

Instructor
Sean Burrus
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Location:
Alamance Bldg. 202
M-F, 1:30-4:30 PM

Syllabus – Religious Studies 271
Jews, Greeks and Romans: Being Jewish in the Classical World

What did it mean to 'be Jewish' in the Greco-Roman world? Jews, Greeks and Romans will explore the myriad ways that Jewish communities across the Mediterranean engaged with Greco-Roman culture and constructed their own ways of being Jewish. Using texts, artifacts and images--from rabbinic commentaries to Roman catacombs--we will investigate cross-cultural dialogue and interaction with local, non-Jewish neighbors throughout the classical world.

Course Objectives:

- General understanding of the historical and cultural conditions of Classical World.
- Familiarity with diverse responses of the Jewish people to their cultural environment in the Classical World.
- Ability to integrate different kinds of historical information, including literature, inscriptions, artifacts and art.
- Understanding of the ways that groups construct their own senses of selves (identity) in a variety of cultural contexts.

Assignments and Grading:

Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More than just regular attendance, participation means advance preparation of reading assignments and <i>regular contributions to class discussions</i>. Contributions can (and should) take the form of both interesting/insightful/open ended questions posed to classmates as well as observations and answers.• <i>Missing more than one class without official documentation will cause your final course grade to fall by 5 pts per absence.</i>	15%
Class Blog	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Daily posting on the class blog, consisting of one 175 word <i>reflection</i> on an aspect of the days readings and one thoughtful <i>response</i> to a peer. See handout for further guidelines.• Due by 11AM each day that reading is due.	20%
Team Report Week I	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group presentation on <i>one</i> piece of Hellenistic Jewish literature. See handout for guidelines on group reports. ~Five groups of three.	7.5%

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due Friday, Jan. 10th, in class. 	
Team Report Week II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare the days readings for the benefit of the class. ~Three groups of five. 	7.5%
Team Report Week III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare the days readings for the benefit of the class. ~Three groups of five. 	7.5%
Blog Portfolio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select your three best blog posts and write a 750-1000 word meta-post reflecting on the way your posts (and the readings they respond to) intersect and what they reveal about “Being Jewish in the Classical World” • Due Thurs., Jan. 16th before class. 	10%
“Historical Review”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-3pp critique of the <i>Monty Python: Life of Brian</i> from the perspective of either a) a modern historian or b) a contemporary (historical) Jew. • Film will be screened in class, Thurs. Jan. 7th • Due Tues, Jan 21st before class. 	10%
Quiz on Meyers Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monday, Jan 13th in class. 	5%
Final Exam *In Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.5hr, short answer and essay exam. • Open <i>notes</i>. 	17.5%

Required texts:

- There are no required texts for this course. All readings will be posted on Moodle as PDFs.
- For some sessions you will find listed a *Primary Source*. This will also be posted online, and usually consist of ‘cherry-picked’ literary sources that coincide with the topic of the day. We will discuss these sources in class, so be sure to give them attention.

Class Policies

- **Course Materials:** You are required to bring your reading materials to every class.
- **Academic Integrity:** All students are required to adhere to the Elon honor code. You can find Elon’s honor code at <http://www.elon.edu/honor>.
- **Attendance:** If you do not attend this class on a regular basis, you will not succeed in this course. **You may have one “free” absence from this class; after that your final grade will begin to fall for absences without official documentation.** Please note that you are still responsible for course materials on days that you are absent!
- **Extension/Late Paper Policy:** No extensions on assignments will be granted in this course. **Late papers drop by one letter grade for each day that they are late (including weekends).** As with the attendance policy, if you have a truly compelling reason for an extension, speak to me about it in office hours.
- **Talk to the Instructor!:** I will be around after class each day for ~half an hour to chat, but *please* feel free to set up another time to meet if you want to talk to me about class topics or about an assignment, or anything else under the sun (within reason!). I’m always happy to arrange a time over the winter term. If you are concerned that a personal situation inside or

outside the classroom may affect your class performance, this is also the sort of thing you should let me know.

- **Be Courteous:** In this class, you will be expected to be courteous, respectful, and considerate of the instructor, each other, and yourselves. All criticism should be constructive. Don't let your cell phones ring in class, don't check messages, don't send text messages, etc.

Schedule of Readings (Subject to Change)

WEEK ONE

1. **Tues. Jan. 7th - Introduction: Judaism and the Greco-Roman World**
 - Cohen, S. "Prologue" (10pp)
 - Meyers, E. "Jewish Culture in Greco-Roman Palestine" (40pp, **overview*, skim for content)
 - Rajak, T. "Jews and Christians as Groups in a Pagan World" (16pp)
2. **Wed. Jan. 8th - Greek and Roman Authors on the Jews**
 - Gruen, E. "Roman Perspectives on the Jews in the Age of the Great Revolt" (15pp)
 - Schäfer, P. "Anti-Semitism"
 - *Primary Sources: Greek and Roman Authors on the Jews*
3. **Thurs. Jan. 9th - Jews under Roman Law**
 - Rajak, T. "Was there a Roman Charter for the Jews?" (15pp)
 - Rutgers, L.V. "Roman Policy towards the Jews" (20pp)
 - **Screening of *Monty Python: Life of Brian***
 - *Primary Sources: Jews under Roman Law*
4. **Fri. Jan. 10th - Jewish-Hellenistic Literature**
 - Himmelfarb, M. "The Torah between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Difference in Antiquity" (17pp)
 - **Due: In-class team presentations of select work of Hellenistic Jewish Literature**

WEEK TWO

5. **Mon. Jan. 13th – The Herodians and Roman Imperialism**
 - Chancey, M., Chapters 3-4 in *Greco-Roman Culture in the Galilee of Jesus*. (49pp)
6. **Tues. Jan. 14th - Jews in the Roman City**
 - Eliav, Y. "Bathhouses as Places of Social and Cultural Interaction" (15pp)
 - Weiss, Z. "Theatres, Hippodromes, Amphitheatres and Performances" (15pp)
7. **Wed. Jan. 15th – Converts, Proselytes and Proselytism(?)**
 - Schaefer, P "Proselytes"
 - Cohen, S. "Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew"

- *Primary sources: Proselytism*

8. Thurs. Jan 16th - Diaspora

- Kraabel, A. "The Roman Diaspora: Six Questionable Assumptions" (20pp)
- Rutgers, L.V. "Archaeological Evidence for the Interaction of Jews and Non-Jews in Late Antiquity" (18pp)
- Rajak, T., "The Synagogue in the Greco-Roman City" (15pp)

9. Fri. Jan. 17th – Diaspora: Dura Europos (A Case Study)

- Elsner, J. "Cultural Resistance and the Visual Image: The Case of Dura Europos." (37pp, 15pp of images included[!])
- Rajak, T. "The Synagogue Paintings of Dura-Europos: Triumphalism and Competition." (20pp, image heavy)

WEEK THREE

10. Tues. Jan. 21st - Synagogues in Late-Ancient Palestine

- Fine, S – "Synagogue Mosaics and Liturgy in the Land of Israel" (22pp)
- Weiss, Z. "The Sepphoris synagogue mosaic and the role of Talmudic literature in its iconographical study" (15pp)
- Schwartz, S. "On the program and reception of the synagogue mosaics" (15pp)

"Historical Review" of Life of Brian DUE

11. Wed. Jan 22nd - Rabbis and Romans

- Cohen, S. "The Significance of Yavneh" (27pp)
- Schäfer, P. "Jews and Gentiles in Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah" (18pp)
- *Primary Source: Mishnah Tractate Avodah Zarah*

12. Thurs. Jan. 23rd - Rabbis and Visual Culture

- Schwartz, S. "Gamaliel in Aphroditis Bath: Palestinian Judaism and Urban Culture in the Third and Fourth Centuries" (15pp)
- Eliav, Y, "Viewing the Sculptural Environment: Shaping the Second Commandment" (23pp)
- Stern, S. "Images in Late-Antique Palestine: Jewish and Greco-Roman views" (20pp)
- *Primary Source: Mishnah Tractate Avodah Zarah (cont.)*

13. Fri. Jan. 24th - Jews and Christians

- Kimmelman, R., "Birkat Ha-Minim and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christan Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity*" (19pp)
- Skarsaune, O. "Elder and Younger Brothers: The Second Century Debate with Judaism and Christianity" (17pp)
- **Katz, S. "The Rabbinic Response to Christianity" (37pp* *skim*)
- *Primary Source: Jews and Christians*

WEEK FOUR

14. Mon. Jan. 27th - Course Recap
15. Tues. Jan. 28th - In-class Exam