

## **RE/HI 282: The Making of Judaism**

Colby College, Spring 2009 — Mondays/Wednesdays, 2:30–3:45 pm, Lovejoy 319

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Office Hours: Mondays/Wednesdays 10:30–12:00 and by appointment

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Judaism as we know it came into being during the period from about 600 B.C.E. through 600 C.E. Its formation results from a complex interplay of internal innovation, external classification, and responses to dramatic political and cultural forces. This course explores this crucial period in Jewish history and introduces students to the ways in which historians approach the period. No prior familiarity with Jewish history or Hebrew is assumed.

### **COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

#### Attendance

Students are expected to attend all classes, and you are responsible for all material presented through lectures, much of which cannot be found in course readings. Some class time will also be devoted to learning activities that you cannot replicate on your own. It is understood that circumstances may prevent you from attending class on a given day, and you are entitled to two absences with no questions asked. More than two absences, however, will impair your ability to benefit from this course and will affect your final grade significantly unless all absences result from documented emergencies or illness; if such circumstances arise, please speak with me. **I reserve the right to fail students who miss more than five sessions.** In determining the final grade, I assign extra credit to students with perfect or near-perfect attendance records.

NOTE: Because of Passover, this class will not meet on April 8 or 15. We will meet on **Thursday, April 30, 4:00–5:15**; this is a required session, with guests from off campus.

#### Participation (worth 15% of the final grade)

Students are expected to participate regularly in class discussions and to do so in a constructive manner. Participation should reflect strong preparation of assigned readings and prior consideration of assigned study questions. Participation in online discussions (accessible through <http://moodle.colby.edu>) counts so long as I have time to read your posts before class; if you post before 10:00 am on the morning of class, you are guaranteed credit for your posts.

*Evaluation:* I assign a ✓+, ✓, ✓-, or 0 to each student after every class, on the following basis:

- ✓+ indicates that the student participated actively in class discussions, engaged others about ideas while respecting their opinions, and elevated the overall level of discussion.
- ✓ indicates that the student offered constructive contributions to class discussion; **I expect every student to do so at least once in every class**, either in the classroom or online.
- ✓- indicates that the student was present in class but either did not participate sufficiently or participated in a non-constructive or disrespectful manner.
- 0 indicates that the student was absent and failed to post to the online discussion or that the student was especially disrespectful toward fellow participants.

## Assignments

Assignments are designed to measure your command of the specific knowledge and skill sets being taught in this course along with the general skill sets associated with an undergraduate liberal arts education. Engaging in acts of academic dishonesty is antithetical to this goal, and for that reason any student guilty of such acts may automatically fail the course. If you are in doubt as to whether an act crosses the line into academic dishonesty, speak with me, another member of the faculty, or a librarian.

- **Quiz** (Feb. 18; worth 10% of final grade) — identification of key people, groups, events, texts, and concepts
- **Reviews** (Mar. 2, 18, Apr. 13, 29; worth 15% total) — three short essays (2–3 pages each) summarizing and evaluating the key arguments of assigned readings; there are four reviews you could write, and if you write all of them I will discard the lowest grade
- **Exegesis assignment** (Apr. 6; 15%) — a creative and analytical exercise, 6–8 pages
- **Research paper** (May 14; 30% for the paper itself, additional 15% for preliminary stages) — a work of original, research-based analysis, 10–12 pages; preliminary stages (Feb. 25, Mar. 18, Apr. 29, May 4) are designed to help you produce your best work

Late essays will only be accepted under extenuating circumstances with prior permission, and lateness may result in a lower grade.

*Note:* Grading in the humanities is not an exact science. My goal is to be fair in evaluating your work, open about the reasons for the grades I give, and available to help you improve your work over the course of the term. Please note that if a student is on the border between two final grades, I will give extra weight to performance in the second half of the semester. I use the participation grade as a tie-breaker.

## ASSIGNED READINGS

Assignments for each class session may be found on the course Moodle site, <http://moodle.colby.edu>. All readings not found in the following books are posted there as well.

Please purchase the following books (all available at the Colby Bookstore)

*Access Bible*

Shaye Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*

Jeffrey Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories*

Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*

**NOTE:** Please bring to class the assigned readings for that session.