

INTRODUCTION TO ANCIENT JUDAISM
SPRING 2013
563:222 (Jewish Studies) / 840:242 (Religion)
Mon / Wed 5th period 2:50-4:10 – Murray 213

DRAFT

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COURSE GOALS: This course will investigate the historical development of Jewish beliefs and practices in ancient times, spanning the Biblical and post-Biblical periods. Issues to be studied include Sabbath, festivals, circumcision, dietary laws, sacrifice, prayer, monotheism, covenant, and eschatology. Our sources will include both classical texts, such as the Bible and the Mishna, and information forthcoming from archaeological discoveries, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and excavated synagogues.

We will study ancient Judaism against the backdrop of ancient Near Eastern literature, history, religion, mythology, law, and culture. Our view is that no civilization develops in a vacuum, and this is certainly true of Judaism. Thus a basic knowledge of the cultures surrounding ancient Israel will be important for understanding the development of ancient Judaism.

Finally, while our efforts will concentrate on Judaism in its early historical period, we will have occasion to reflect on how the beliefs and practices of ancient times are continued to the present day in modern Judaism.

TEXTBOOKS: *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford University Press)
Lawrence Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition* (Ktav)
Martin Jaffee, *Early Judaism* (University Press of Maryland)
Shaye Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*
(Westminster John Knox Press)

COURSE PACKET:

The Course Packet for this course will be available for download via the Sakai course website.

TOPICS:

It is impossible for me to list here all the topics which we will discuss during the semester. I present here a representative sampling of topics, not necessarily in the order to be presented.

Monotheism	Tzitzit (Fringes)
Sabbath	Tefillin (Phylacteries)
Holidays	Sacrifice
Dietary Laws	Prayer
Ritual Purity	Marriage
Covenant	Divorce
History	Death
Circumcision	Problem of Evil
Prohibition against Idolatry	Eschatology

In addition, I will be happy to discuss any further topics that individual class members wish to learn more about.

EXAMS AND GRADING:

There are three exams (two midterms and a non-cumulative final), each covering approximately one-third of the course material.

Each of these exams is worth one-third of the course grade. However, the grade can be adjusted slightly based on class participation, attendance, progress, and other subjective factors.