RST 495/695 Topics in Religious Studies
BEING JEWISH*

* This is a sample syllabus; the topic will vary depending on the instructor

Course Description:
This course examines the history, experiences, values, and beliefs of Jewish people, a group that has been significantly marginalized and excluded from social and political participation in many societies. Students will examine ethical issues pertinent to Jewish thought, philosophy, life, culture, politics, and religion, such as: the ethics of cultural or religious identity; just and unjust treatment of others; the ethics of openness and difference; and the relationships between ethics, politics, law, and religion.

CORE OBJECTIVES:
This course satisfies CO 12: Ethics

CO 12 Ethics
Students will demonstrate understanding of the ethical principles in general or in application of specialized knowledge, results of research, creative expression, or design processes. Students will demonstrate an ability to recognize, articulate, and apply ethical principles in various academic, professional, social, or personal contexts.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:
• Students will be able to describe and analyze the ethical principles embodied in a particular religious belief system. (CO12)

• Students will be able to identify key elements of a marginalized religious group’s experience in relation their history, values, politics, beliefs, and practices.

• Students will be able to identify the multiple ethical interests at stake in the history and contemporary practice of a particular religious identity. (CO12)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Readings as assigned
Participation in class discussions
Class attendance
Four papers (six or seven pages)
Optional fifth paper (six or seven pages) (due the last day of class)
GRADUATE STUDENTS: Graduate student requirements are: readings as assigned, participation in class discussions, class attendance, three of the four papers (around ten pages). Grades will be based on the three papers, weighted equally. Please arrange to meet with the instructor during the first or second week of classes to discuss the course.

COURSE TEXTS:
Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate* (George J. Becker, trans.), Schocken Books


-------, “The Temptation of Temptation” (in *Nine Talmudic Readings*, Annette Aronowicz, trans.), Indiana University Press (online)

Joann Sfar, *The Rabbi’s Cat* (Alexis Siegel and Anjali Singh, trans.) (Pantheon)


-------, *Monolingualism of the Other, or the Prosthesis of Origin* (Patrick Mensah, trans), Stanford University Press

Hélène Cixous (1937), “My Algeriance, in other words: to depart not to arrive from Algeria” (in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts*, Eric Prenowitz, trans.), Routledge (online)

-------, *Reveries of the Wild Woman* (Beverly Bie Brahic, trans.), Northwestern University Press

Edmond Jabès, “From the Desert....” (in *From the Desert to the Book: Dialogues with Marcel Cohen*, Pierre Joris, trans.), Station Hill (online)


ATTENDANCE: Much of the important work in this course goes on in class. Students are expected to be in attendance except in cases of illness, emergency or religious holiday, to be present for the entire seventy-five minute period and not to make appointments that conflict with class sessions. Graded assignments are based, in part, on class discussion. As a result, it is to your disadvantage to miss class.
Attendance is required and will be taken at the beginning of each class session. Students may miss three classes without penalty. Five points will be subtracted from the final grade for the fourth class missed and two points for each class missed after that. Exceptions will be made in the case of illness, emergency or religious holiday. A written excuse must be provided for exceptions to be made.

If you miss class, contact one of your fellow students to find out what we did in your absence and to get notes on the class you missed. Once you have done that, you may wish to talk to the instructor about what you missed.

PAPERS: The papers will be essays (not research papers). They will be six or seven pages long. You need use no books other than the course texts in order to write the papers.

In an essay, you state a thesis, explain it and argue for it. The basic structure of an essay is: an introduction in which you state your thesis, the body of the essay in which you explain and argue for your thesis, the conclusion in which you summarize or highlight what you have done in the essay.

Essays will be typed or word-processed, double-spaced, in 10- or 12-point type. They will have a title and a title page. They will be in finished form and without errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation. All quotations will be accompanied by a reference in parentheses. Long quotations will be block indented. Essays will be evaluated on the following basis:

1. Do you have the parts mentioned above (introduction, body, conclusion)?
2. Do you fulfill the functions mentioned above (state thesis, explain it, argue for it, summarize or highlight)?
3. Is the thesis you are writing about an interesting and important one?
4. Does your explanation of the thesis show that it is an interesting and important one? Does your explanation make the basic concepts and terms in your essay clear to the reader?
5. Are your arguments clear and convincing to the reader?
6. Do you use specific examples from the text you are writing about to make your arguments stronger? Do you use direct quotations from the text you are writing about to make your arguments stronger?
7. Does your conclusion add something to the essay as a whole?
8. Is the essay typed (double-spaced)? Does it include a title and a title page? Is it in finished form and without errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation? Are all quotations accompanied by a reference in parentheses?

REFERENCES: Quotations in the text should end with quotation marks followed by a reference in parentheses followed by a period.

EVALUATION: Grades will be based on the papers weighted equally (1/4 each). Excellent class participation may raise your grade somewhat over the mathematical average, at the discretion of the instructor.
Any student who has completed each of the assigned papers may complete the optional fifth paper. The grade on it will replace the student’s lowest grade (supposing that the grade on the optional paper is higher than the lowest grade).

Late papers will lose a letter grade (ten points) for each class session they are late. Exceptions will be made only in the case of serious illness, emergency, or religious holiday. A written excuse must be provided for exceptions to be made.

There will be no extra credit work. The student will be held responsible for knowing what goes on in class.

The grading scale is: 94-100, A; 90-93 A-; 87-89 B++; 84-86 B; 80-83 B-; 77-79 C++; 74-76 C; 70-73 C-; 67-69 D++; 64-66 D; 60-63 D-; below 60, F.

It is the instructor’s policy that cheating, plagiarism or submission of written work for this course which was submitted in another course merits a course grade of F.

COURSE LINKS: The course outline and class assignments can be accessed by visiting <www.unr.edu/~achten/BJS14CO.html>. They can also be accessed by visiting my homepage: <www.unr.edu/~achten/homepage.html>. My homepage can also be accessed through the Department of Philosophy website <www.unr.edu/philosophy> or by means of a search engine such as Google: <www.google.com> (search for: “Deborah Achtenberg” homepage).

USE OF THE INTERNET: Use of the internet for research purposes can be appropriate. However, students should use their own ideas in their papers. In addition, they should be aware that papers plagiarized from internet sources can easily be detected through the use of a search engine such as Google.

PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is a serious offense. You plagiarize when you use someone else’s words or ideas without attribution. When you do this, you are putting forward someone else’s work as if it were your own.

Changing a few words in a phrase or sentence is not enough to avoid plagiarism. (1) Instead, when you utilize someone else’s exact phrases, put them in quotation marks and cite in parentheses the person whose words you have used. (2) It is fine to paraphrase someone, but when you do, you must say so. You can make it clear by saying “As Sartre says...” or “According to Lévy...”. (3) Finally, do not utilize even short phrases from another person’s work without a citation. If you follow these guidelines, you will find it is easy to use sources in your own writing without being academically dishonest.

INTERNET RESOURCES: Some on-line reference books of use to students include (you may need UNR access for some of these sites; visit the UNR library Off-campus Access page to learn how to gain access):


*Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

The on-line edition of Routledge's encyclopedia of philosophy.

*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

Another good on-line encyclopedia of philosophy, this one from Stanford University.

Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper

In addition to suggestions I will make in class, you may find this webpage from Jim Pryor at NYU's Department of Philosophy helpful.

*Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*


*Oxford English Dictionary*

The electronic version of the OED with the latest new and revised entries.

WordReference.com

An on-line French, Italian and Spanish translation dictionary provided by Michael Kellogg.

German-English Dictionary

An on-line German translation dictionary provided by the Chemnitz Technical University and Frank Richter.

Liddell, Scott, Jones Lexicon

Perseus's on-line version of the Liddell, Scott, Jones lexicon (dictionary) of ancient Greek. (To look up a transliterated Greek word--such as logos or physis--type the word in the Find space, click on the Submit Query button, then double-click on Middle Liddell which will take you to definitions found in the middle-sized Liddell, Scott, Jones Lexicon.)

Words


**CLASS FORMAT:** This class will be a combination of lecture and discussion. Discussions generally will have a focus rather than being general discussion or debate. Students will be expected to respond to questions asking them to reflect on the texts and the issues raised, to speculate in a thoughtful way when not sure, and in general to participate in discussion.

Class discussions will refer to the course texts. Students will need to bring the course texts to class if they are to benefit from lectures and discussions.

*Web surfing and sending or reading e-mail or text messages during class are not allowed.* In addition, please refrain from carrying on extensive side conversations during class discussion and from eating during class. Also, please silence cell phones before class.
STUDYING: Many students will find that they do better work in this course if they study together with other students.

REQUIRED STATEMENT ON DISABILITY POLICY: “Any student with a disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building, Suite 101) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.”

REQUIRED STATEMENT ON AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDING: “Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may be given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.”

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My office hours are 2:30 - 3:30 p.m., Tuesday, and noon to 1:00 p.m., Wednesday, or by appointment. Please feel free to come by to discuss the course topics or your progress in the course. I look forward to meeting with you for such discussions, and I have plenty of time to meet with you. Please contact me as much as possible in person or by phone so that I can get to know you better!

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction (2 classes)

Weeks 2 and 3: Religion and Hatred (this unit addresses CO 12)
Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), Anti-Semite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate

Weeks 3 and 4: Religious Ethics (this unit addresses CO 12)
Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), “Being Jewish” and “The Temptation of Temptation” (approx. 2 weeks)

Week 5: Sfar and the Rabbi
Joann Sfar (1971- ), The Rabbi’s Cat (approx. 1 week)

Weeks 6 and 7: The Ethics of Testimony and Encounters with The Other (This unit addresses CO 12)
Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), “A Testimony Given...” and Monolingualism of the Other, or the Prosthesis of Origin (approx. 2 weeks)

Weeks 8 and 9: Jewishness and the Ethics of the Postcolonial Situation (This unit addresses CO 12)
Hélène Cixous (1937), “My Algeriance, in other words: to depart not to arrive from Algeria,” and *Reveries of the Wild Woman* (approx. 2 weeks)

Weeks 10 and 11: Jabesian Questions
Edmond Jabès (1912-1991), “From the Desert...” and *The Book of Questions I* (approx. 2 weeks)

Weeks 13 and 14: Towards the Future
Jean-Paul Sartre and Benny Lévy (1945-2003), *Hope Now*

Week 15: Conclusion