Early Judaism and Christianity
Syllabus
Fall 2019
REL 3321 / JST 3930

Professor: Michael J. Stahl
Email: michael.stahl@ufl.edu
Office: 123 Anderson Hall
Office Hours: M/W/F 9:30–10:30 a.m. or by appointment

Time: M/W/F 4:05–4:55
Classroom: MAT 0107

Course Description

This course takes a historical-critical approach to early Judaism and Christianity that incorporates current critical theory on such issues as historiography, ideology, religion, ethnicity, race, gender, and identity. Students will explore early Jewish and Christian history, literature, social life, and religious traditions in an effort to understand the interplay between developing Jewish and Christian identities in antiquity. Specific topics of study include: exile, temple, torah, early Jewish monotheism and angelology, apocalypticism, ancient Jewish messianisms, the Jewishness of Jesus and Paul, Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls, the origins of the Synagogue, etc.

Disclaimer: Because Judaism and Christianity, along with their sacred texts, continue to play an important role in the religious and spiritual lives of many people today, some may initially find the academic study of early Judaism and Christianity — which, in theory and methodology, attempts to analyze these traditions from a position of religious neutrality — difficult in various ways. However, by approaching early Judaism and Christianity from a non-confessional standpoint, all persons — regardless of their personal religious commitments (or lack thereof) — may participate in the course on an equal footing. Moreover, a non-confessional, “critical” approach should not be confused with one that is inherently anti-religious. In adopting a critical stance toward early Judaism, Christianity, and the Bible, the term “critical” does not mean attempting to tear down Judaism and Christianity or undermine faith-based commitment to the Bible; rather, “critical” refers to judicious analysis and rational argumentation using logic and publicly available evidence. In short, this course does not seek to advocate for or against religious faith.

Additionally, while I explicitly welcome all to express their views during class discussions, any viewpoint that is expressed in class also may be questioned by the class. I strive to make the classroom a charitable and respectful environment where we as a class together look for the strongest points of every position or argument. However, part of respecting a position also means thinking through its possible weaknesses. Thus, one should not construe constructive criticism in negative terms as hostile or confrontational, but as a sign of deep care and respect.

Course Objectives

In addition to acquiring a critical density of knowledge regarding course content, this course aims to develop intellectual and professional skills of broader application, such as:
• The intellectual skill of reading texts closely and thoughtfully
• Historical reasoning skills
• Analytical skills
• Problem-solving skills
• Reading and writing at an advanced level appropriate to a college or university setting
• The ability to participate in respectful and thoughtful dialogue
• The ability to reflect self-critically about one’s own culture and historical situatedness
• The ability to empathize with others and to be sensitive to differing perspectives
• The capacity to work collaboratively
• The theoretical knowledge and vocabulary needed to critically question and examine other bodies of knowledge

Course Textbooks


I also will provide electronic copies or scans of required articles or book chapters on the course website (full bibliographical information will be provided in the syllabus). These articles and book chapters will be made available before the classes for which they are assigned, and students are expected to prepare each reading in advance of class. The course website may be accessed through [http://elearning.ufl.edu](http://elearning.ufl.edu).

Course Assignments and Grading

In order to achieve the goals listed in the Course Objectives section, students are to prepare for each class by thoughtfully reading and analyzing selections of biblical and other early Jewish and Christian texts, as well as assigned secondary/scholarly literature. Students are expected to prepare primary/ancient and secondary/scholarly readings in advance of the class for which they are assigned. Besides lecture, a significant component of each class session includes student discussion based on the primary and secondary readings. Participation in class discussions is one crucial element of a student’s grade.

(1) A **Preparation/Attendance/Participation grade** worth 20% of the final grade will be assigned based on each student’s individual preparation, attendance, and personal participation in class. In assessing the Preparation/Attendance/Participation component of a student’s overall grade, I will consider such factors as: class attendance and absences, preparation of assigned readings before the class for which they are assigned, tardiness, quantity and quality of participation in class discussion, and student focus and engagement (e.g., cell phones are not to be used in class, side discussions among students are not appropriate, frequently leaving and reentering the classroom should be avoided, etc.).

Attendance is mandatory and will be taken at the beginning of every class. If a student misses more than half the class, either because of arriving late or leaving early, the student will be
counted as absent. I will automatically deduct three points per absence from the student’s Preparation/Attendance/Participation grade, and one point for every time the student is tardy. If you expect to be absent from class for a pre-scheduled or University approved reason, please contact me beforehand as soon as possible. It is the student’s responsibility to obtain notes or handouts from any classes s/he/they miss. For further information on UF’s attendance policies, see: https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/.

(2) This class will have two exams, one **Midterm Exam** and one **Final Exam**, each worth 20% of the final grade (i.e., 40% total). For both the Midterm Exam and the Final Exam, students will be asked to respond to any two essay questions from a choice of four or five possible essay questions. The exams will cover material from the primary readings, scholarly readings, and class lectures and discussions. One week before each exam, I will provide in class and online an extensive study guide with questions similar to the types of questions one should expect to find on the exams. Exams will cover material up to and including the last class before the exam.

The Midterm Exam will be taken in class on Friday, October 11, and the Final Exam will be taken during the Final Exam Period on Monday, December 9 from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. I will provide free Blue Books to students for the Midterm and Final Exams. You are responsible for bringing your own pen or pencil and writing legibly.

(3) Together, two **Quizzes** will comprise 20% of the final grade (i.e., each quiz is worth 10% of your final overall grade). Quizzes will consist of short answer, matching, true and false, and/or fill-in-the-blank questions. Quiz 1 will take place in class on Friday, September 13, and Quiz 2 will take place in class on Friday, November 8.

(4) The **Final Paper**, a thesis-driven research paper of 8 pages (2,000 words), accounts for the last 20% of the final grade. This research paper will focus on one specific issue or topic relating to Israelite religion not addressed in class readings and discussion (or, if addressed in class readings and discussion, your paper must go significantly beyond the readings and class discussion for that particular topic).

The topic of the Final Paper will be of the student’s choosing, but it must be cleared with me (see Final Paper Deadlines on pp. 6–7 below). The topic must be sufficiently focused. You cannot write on a general category or broad area of study. For example, you may not write about “monotheism in early Judaism and Christianity.” However, you might write about some aspect of angelology in *1 Enoch*. The Final Paper must have a focused base of primary/ancient evidence (textual, archaeological, epigraphic, iconographic, etc.), and it also must properly use — and appropriately cite — at least three vetted, peer-reviewed scholarly sources relevant to the issue at hand (internet sources do not count!). The Final Paper must offer a coherent, sustained argument regarding a specific approved topic, analyzing the relevant primary evidence, discussing the interpretive issues at stake, addressing the main controversies in the scholarly secondary literature, etc. Note: The Final Paper is not a summary of the scholarly literature and/or the primary sources. Do not simply summarize what the scholarly secondary sources have to say; rather, use the scholarly literature to advance your overall argument and analysis of the primary sources.
I will make myself available to help students find an appropriate topic of interest, and I also will help to answer questions regarding research strategies and the choosing of primary and secondary materials.

In assessing your Final Paper, I will consider such qualitative factors as: (1) demonstration of careful reading and observation of the primary evidence, noting small details and connecting them to larger questions raised by the project; (2) proposal of insightful conclusions supported both by specific evidence from the texts and analytical reasoning (remember to cite your evidence!); (3) accounting for all relevant evidence in your conclusions, i.e., that you leave no major gaps in evidence; (4) clarity of writing on both the macro and micro levels; and (5) the proper use and citation of at least three relevant scholarly sources.

The Final Paper is due at the beginning of the last day of class, Wednesday, December 4. If you have any problems meeting this deadline, please talk with me as soon as possible. Any paper turned in late will be lowered by a third of a grade for every day that it is late (e.g., a B+ paper will be downgraded to a B- if it is two days late).

Writing Guidelines: The Final Paper must be typed, double spaced in Times New Roman 12 point font. Final Papers may be submitted in hardcopy, printed on white paper with black ink and stapled or paper-clipped, or electronically via email as a Word document attachment. Handwritten papers are unacceptable. Margins are to be one inch. You must use page numbers. You do not need a front/title page (a title page will not count toward the total number of pages required for an assignment); simply put your name and the title of your paper at the top of the first page. Sources always are to be cited using a standard citation style (e.g., Chicago, Turabian, APA, MLA, etc.). Whatever citation style you choose, be consistent. Use quotation marks when quoting a source verbatim, whether ancient or modern. Avoid long citations of ancient texts or modern scholars. Do not make assertions that you cannot support without direct evidence. Aim for a polished writing style (idiomatic, yet semi-formal): avoid contractions, slang or informal expressions, run-on sentences, switching between past and present tenses in the same sentence, passive voice, common verbs (try to use more descriptive, precise verbs), and the pronouns “you,” “we,” and “us.” Write clearly and concisely. Avoid unnecessarily long, complex sentences with numerous subordinate clauses. Clear written expression is one goal of this course. Remember to proofread and use your word processor’s grammar and spellcheck!

Helpful Reference Works:


How to Cite the Bible:

- Genesis 1:1 = Genesis, chapter 1, verse 1.
- Genesis 1–3 = Genesis, chapters 1 through 4.
- Genesis 1:1–11:32 = Genesis chapter 1, verse 1, through chapter 11, verse thirty-two.
- Genesis 1:1–2:4; 6:1–4 = Genesis chapter 1, verse 1, through chapter 2, verse 4; AND chapter 6, verse 1 through verse 4.
Additionally, scholars commonly abbreviate biblical books (e.g., Genesis = Gen; Isaiah = Isa; etc.). You can find a list of abbreviations in the front matter of the *Jewish Study Bible* (p. xix).

(5) **Bonus Point:** After assessing a student’s overall grade based on the Midterm and Final Exams, Quizzes, the Preparation/Attendance/Participation grade, and the Final Paper, I will add one point to each student’s final overall grade. For example, a student who received an 80 on her/his/their Midterm Exam, an 85 on the combined quizzes, an 85 on the Final Exam, a 90 on the Final Paper, and a 95 for her/his/their Preparation/Attendance/Participation grade (for a total of 435 points) would earn a grade of 87 (435/5 = 87). I will then add one extra point to the overall grade for a final grade of 88 (87 + 1), a B+ (see the grading scale just below). There will be no curve in the class, and I will not add more than one point to each student’s final grade.

Because of the addition of one point to each student’s final overall grade, grades will not be rounded up or down (e.g., if you get an 88.9 + 1 = 89.9, you will receive a B+ in the course; your grade will not be rounded up to a 90, i.e., an A-).

**Assignment Weight:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Midterm Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Two Quizzes</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Final Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Final Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Preparation/Attendance/Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grading Scale:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93–100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90–92.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>87–89.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>83–86.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>77–79.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>73–76.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>67–69.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>63–66.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0–59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Course Policies and Services**

**Classroom Etiquette:**

Active participation is expected and required for success in this course. Students are expected to pay attention and be respectful of others. Apart from laptops, which may be used for the sole purpose of taking notes (gaming or watching videos is not acceptable), please turn off all electronic devices, including cell phones. Texting during class is not permitted. Failure to adhere to classroom etiquette will negatively affect one’s Preparation/Attendance/Participation grade.

**Gender-Inclusive Language:**

Students always are to use gender-inclusive and non-sexist language that respects and affirms the gender identities of all other participants in the course. Students may share their preferred names and pronouns, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored. For further
considerations, please see: http://www.gsws.pitt.edu/faculty/gender-inclusivenon-sexi
language-syllabi-statement.

Academic Integrity:

You are required to abide by the Student Honor Code. Any violation of the academic integrity
expected of you will result in a minimum academic sanction of a zero on the assignment. Any
alleged violations of the Student Honor Code will result in a referral to Student Conduct and
Conflict Resolution. Please review the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code at:

For help with citations and other matters pertaining to academic integrity, I encourage you to consult:

Lipson, Charles. Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism,
and Achieve Real Academic Success. 3d ed. Chicago Guides to Academic Life. Chicago,

Academic Accommodations:

UF offers support and reasonable accommodations for students who have a diagnosed disability
through the Disability Resource Center (DRC). Students requesting classroom accommodation
must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide
documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when
requesting accommodation. I encourage you to contact me as soon as possible if you have a
learning disability and are in need of help. I am happy to work with you, the Dean of Students
Office, and the DRC to arrange for appropriate accommodations to assist you in achieving
academic success.

For additional information, please see: https://disability.ufl.edu/.

UF’s Writing Studio:

I especially encourage you to take advantage of UF’s Writing Studio. For more information
about UF’s Writing Studio, located at 2215 Turlington Hall, or to book an appointment, please
call (352) 846-1138 or visit https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/.

Important Dates

Graded Work:

1. Quiz 1: Friday, September 13.
2. Midterm Exam: Friday, October 11.
5. Final Exam: Monday, December 9 from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Final Paper Deadlines:

1. Final Paper topic approval deadline: Friday, October 25.
2. Final Paper sources and bibliography submission: Friday, November 8.

Class Cancellations: The Center for Jewish Studies officially requests that all classes on days that are yom tov during the major Jewish holidays be canceled (see the Course Schedule below for specific dates). Additionally, classes will be canceled during the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (November 23–26).

Course Schedule

Unit 1 — Thinking Critically

Week 1

Wednesday, August 21: Introduction to the Course
  • Syllabus.

Friday, August 23: What is “Religion”?

Week 2

Monday, August 26: Theorizing Ethnicity, Race, and Identity

Wednesday, August 28: Critical Theory and Historical Method

Unit 2 — Before Judaism

Friday, August 30: The Jewish Bible and the Christian Old Testament
  • Brennan Breed, “How Was the Bible Written and Transmitted?”

Week 3
Monday, September 2: Labor Day, No Class

Wednesday, September 4: Ancient Israel and Judah
- 1 Kgs 12:1–24; 13–16; 2 Kgs 3; 8.

Friday, September 6: Ancient Israelite Religion

**Unit 3 — From Ancient Israel to Early Judaism: The Persian Period**

**Week 4**
Monday, September 9: Into Exile
- 2 Kgs 17–25; Jer 29:1–14; Ezek 1–3; 8–11; Ps 137.

Wednesday, September 11: Return and Restoration
- Isa 40; 44:24–48; 45:1–7; Ezra 1–6; Neh 1–2; 8–9.

Friday, September 13: Persian Period Yehud and the Diaspora

**Quiz 1 in class.**

**Week 5**
Monday, September 16: Creating Judaism: Torah and Temple
- Hag 1–2; Zech 1, 8; Mal 2–3; Ezra 7–10; Neh 7–10.

**Unit 4 — Judaism and Hellenism**

8
Wednesday, September 18: Alexander the Great and Hellenistic Judea
- 1 Macc 1–10, 13–14.

Friday, September 20: Second Temple Jewish Literature: Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha
- Tobit; Judith.

**Week 6**
Monday, September 23: Hellenism and Jewish Identity
- 2 Macc 1–11.

Wednesday, September 25: Judaism: Ethnicity and/or Religion?

**Unit 5 — Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period**
Friday, September 27: The Roman Conquest of Judea

**Week 7**
Monday, September 30: Rosh Hashanah, No Class

Wednesday, October 2: Early Jewish Sectarianism: Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes

Friday, October 4: Homecoming, No Class

**Week 8**
Monday, October 7: Midterm Exam Review
- Bring your questions for the Midterm Exam!
Wednesday, October 9: Yom Kippur, No Class

Friday, October 11: Midterm Exam

**Midterm Exam in class.**

**Week 9**

Monday, October 14: Sukkot, No Class

Wednesday, October 16: Jewish Sectarianism: Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls


Friday, October 18: Early Jewish Monotheism

- 1 Macc 1–2; 2 Macc 4.

**Week 10**

Monday, October 21: Shemini Atzeret, No Class

Wednesday, October 23: Early Jewish Apocalypticism

- Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch*, 38–49.
- Dan 7, 12.

Friday, October 25: Ancient Jewish Messianisms


**Final Paper topics must be approved by this date.**
Week 11
Monday, October 28: The First and Second Jewish Revolts
- Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition*, 157–76.

**Unit 6 — Jesus, Paul, and the Jewish-Christian Encounter**

Wednesday, October 30: Introducing the New Testament
- Matt 1–2; Mark 1; Luke 1–2; John 1; Acts 1–2; Heb 1–2; 1 Jn; Jude; Rev.

Friday, November 1: Jesus the Jew

Week 12
Monday, November 4: Paul the Jew
- Romans; 1–2 Cor; Galatians; 1 Thess; Phil; Phlm.

Wednesday, November 6: Diversity in the Early Jesus Movement

Friday, November 8: The ‘Parting of the Ways’? (Part I)

**Quiz 2 in class.**

**Primary and secondary sources for the Final Paper must be submitted for vetting by this date.**
Week 13
Monday, November 11: Veterans Day, No Class

Wednesday, November 13: The ‘Parting of the Ways’? (Part II)

Friday, November 15: Early Rabbinic Judaism

Week 14
Monday, November 18: Rabbinic Literature: Mishnah, Talmud, and Midrash

Wednesday, November 20: The Synagogue

Friday, November 22: Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, No Class

The thesis for your Final Paper must be submitted for review by this date.

Week 15
Monday, November 25: Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, No Class

Wednesday, November 27: Thanksgiving/Fall Break, No Class

Friday, November 29: Thanksgiving/Fall Break, No Class

Week 16
Monday, December 2: Jews and Christians Outside the Roman Empire

Course Evaluations: [https://evaluations.ufl.edu](https://evaluations.ufl.edu).

Wednesday, December 4: Final Exam Review
- Bring your questions for the Final Exam!
Final Paper due.

Friday, December 6: No Class, Official University Reading Day

Week 17
Monday, December 9: Final Exam

Final Exam from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.