

Shulamit Magnus

Oberlin College

Jewish Studies/ History 131

Jewish History: From Biblical Antiquity to Spanish Expulsion

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JEWISH HISTORY: FROM BIBLICAL ANTIQUITY TO SPANISH EXPULSION

Tu., Th. 11-12:15 King 341

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Office hours: Tu, Th 4:30- 5:30 -- use sign up sheets on my door each week—and by appointment.

This course is a survey of Jewish history from biblical antiquity through the medieval period in Christian and Islamic realms. No background is assumed or required.

While the course is introductory, it engages questions about the nature and use of historical sources and about theory and bias in history writing, and will emphasize themes, analysis, and the use of primary sources. Its broad sweep is intended to give students a grasp of main tropes in Jewish history and an appreciation of change and continuity in Jewish experience over epochs in different regions and settings. Successful completion of the course will leave students with a solid grasp of foundational dynamics in Jewish history and with working literacy in terms and concepts of Jewish experience and expression.

Major themes studied in evolving and comparative perspective are: Jewish self-definition and expression; political, economic, religious forces in larger society that supported as well as threatened group existence and religious/ cultural survival; material circumstances of Jewish life (place; economics); Jewish attitudes to political authority, both Jewish and non-Jewish; Jewish sense of self and other; strategies of physical and cultural survival.

Topics include: biblical society, religion, and literature; Jewish attitudes to sovereignty, loss of sovereignty and exile and to non-Jewish rule; Second Temple sects, including Jesus-followers; emergence, nature and triumph of rabbinic Judaism; gender, family and community in Jewish society; Jewish legal status and economic activities in medieval Muslim and Christian realms; medieval Jewish philosophy, mysticism, and schisms; Christian anti-Judaism and Jew-hatred: Jewish attitudes to non-Jews and responses to persecution.

This course is a requirement for the history track of the JWST major and for some upper level JWST courses. It can be taken for JWST or HIST credit, or both; successful completion gives SS, CD, and Wr credit.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. ATTENDANCE is required and will be noted; absence may factor in the final grade. It is the student's responsibility to obtain from other students any handouts, notes, assignments, or announcements for any missed class. If illness or emergency prevents your attendance, please email me. If a circumstance hinders your ability to attend regularly or fulfill other requirements, please see me as soon as possible. I will do my best to be of help but can do so only if you alert me to the need promptly.

PLEASE NOTE:

A. There will be three missed class dates at the beginning of the semester, as noted on the syllabus, for two of which we will hold makeup classes. Such sessions pose scheduling challenges to all but I ask your cooperation; preparation and attendance are required at

makeup classes, except in case of documented, immovable class conflict or emergency, when alternative arrangements to make up the class must be made.

B. If a class session is cancelled for any reason, e.g., weather, PREPARE AS USUAL for the missed class day, and prepare the next class reading for its scheduled time: stay current with the syllabus.

2. READING: Thoughtful preparation of readings for the session assigned. I welcome and will ask your informed input during class. Lectures and discussions assume and build on readings. Exams require thoughtful use of readings and lectures.

Obtaining readings:

ALL required reading for the course, except encyclopedia articles, is on shelf reserve in Mudd; this is the default option for doing required reading. Printouts of some readings are available from the JWST office; see me.

Required reading NOT in titles on the "Required for Purchase" list (see below), is in addition, on ERES (JWST 131), under author; editor (if an anthology); title of article or book. Refer any problems obtaining required readings to reserve room staff, preferably, the Supervisor, Michael Palazollo, immediately. Emailing me about such problems is not an effective route to help since all I can do is contact reserve room staff, and will not excuse failure to obtain and do readings. Do tell me of any problem your efforts do not resolve (same for the Bookstore). Don't wait for the last minute to obtain and do readings.

There are up to 60-65 pages of assigned reading per session, not including notes/illustrations (page numbers on the syllabus include these). Securing and doing the required reading for the date assigned is the responsibility of each student. There are no excused failures to OBTAIN readings. If you cannot DO them because of illness or emergency, come to class anyway, and see me.

Titles listed as "Required for Purchase," below, are used heavily and have been ordered in the Bookstore; using shelf reserve for these readings is not realistic. Material in these titles is NOT on eres (again, ALL assigned reading is on shelf reserve). If purchase is untenable, try pairing with other student/s to purchase and share, or use Ohio Link, but be sure to order well in advance. Again, there are no excused failures to obtain readings.

REQUIRED FOR PURCHASE:

Tanakh, The Holy Scriptures. The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text

The Jews, A History, eds. John Efron, Steven Weitzman, et. al.

Susan Niditch, Ancient Israelite Religion

Adin Steinsaltz, The Essential Talmud

Jane Gerber, The Jews of Spain

Robert Chazan, In the Year 1096: The First Crusades and the Jews

Recommended books on writing: I urge you to read the following short, paper backs; they will help you in this course and many others. Rampolla and Benjamin include guides to reading and note taking, as well as writing. Use of Rampolla or Benjamin is REQUIRED for those choosing the paper option:

Mary Lynn Rampolla, A Pocket Guide to Writing in History
 William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White, The Elements of Style
 Jules Benjamin, A Student's Guide to History

Whenever reading is assigned from a primary text in a book you own (e.g., Bible), or have printed out from eres (Schiffman; Chazan, Church), please bring that to class.

TIPS TO EFFECTIVE READING (see too, Rampolla, pp.6-37):

When you finish a reading or a part of it, stop and ask yourself what impressions you are left with and what you have learned. Ask yourself WHY what struck you did; what thesis the author is arguing and what evidence s/he presents. What are the implications of the argument? Asking yourself these types of questions will help you put details in perspective and focus on significance. Making short notations of your responses to these questions will help immensely in your learning and will make your reading effective.

3. ORAL WORK:

PRESENTATION: Each student will make 1-2 SHORT (5-7 minute, enforced) presentation/s on MAIN POINTS in or about a session's assigned readings. Do not review or report on the readings or simply state subjective reactions to them. Rather, give 3-5 (not more!) informed insights: what struck you, why? What connections to, comparisons, contrasts with other material we've studied do you see? What implications, conclusions can you state? What questions remain in your mind after you have done the reading? Use "Tips to Reading," above, for this assignment.

PRESENTATION WRITE-UP: On the day of your presentation, you must hand in a written version of your presentation, not to exceed 2 typed (not hand written), double-spaced pages; no late submission. This MAY be a detailed outline and need not be in polished prose. It must however, be coherent and substantive.

If class size requires two students lead off a session, DO NOT "split" the reading between you; EACH student does the assignment. You must meet with one another at least one day before the class to discuss your points to prevent duplication/ repetition.

I am happy to meet with you for guidance about this or any other requirement. I will solicit everyone's leadoff choice but it is each student's responsibility to be signed up for 1-2 presentation (class size will determine the number of presentations per student). If you find someone to switch a date with, fine with me but you must confirm this with me.

4. WRITTEN WORK:

ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS: There will be two take home essay assignments at roughly one-month intervals (due dates on syllabus), and a final, in-class exam on the day and time set by the Registrar (or a substitute paper option, see below). I will distribute essay topic choices at least one week in advance of the due date. Submit essays in hard copy only, no electronic submissions (except, if needed, to establish submission by the deadline).

Except in case of documented illness or emergency, late submission results in 1/3 grade reduction/day (A- becomes a B+, etc.); no credit for late leadoff presentation submission except in case of documented illness/ emergency. The final exam or paper must be submitted at the time set for this course by the Registrar, see their site for date. Instructors have no discretion about this. Requests for Incompletes must be processed with the Registrar.

PAPER OPTION:

Students may opt to write a 10-12 page research paper on a topic on or related to the syllabus instead of the final exam, due at the date and time of that exam. You **MUST** obtain my consent to exercise this option AND for your topic choice, preferably, by fall Break. You must submit a statement of topic and preliminary Bibliography upon return from Thanksgiving Break at the latest. Bibliography and footnotes are required for the paper, using scholarly conventions, as in Rampolla or Benjamin (see above).

All submitted written work MUST have: your name and a signed Honor Code declaration (College requirement). All writing MUST be typed, paginated, dated, and stapled. Work missing any of these elements will be returned ungraded.

WRITING GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS:

Substantiated analysis and clear, effective writing are basic requirements in the study of history. Essays must address the question asked. Be substantive, drawing from assigned readings and class sessions only—no off syllabus sources, unless these have my specific approval. Use correct grammar and spelling. Your work must be self-sufficient: comprehensible to an intelligent, interested reader with no independent knowledge of your topic. Such a person, not I, should be your imagined reader. Cite specifics to illustrate points; be precise. If you have any doubts about what is being asked in an assignment, see me.

Avoid passive tense and complicated, wordy style. Write simply, directly, concisely, and precisely. Common misuses: "impact" is not a transitive verb unless you mean "collide with" (as in car crash); use "affect"; "influence." "It's" is a contraction for "it is"; "its" is possessive. Bibliography, footnotes, are NOT necessary and should not be used in essays; use abbreviated citation in the body of your text, e.g., (Chazan, Church, p.62). Clear thinking and writing and solid argumentation based on evidence count heavily. I am happy to meet with you and read drafts if you submit these a few days in advance of expected comments. Do make use of Writing Tutors the College makes available and the writing guide books cited above. History essay writing is a complex skill. Drafts and re-writes-- meaning enough time to reflect on and revise-- are essential.

GRADING:

Oral presentation and its write-up: 15% of final grade

First essay assignment: 20%

Second essay assignment: 30%

Final exam (or paper): 35%

HONOR CODE: This course, as all in Oberlin, operates under the Honor Code, including but not limited to, prohibition of plagiarism. Students are responsible for understanding and adhering to the Code, information about which is available on the College website, from the Honor Code committee; reference librarians; me.

Reference recommendations (should you wish to look something up beyond assigned readings, or for background for a paper, if you choose this option:

Robert Seltzer, Jewish People, Jewish Thought

The Encyclopaedia Judaica (available in e and hard copy) in/ through Mudd

You are responsible for the information on this syllabus; see me with any questions. The syllabus is on the Jewish Studies and History websites should you lose your hard copy.

Welcome to the course!

Shulamit Magnus

JWST/ HIST 131

Oberlin College

Jewish History: From Biblical Antiquity to Spanish Expulsion

1. INTRODUCTORY 9/7

What is "Jewish" history? Were Abraham, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, Miriam-- Jews? Historical characters?

Assumptions and biases in the study of Jewish history:

"B.C." / "B.C.E."

"A.D." / "C.E."

"Old Testament; "Hebrew Bible; "The Bible; " "Torah"; "Tanakh"
 "Hebrews" / "Israelites" / "Jews" / "non-Jews"

Reading texts: Genesis

-- How, according to Genesis, did creation of the world happen?

-- What fruit did Adam and Eve eat?

NO CLASS 9/9 Rosh Hashana

2. THE BIBLE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND; READING THE TEXT 9/14

The Jews, Efron et. al. (henceforth, "Efron"), pp.1-6, to end of first paragraph only.

Susan Niditch, Ancient Israelite Religion, chp.1, pp.3-33; and "Timeline" at back of the book

Ronald S. Hendel, "Israel Among the Nations: Biblical Culture in the Ancient Near East," in David Biale, ed., Cultures of the Jews, pp. 43-69

Genesis, 1:1-11:32 (JPS Tanakh, pp. 1-17)

N.B.: in Biblical readings: the first number signifies chapter, followed by colon and verse number/s. If I list only the name of a biblical book and number/s, with no colon, the number refers to the chapter, all of which is to be read (e.g., Deuteronomy 15-17= read chapters 15, 16 and 17). REMEMBER TO BRING THE TEXT TO CLASS

In class: reading, discussing the Gilgamesh Epic in comparison with the Biblical flood tale

3. FOUNDATIONAL MYTHS: ORIGINS, PATRIARCHS, MATRIARCHS, GOD 9/16

Leadoff:

Niditch, Ancient, chp. 2, pp.34-69

Niditch, "Portrayals of Women in the Hebrew Bible," in J. Baskin, ed., Jewish Women in Historical Perspective, pp.25-42

Rapid reading: Genesis, 12:1-28:9 (JPS Tanakh pp.3-43): Rapid reading is meant to familiarize you with basic outlines of significant portions of text; distinct from more focused reading of shorter selections. Basically, this means skim-- but note important themes, events. See how Niditch uses and interprets this material. Remember to bring Hebrew Bibles to class.

4. FOUNDATIONAL MYTHS, CONTINUED: TRIBES; EGYPT; EXODUS; SINAI 9/21

Leadoff:

Ilana Pardes, "Imagining the Birth of Ancient Israel: National Metaphors in the Bible," in, in Biale, ed., Cultures, pp.9-37

Rapid reading:

Genesis 28:10-33, 35-37, 39-48, 49:28-50:26;

Exodus 1:1-15:27, 19:1-20:23 (JPS Tanakh, pp.43-109): note themes, story lines, sub-plots, editorial seams, different genres-- narrative; legal; ritual)

NO CLASS 9/23 (Sukkot)

5. LAW, COVENANT, RITUAL 9/28

Leadoff:

Niditch, pp.70-121

Exodus, 18:13-27, 21-23

Deuteronomy, 5-6, 14, 17, 18:1-5

Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger, pp.41-57

Rapid reading:

Leviticus 5-6, 11-13, 17, 18-20, 23, 26

Numbers 28-29

NO CLASS 9/30

6. CONQUEST (?) OF CANAAN; ISRAELITE KINGDOMS AND EMPIRE *makeup class Sun. 10/3 (suggested date, time, that and place, TBA; we'll settle in class. Please bear in mind that no date/ time will be great for all, we all need maximum flexibility.)

Leadoff:

Efron, pp.6-14, through first paragraph only.

Niditch, Conclusion, pp.119-121 and 122-123 (timeline), 128-130 (maps)

Rapid readings:

Numbers 27:1-11

Deut. 1:1-3:22, 7:1-8:20, 20:1-20

Joshua 1:1-9, 2, 3, 6-7, 12

Judges, 1:1-29

I Samuel 3, 8-10, 14:47-48, 15-17

II Samuel 5:1-11

I Kings 1:1-40, 3, 5:9-31, 6-7:1

II Kings 21-23:26

**7. GOD, SOCIETY AND HISTORY IN CLASSICAL PROPHETS; MONOTHEISM;
DESTRUCTION AND EXILE: ISRAEL; JUDAH 10/5**

Leadoff:

Efron, pp.14-15, 18-24

Michael Fishbane, "Biblical Prophecy as a Religious Phenomenon," in Jewish Spirituality From the Bible Through the Middle Ages, ed., Arthur Green, *Vol. 1, pp.62-80

Rapid readings:

Amos 2: 4-8, 4, 5:7-14, 8:4-12

Micah 3, 4:1-6

Hosea 8:11-14

Isaiah 1, 10, 47, 51-52, 60, 62

Deut. 11, 28, 30

Lamentations, 1-2

**8. EXILE AND RETURN; SECOND TEMPLE THEOCRACY; CANONIZING
"SCRIPTURE" 10/7**

Leadoff:

Efron, pp.25-47

Jeremiah, 1-2, 5, 7, 25, 28, 29:1-14, 30

Ezekiel 5:5-7, 37

Ezra 1-7, 9-10

Nehemiah 1-2, 8-10

Lawrence Schiffman, Texts and Traditions, pp.99-103, 117-120

9. JEWS, JUDAISM, AND HELLENISM; JEWISH-GENTILE RELATIONS * makeup class Sun. 10/10 time, room TBA

FIRST ESSAY ASSIGNMENT handout

Any wishing to do (or even consider doing) the paper option (see syllabus front matter), see me before break.

Leadoff:

Efron, pp.49-57

Erich S. Gruen, "Hellenistic Judaism," in Biale, ed., Cultures, pp. 77-102 ONLY

Schiffman, Texts and Traditions, pp.130-134, 145-147, 195-206, 211-220 (top), 682 (13.1.5)

10. HELLENISM AND JUDAISM: HELLENIZERS, PIOUS ZEALOTS, MACCABBEES, JEWISH CULTURE WARS (or: "What is Hannukah?") 10/12

Leadoff:

Efron, pp.57-62

Victor Tcherikover, Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews, chps.4-6, pp.175-234 (don't get stuck in the details; follow his argument and use of sources: what really caused the Greek crackdown on Judaism, according to Tcherikover?)

Schiffman, Texts, pp.136-138, 145-147, 151-164, 711-712

First essay assignment due Mon. 10/18 BY NOON. Put in my box or under my office door.

11. JUDEA AND ROME; SECOND TEMPLE SECTS; GREEK AND JEWISH OUTLOOKS AND PHILOSOPHY 10/14

Leadoff:

Efron, pp.62-68

Erich S. Gruen, "Hellenistic Judaism," in Biale, ed., Cultures, pp. 117-124 ONLY

Rich M. Meyers, "Jewish Culture in Graeco-Roman Palestine," in Biale, ed., Cultures, pp.147-160 ONLY

Schiffman, Texts, pp. 266 (document 6.2.1)-269, 273-284, 292-299, 359-361, 366-367

FIRST ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE 10/18 by noon to my office or mailbox

**12. JESUS-FOLLOWERS; RISE OF RABBINIC JUDAISM; JEWISH REVOLT AGAINST ROME; DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM AND JEWISH RESPONSES
10/19**

Leadoff:

Efron, pp.70-91

Schiffman, Texts, pp.396-414, 442-457, 462-469, 471-472, 714-715 (document 13.3.14)

13. EARLY CENTURIES UNDER CHRISTIAN RULE AND IN PERSIAN BABYLONIA; TRIUMPH OF RABBINIC JUDAISM; JEWISH BOUNDARY LINES 10/21

Leadoff:

Efron, pp.92-113

Adin Steinsaltz, The Essential Talmud, chps. 1-4, pp.3-32

Schiffman, Texts, pp.415-424, 512-520, 523 (bottom)-531-532

In class study: Rabbi Ishmael's hermeneutic rules and examples: in Schiffman, pp.531-532

FALL BREAK 10/23-10/31 For those doing the paper option: topic statement and preliminary Bibliography due upon return from Break

14. MISHNAH AND TALMUD 11/2

Leadoff:

Steinsaltz, chps. 5-9, 12-13, 15, pp.33-73, 89-100, 108-114

Schiffman, Texts, pp. 699-703

Topic statement and preliminary Bibliography due from for those doing the paper option

**15. RABBINIC PATRIARCHY, "WOMAN" AND WOMEN; "LEARNING" TALMUD
11/4**

Leadoff:

Steinsaltz, chps. 17-18, pp.129-144

Ross Kraemer, "Jewish Women in the Diaspora World of Late Antiquity;" Judith Romney Wegner, "The Image and Status of Women in Classical Rabbinic Judaism," in J. Baskin, ed. Jewish Women, pp.43-93

Schiffman, Texts, pp.719-727, 732-734

(Recommended: Robert Goldenberg, "Talmud," in Barry Holtz, ed., Back to the Sources, selections, pp.132-134, 143-158)

In-class "yeshiva" text study; handout

Second essay assignment handout. Essays due 11/22

16. ISLAM AND THE JEWS; JEWISH COMMUNAL STRUCTURE AND AUTHORITY UNDER ISLAM; KARAITE SCHISM 11/9

Leadoff:

Efron, pp.116-127, 132-136

Norman Stillman, The Jews of Arab Lands, pp.113-118, 149-161, 176-179, 192-193, 198-199

Schiffman, Texts, pp.750-756

17. JEWISH WOMEN, MEN, FAMILY, AND SOCIETY DURING THE ISLAMIC MIDDLE AGES 11/11

Leadoff:

Efron, p.127

S. D. Goitein, A Mediterranean Society (An Abridgement in One Volume), map (unpaginated but would be pp. 7-8), Introduction (selection), chps. 13, 14, 15, selections, pp.9-27, 350-367, 371-398, 402-408, 418-423, 439-444, 459-467

18. ASHKENAZ: JEWS, JUDAISM, JEWISH COMMUNITY IN MEDIEVAL CHRISTIAN EUROPE 11/16

Leadoff:

Robert Chazan, Church, State and Jew in the Middle Ages, pp.57-70

Ivan Marcus, "Judaism in Northern and Eastern Europe to 1500," in The Encyclopedia of Religion, ed. Mircea Eliade, vol. 8, pp.180-186

Ivan Marcus, "Jewish Communal Government, Europe," in Joseph R. Strayer ed., The Dictionary of the Middle Ages, vol. 7: 68-72

Louis Finkelstein, Jewish Self-Government in the Middle Ages, chps. 1-3, selections, pp.6-31 only

SECOND ESSAY ASSIGNMENT DUE 11/22 by noon to my office or mailbox

19. SPAIN: "GOLDEN AGE" 11/18

Leadoff:

Jane Gerber, The Jews of Spain, pp.28-89

20. MEDIEVAL JEWISH PHILOSOPHY 11/23

Leadoff:

Efron, 136-145

Robert Seltzer, Jewish People, Jewish Thought, chp. 8, selection, pp.373-408 only

Handout: Maimonides

NO CLASS 11/25 Thanksgiving**21. KABBALAH 11/30**

Leadoff:

Joseph Dan, Kabbalah: A Very Short Introduction, chps. 1-4, pp.3-61

In Class handout: Zohar

Those doing paper option: statement of paper topic and preliminary bibliography due next class

22. JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS: VERBAL AND VISUAL IMAGES 12/2

Paper topic statement and preliminary Bibliography due today for those doing a paper

Efron, pp. 147-152

Joshua Trachtenberg, The Devil and The Jews, chps.1-3, pp.11-53 (pagination as in 1943 ed., if discrepancy, follow chp. numbers.

Robert Chazan, In the Year 1096: The First Crusades and the Jews, chp. 1, pp.3-26

(* For those interested in further reading on this subject or for papers, read Jacob Katz, Exclusiveness and Tolerance, chps. 1-5, pp.3-63.)

**23. THE CRUSADES AND THE JEWS; JEWISH REACTIONS TO PERSECUTION
12/7**

Leadoff:

Chazan, In the Year 1096, chps. 3-4, pp.51-103

Chazan, Church, State and Jew, pp.99-100, 133-141

"Merciful Father" ("Av Harahamim"): on screen/ or handout

**24. JUDEOPHOBIA: RITUAL MURDER, HOST DESECRATION ACCUSATIONS;
THEOLOGICAL DISPUTATIONS; CONFISCATING, BURNING THE TALMUD;
BLACK DEATH; EXPULSIONS 12/9**

Efron, pp.152-169

Chazan, Church, State and Jew, pp.169-173, 197-201, 221-233, 255-276, 310-312, 317-319

Film: "The Disputation"

25. SPANISH EXPULSION; END OF AN ERA? 12/14

Jane Gerber, The Jews of Spain, pp.91-144

Chazan, Church, State and Jew, pp. 319-322