Yom HaShoah
- Yom HaAtzmaut
- Yom HaZikaron

Readings:

- Golinkin, David. "Yom HaShoah: A Program of Observance". in Conservative Judaism. Vol. 37 (4). p. 52-61.
- Greenberg, Irving. Op. Cit. p.326-339 and 388-399.
- Schwartz, Rabbi Yom Tov. Eyes to See – Recovering Ethical Torah Principles Lost in the Holocaust. Urim Publications: Jerusalem, 2004. p. 167-177. (classroom handout).