



Oberlin College, Fall 2020 / Science Center N292 / srabin@oberlin.edu

Office Hours: by appointment (sign up at tinyurl.com/profrabin)

This course is an introduction to Jews, Judaism, and Jewish culture, focusing on the question of *where*? By centering the spaces and places that Jews have constructed and inhabited – from synagogues to coffeehouses, from Jerusalem to Ohio – we will foreground questions of power, adaptation, and difference, within Jewish communities and in Jews’ interactions with their varied neighbors across history. Through the examination of diverse primary and secondary sources, we will see how “sacredness,” “promisedness,” and “Jewishness” are all complicated and contested.

Learning Goals:

- to gain familiarity with foundational concepts in Jewish history, religion, and culture
- to learn how to read and analyze diverse primary and secondary sources
- to strengthen abilities in writing and communication
- to gain familiarity with the Jewish studies program at Oberlin

Fall 2020 Note:

We are learning in an unprecedented situation, which is going to require flexibility and patience from all of us. I will do my best to facilitate a deep and meaningful learning experience, without ignoring the changes and/or stresses that accompany an ongoing global pandemic. I commit to open and honest communication and invite your input as we navigate this together.

Active Engagement (10%)

This grade assesses your preparedness and engagement, which can be demonstrated by commenting in class, asking thoughtful questions, and/or attending office hours. Completing in-class activities is necessary to earn a high grade, but completing in-class activities alone will not merit an A.

On Discussions:

- In a liberal arts course, discussion is one of the main – and best – techniques for learning.
- Everyone is invited to contribute to discussions. When you do so, you should use respectful language and informed arguments that are based on reliable sources. Avoid generalizations and stereotypes, unsupported claims, and logical fallacies. Racist language and abusive terms will not be tolerated.
- It is also crucial that you make space for other voices to be heard. When your classmates are speaking, you should listen carefully, assume good intentions, and respond – especially if you disagree – by engaging with the substance of their argument.
- You will get the most out of this class if you see it as an opportunity to learn and grow. This means approaching discussions with a spirit of openness to the – sometimes difficult – process of understanding new ideas, receiving feedback, and developing as a thinker.
- During class, please avoid texting, checking your cellphone, or doing other activities that distract you, me, and/or your classmates from our shared pursuit of learning.

On Written Assignments:

- Papers should be written in Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced with standard margins and using Chicago citation style. They should be submitted by email, as Microsoft Word or PDF files.
- You can submit an optional draft 3 days before each deadline to receive feedback.
- You will be allotted two no-questions-asked 48-hour extensions on assignments.
- You must adhere to the honor code in all class assignments (more info at: <http://oberlin.edu/studentpolicies/honorcode>). This means submitting your own original work and including clear citations of all sources. If you have questions about this, please contact me!

Disability Accommodations:

Student should notify the Office of Disability Resources and their instructor of any disability-related needs. More information at: <http://oberlin.edu/disability-resources>.

Reading Assignments (30%)

Actively engaging the assigned readings is a key component of this class. During weeks 2 through 12, there will be a short weekly assignment related to one or more of the class readings. Each assignment will be worth 3% of your final grade. They will be graded Good (3), Room for Improvement (2), Incomplete (1) or No Submission (0). The prompt for the week will be emailed by 5pm ET on Sundays. You can take off one week without it affecting your grade.

Film Review (10%)

You will attend an online Sunday screening of one of the following films and write a 500-750-word review answering the question, how does this film represent Jewish space and/or place?

The review will be due one week after the screening. You can attend additional screenings for extra credit (½ a point each).

-*The Jazz Singer* (U.S., 1927) – September 27, 2pm -> Review due October 4 at 2pm

-*Ushpizin* (Israel, 2004) – October 11, 5pm -> Due October 18 at 5pm

-*Adio Kerida* (U.S., 2002) – October 25, 5pm -> Due November 1 at 5pm

Midterm Exam (20%)

This open-book exam will assess your engagement with class discussions and readings, including the Tapper text. To be taken online between November 3 and November 10.

Final Assignment (30%)

For the final assignment, you will conduct research on a Jewish space and/or place *or* another topic related to Jewish history, religion, or culture.

-You will submit a proposal including a clear topic and a summary of one primary or secondary source that you plan to use in your blogpost. Due Nov. 20 (5%)

-You will write a 750-1000-word blogpost about your topic for our class website (<https://sites.google.com/oberlin.edu/introjwst>), using relevant primary and secondary sources (25%). You can choose whether to make your post public or not. Due December 15 at 9pm.

Extra Credit

You can gain extra credit by contributing a 100-250-word post to our class blog (each assignment will add ½ a point to your final grade). There are two options, each of which you can do once:

-Event Note: Attend a Zoom event related to the themes of our course. What event did you attend, what did you learn, and how does it relate to our course? I will alert the class to relevant events, but you can run additional ideas by me.

-News Note: Identify a reliable news article or podcast episode relevant to the themes of our course (from August 15, 2020 or later). What does the article say and how does it relate to our course?

Required Text: Aaron J. Hahn Tapper, *Judaisms: A Twenty-First-Century Introduction to Jews and Jewish Identities* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016).

Schedule and Readings (Subject to Revision):

	Readings (except for <i>Judaisms</i>, posted in Blackboard)
Week 1 - Welcome!	
Tu Sep 1	
Th Sep 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Judaisms</i>, 1-7, 12-18 •Michael Figueroa, “Knock-Knock! It’s Diversity at the Jewish Studies Door,” <i>AJS Perspectives</i> (Fall 2018), 49-51
Week 2 – Beginnings	
Tu Sep 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Judaisms</i>, 18-27 •Barbara Mann, “Makom,” <i>Space and Place in Jewish Studies</i>, 11-25
Th Sep 10 – <u>Via Zoom, w/Prof. Cindy Chapman</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Judaisms</i>, 28-44 •Genesis, Chapters 1-3
Week 3 – Narratives of Biblical Place	
Tu Sep 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Judaisms</i>, 45-59 •Joshua, Chapters 18-21
Th Sep 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Judaisms</i>, 60-71 •Book of Zechariah, Chapters 1-8
Week 4 – After the Temple	
Tu Sep 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Judaisms</i>, 72-83 •Selections from the Babylonian Talmud •Thomas Tweed, “Space,” <i>Key Terms in Material Religion</i>, edited by S. Brent Plate (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 223-230.

Th Sep 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Judaisms</i>, 140-167 •“Synagogue,” <i>Dura-Europos : Excavating Antiquity</i> •Shari Rabin, “space, place,” <i>The Immanent Frame</i>
Sun Sep 27	Film Screening: <i>The Jazz Singer</i> (U.S., 1927)
Week 5 – Sacrality and Purity	
Tu Sep 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Peter Cole and Adina Hoffman, “Hidden Wisdom,” <i>Sacred Trash: The Lost and Found World of the Cairo Geniza</i>, 3-19 •“Bridge of Books,” <i>The Yiddish Book Center</i> •Jeffrey Veidlinger, “Digital Judaica”
Th Oct 1 – <u>Via Zoom, w/Prof. Ellen Wurtzel</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Judaisms</i>, 83-90 •“Women and Ritual Immersion in Medieval Ashkenaz: The Sexual Politics of Piety,” <i>Judaism in Practice</i>, 131-142 •“<i>Mikvah</i> Ceremony for Laura (1989),” <i>Four Centuries of Jewish Women’s Spirituality</i>, 321-6 ***CW: Sexual Assault •M. Deforge medieval <i>mikveh</i> images from Provins, France
Week 6 – Community and Calendar	
M Oct 5 – <u>LAST DAY TO REGISTER TO VOTE IN OHIO</u>	
Tu Oct 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Judaisms</i>, 90-94 •“The Enclosure of Spaces,” <i>Code of Jewish Law</i> (c. 1560s), 108-110 •Calvin Trillin, “Drawing the Line,” <i>New Yorker</i>, December 4, 1994, 50-62
Th Oct 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •<i>Judaisms</i>, 95-112 •Selected Hasidic Tales •Sukkahcity.com
Sun Oct 11	Film Screening: <i>Ushpizin</i> (Israel, 2004)
Week 7 – Jewish Geographies	

Tu Oct 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Abraham ibn Daud, “Story of the Four Captives” (c. 1160) •David Ruderman, “Jews on the Move,” <i>Early Modern Jewry</i>, 23-41 •Select an essay from “The Migration Issue,” <i>AJS Perspectives</i> (Fall 2017), http://perspectives.ajsnet.org/migration-issue/
Th Oct 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Excerpts from Moses Hess, <i>Rome and Jerusalem</i> (1862) •David Shneer and Caryn Aviv, “Introduction: From Diaspora Jews to New Jews,” <i>New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora</i>, 1-25
Week 8 – Europe and Israel	
Tu Oct 20 – <u>Via Zoom, w/Prof. Laura Herron</u>	<i>Judaisms</i> , 168-184 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •“How I Grew up as a Jew in the Diaspora” (1918), <i>JMW</i>, 810-12 •Images related to German Jews and the First World War
Th Oct 22 – <u>Via Zoom, w/Prof. Sheera Talpaz</u>	<i>Judaisms</i> , 190-209, 222-3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •TBD
Sun Oct 25	Film Screening: <i>Adio Kerida: Goodbye Dear Love</i> (U.S., 2002)
Week 9 – Global Jewries	
Tu Oct 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Amalia Ran and Jean Axelrad Cahan, “Introduction: Rethinking Jewish Identity in Latin America,” <i>Returning to Babel</i>, 1-9 (e-book) •Excerpts from Alberto Gerchunoff, <i>The Jewish Gauchos of the Pampas</i> (1910) •Mónica Szurmuk, “Home in the Pampas: Alberto Gerchunoff’s Jewish Gauchos” (optional)
Th Oct 29	<i>Judaisms</i> , 113-139 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Select a primary source from <i>Sephardi Lives</i>, eds. Cohen and Stein (e-book)
Week 10 – The U.S.	

Tu Nov 3 – <u>Via Zoom, w/Prof. Matthew Berkman</u>	<i>Judaisms</i> , 186-190, 209-216, 226-30 •TBD
Th Nov 5	<i>No Class</i> - Take-Home Midterm Exam
Week 11 – Jews in Public	
Tu Nov 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •“We Consider the Cemetery to be a Temple” (1929) •Natan Meir, “The Cholera Wedding,” <i>Stepchildren of the Shtetl</i>, 89-117
Th Nov 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •“Jews Join the Crowd at a Drag Ball,” <i>A Rainbow Thread</i>, 272-6. •Explore two “Stories” at https://richbrew.org/stories/ •“Camp,” <i>Adventures in Jewish Studies Podcast</i> (start at 2:00)
Week 12 – Jews in Private	
Tu Nov 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Michael Twitty, “Mishpocheh,” <i>The Cooking Gene</i>, 65-78 •Robin Amer, “The Last Jews of Natchez,” <i>Gravy</i>, May 21, 2015
Th Nov 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Excerpts from Laurel Snyder, ed. <i>Half/Life: Jew-ish Tales from Interfaith Homes</i> •Vanessa Ochs, “What Makes a Jewish Home Jewish,” <i>Cross Currents</i> (Winter 1999/2000) 49.4.
F Nov 20	Final Blogpost Proposal Due at 5pm
Week 13	
Tu Nov 24 – <u>Via Zoom</u>	<i>Judaisms</i> , 231-244
Th Nov 26	<i>Thanksgiving</i>
Week 14	

Tu Dec 1 - <u>Via Zoom</u>	Workshop
Th Dec 3 - <u>Via Zoom</u>	Conclusions <i>Judaisms</i> , 217-230
Finals Period	
Dec 15	Blogpost due at 9pm ET