Spring 2-1-2019

RLST 320.01: Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity

Nathaniel B. Levtow
University of Montana - Missoula, nathaniel.levtow@umontana.edu

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.
Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi

Recommended Citation
Levtow, Nathaniel B., "RLST 320.01: Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity" (2019). Syllabi. 10166.
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi/10166

This Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the Course Syllabi at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syllabi by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
RLST 320: Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity
Spring 2019  Tu Th 2:00 - 3:20 pm  LA 249  3 cr  CRN 34949

This course explores the beginnings of Judaism and Christianity in the ancient world. We trace the development of early Jewish and Christian social groups, literary traditions, and religious belief and practices, as the biblical heritage of ancient Israel was adopted and adapted in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean. Our story begins with the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple in the 6th century BCE., and ends with the rise of Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism in the Roman Empire of first centuries C.E. This is a story of continuity and change, unity and diversity, and cultural creation amid cultural conflict. Students will be introduced to the modern study of ancient Jewish and Christian literature, and will learn how a local temple culture in ancient West Asia grew into two closely related, worldwide “religions of the book” that remain with us today.

Required Texts
(available for purchase at the UM Bookstore and elsewhere):
3. James Vanderkam, An Introduction to Early Judaism (Eerdmans, 2000) = IEJ
4. An NRSV Bible translation, with Apocrypha (e.g. HarperCollins Study Bible)
5. Additional readings listed in this syllabus as digital are available on Moodle

Course Requirements:
1. Attendance: Regular attendance is required for this course (see course policies below). Preparation for and participation in class meetings is expected and essential.
2. Readings: Plan to complete all readings before the class on which they are assigned. Bring the assigned readings to class with you.
3. Quiz: A quiz will be given in class on January 31.
4. Midterm: A take-home midterm essay exam is due on March 1.
5. Student Presentations: Each student will give brief presentations in class on assigned readings.
6. Final exam: A take-home final exam is due on April 29.
Grading:
1. Attendance and class participation: 20%
2. Quiz: 10%
3. Midterm exam: 25%
4. Student presentations: 20%
5. Final exam: 25%

Student Learning Outcomes:
Upon successful completion of this course, students will have acquired the ability to:
1. Use social-theoretical and literary-critical methods to make sound comparative and cultural-historical arguments based on clear textual and archaeological evidence.
2. Identify and analyze the history of biblical literature and religions by making comparative, evidence-based arguments about different West Asian and Mediterranean textual, ritual, and interpretive traditions and the biblical traditions to which they relate.
3. Speak and write with critical awareness and methodological consciousness about the origins of biblical religion. This includes the ability to trace the development of early Jewish and Christian social groups, literary traditions, and religious beliefs and practices in comparative-historical contexts from the Bronze Age to the Roman Empire. This skill is achieved through in-class presentations and take-home writing assignments in which students locate the history of the Bible, Judaism and Christianity with respect to broader cultural-historical developments in Mesopotamian, Persian, and Greco-Roman antiquity.

Course Policies:

1) There will be no make-up exams or extensions unless the student has made arrangements at least a week ahead of time. Early departures will be counted as absences. If you skip a class meeting, it is your responsibility to obtain from a classmate any class notes and other assignment and scheduling information discussed during your absence.

2) Students are allowed one cut, no penalties or questions asked. Each additional cut (including early departures from class) will reduce the attendance and participation grade by 10% (that is, 2% of your final grade).

3) This is a course about religion as an academic subject and the development of Judaism and Christianity in historical context. This is not a class that teaches religion or religious doctrine from a religious and/or devotional perspective. In this class, we will be examining early Jewish, Christian, and other Greco-Roman texts and traditions in an academic and secular setting. We will be treating these texts as ancient documents open to questioning, examination, criticism, and interpretation. An interest in exploring new ideas and new methods of examining these documents is essential. This class is not a forum for expressions of personal theology.
4) Plagiarism – the presentation of others’ work as your own – is an offense punishable by course failure and/or expulsion. All work submitted in this class must be your own, and all references to ideas from books, articles, or other sources must be cited. If you do not know how to properly reference your work, or you are in doubt whether or not you should cite material, refer to the University guidelines, or make an appointment to see the instructor to discuss this. Anyone found guilty of plagiarism, cheating, forgery, falsification or any other form of academic dishonesty will fail this course and the incident will be reported to the Dean.

Course Schedule
(Note: This schedule may change as our course develops. Regular attendance will ensure that you remain updated on any possible changes)

Thursday 1/10
   **Introductions: Course overview**

Part I: Foundations: The Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel
Tuesday 1/15
   **The Hebrew Bible: Structure, Themes, Traditions**
   Gen 9:1-17; 15; 17; Exod 24:1-8; 34:1-27 (Covenant)
   Exod 1, 12-15 (Egypt/Exodus)
   Exod 19-20 (Sinai/Legislation)
   Exod 3; Deut 4:1-40; 6: 4-25; 12:2-5, 29-32; 26:5-9 (God/Monolatry)
   1 Sam 8; Deut 17:14-20; 2 Sam 7; Ps 132 (Kingship/Jerusalem)
   Jer 1, 7; Mic 3:9-12 (Prophecy)
   Lev 1; 8-9; 11-13; Num 3:5-10; 28-30 (Priest/Temple/Cult/Holiness/Purity)


Thursday 1/17
   **Exile**
   2 Kgs 17-25; Ps 137; Lam 1; Jer 29:1-14; Ezek 3, 11, 20:1-44, 37:1-14

Part II: From Ancient Israel to Ancient Judaism: Persia and The Early Second Temple Period

Tuesday 1/22
Return and Restoration: The Persian Province of Yehud

Isa 40:1-5; 44:24-28; 45:1-7
Ezra 1-6
The Cyrus Cylinder (TT, 3.1.2)

IEJ, 1-11


Thursday 1/24
Judaism in the Persian Period: Temples and Texts

Hag 1-2; Mal 2-3; Zech 1, 8
Ezra 7-10; Nehemiah 7-8, 10
The Elephantine Papyri (TT, 3.2.1-4 and *digital)

IEJ, 49-52, 147-50, 193-211


Tuesday 1/29
Judaism in the Persian Period: Community and Canonization

TT, 3.7.1-4


Thursday 1/31
Quiz (Hebrew Bible, Ancient Israel, Persian Period)
Part III: The Greek Age: Hellenism and Judaism

Tuesday 2/5

**Alexander and Hellenistic Judea; The Maccabees**

1 Maccabees 1-2: 4:36-61; 13-14; 2 Maccabees 1-10:8, 15
(Cf. Josephus, *Antiquities*, XIII [selections] [TT, 6.1])

*IEJ*, 11-32


Thursday 2/7

**Hellenism and Jewish Identity**


Part IV: Roman Imperialism

Tuesday 2/12

**The Rise of Rome: Jews and Judaism in the Roman Empire**

*IEJ*, 32-49

Letter of Claudius to Alexandrians (*digital*)


L. H. Feldman, “Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism in the First Century” in *CRJ*

Thursday 2/14

**The Wars with Rome I**

*TT*, 9.1-6


Tuesday 2/19

**The Wars with Rome II**

*Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period – The Cave of Letters* (*digital*)


L. Levine, “Judaism from the Destruction of Jerusalem to the End of the Second Jewish Revolt: 70-135 C.E.,” in *CRJ*

---

**Part V: Social Life and Religion in the Second Temple Period**

Thursday 2/21

**Jewish Sectarianism: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes**

*TT*, 6.2.1-12, 6.3.1-4 (Josephus, *War* 1.110-14; II.119-66; *Antiquities* XVIII:11-25; *Life* 1-16; Mark 2-3; Mishnah: *Yadaim* 4:6-8; *Hagigah* 2:7; *Makkot* 1:6; Pliny, *Natural History* V:xv)

*IEJ*, 175-93

Tuesday 2/26

**Family and Gender in Greco-Roman Judea**


M. Goodman, “Babatha’s Story” (*digital*)


---

Thursday 2/28:

Review and Catch-up

---

**Friday March 1: Take-home midterm due by 5pm.**
Part VI: Religion and Literature of the Second Temple Period

Tuesday 3/5, Thursday 3/7

**Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls**

*TT*, 7.3.1-7 (Damascus Document, Rule, 4QMMT (Halakhic Letter), Habakkuk Pesher, Temple Scroll, War Scroll)

*IEJ*, 150-73


L. Schiffman, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and the History of Judaism” (*digital*)

L. Schiffman, “The Origin and Early History of the Qumran Sect” (*digital*)

Tuesday 3/12, Thursday 3/14, Tuesday 3/19, Thursday 3/21

**Philo, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha**


*IEJ*, 53-146

*TT*, 5.6.1-6; 7.1.1-13; 7.2.1-5

March 25-29: Spring Break
Part VII: The Emergence of Christianity

Tuesday 4/2

Narratives of Christian Origins


E. P. Sanders, “The Life of Jesus,” in *CRJ*

Acts

“Holy Men and Women” (*digital*)

Thursday 4/4

Paul, Judaism, and the earliest Christian Communities

Galatians

Romans 3, 9-11

H. C. Kee, “After the Crucifixion--Christianity through Paul,” in *CRJ*

Tuesday 4/9

The Jesus Movement and Jewish Sectarianism

Matthew


Thursday 4/11

Christianity in the Greco-Roman World: Social Relations


Ignatius, *Letter to the Roman* (*digital*); 1Timothy; Titus

R. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (selections) (*digital*)

Harold W. Attridge, “Christianity from the Destruction of Jerusalem to Constantine's Adoption of the New Religion: 70-312 C.E.,” in *CRJ*
Part VIII: The Rabbis and the Rabbinic Movement

Tuesday 4/16

**Who Were the Rabbis?**


S. Cohen, “Judaism to the Mishnah: 135-220 C.E.,” in *CRJ*

Please also print out and bring to class the following short *digital* documents:
- Rabbinic Geography; Tannaitic and Amoraic Periods
- Mishnah: *Avot* (the chain of tradition)
- Babylonian Talmud *Gittin* 55b-57a (Y. ben Zakkai's escape from Jerusalem)
- Babylonian Talmud *Shabbat* 30b-31a (the patience of Hillel)

Thursday 4/18

**Institutions of the Rabbinic Movement: Synagogues and Sages**

Handout: Ancient Synagogues (*digital*: please print out and bring to class)


Tuesday 4/23

**Rabbinic Literature: Mishnah, Talmud, and Midrash**

Mishnah and Talmud (selections: *TT*, 10.1-10.6)

I. M. Gafni, “The World of the Talmud: From the Mishnah to the Arab Conquest,” in *CRJ*
Part IX: Judaism and Christianity: Interaction and Identity

Thursday 4/25

“The Parting of the Ways”


J. H. Charlesworth, “Christians and Jews in the First Six Centuries,” in CRJ

Final Exam: Monday, April 29