

Religious Studies 112:

# INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM

An introductory course taught at Vanderbilt University (5,800 undergraduates and 4,200 graduate and professional students), with an enrollment of 25-30.



MWF 2:10-  
3:00, Calhoun  
320



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## Required Textbooks:

- Norman Solomon, *Judaism, A Very Short Introduction*
- Barry Holtz, *Back to the Sources*
- Elie Wiesel, *Night*
- Chaim Potok, *The Chosen*
- Liz Harris, *Holy Days*

## Course Requirements and grading:

ASSIGNMENT	% OF GRADE	DUE DATE
Exam on Bible	10	January 26
Review of Potok	15	February 13
Synagogue Visit	15	February 27
My Jewish Hometown	15	March 20
Review of Wiesel	15	April 6
Special Project	15	April 17
Review of Harris	15	April 29

**NOTE: Regular attendance and participation in class is expected.**

Jan 7-9

- Introduction to the course
- Defining our Topic: Who are Jews? What is Judaism?

## I. Introducing Judaism

Jan 12-16: The Roots of Judaism: the "TANAKH"

- **Reading: Holtz, IA, 1B**
- What is the "Jewish Bible"
- Who were the Hebrews?
- Who were the Biblical Israelites?
- Judah, Israel, Macabees, and other Mysteries
- The Jerusalem Temple and its Priests

## II. Classical Judaism as a Religion

Jan 19-23: A Kingdom of Priests and a Holy People

- **Reading: Holtz 2,3**
- Pharisees, Essense, Christians and other sects
- The Classics of the Rabbis: Mishnah, Talmud

Jan 26-30: The Classics of the Rabbis Continued

- **JAN 26: EXAM**
- Talmud, Midrash
- Are Giraffes Kosher: Responsa and Codes

[Exploring the Talmud](#)

[Exploring a Code of Jewish Law](#)

Feb 2-6: How to be Holy

- **Begin reading Potok**
- Sacred Time: Calendar and Holidays
- Sacred People: life-cycle
- Sacred Place: the Jewish Community

[Some more background on Hasidism](#)

[More on Jewish Law and Life](#)

Feb 9-13: Jewish Theology: Coming to Terms with God

- **Reading: Holtz 5**
- **FEB 13: REVIEW OF POTOK DUE**
- God
- Revelation
- Why Bad Things Happen to Good People
- What happens after death

[I want to read more on Jewish belief](#)

[What is the Jewish View of Death?](#)

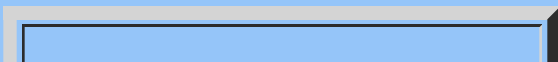
[Some more on Jewish concepts of death](#)

Feb: 16-20 Synagogues, Temples and Shuls

- **Reading: Holtz 8**
- What is a Synagogue?
- Jewish Prayer and Liturgy

[Ancient Synagogues](#)

[Medieval Synagogues](#)



Feb 23-27: The Birth of an American Judaism

- **FEB 27: SYNAGOGUE VISIT REPORT DUE**
- The German Jews and the Creation of American Judaism
- The East Europeans and the Remaking of American Judaism
- American Judaism Today

[\*A Tour of American Jewish History\*](#)

[\*Other Web-links for American Jewish History\*](#)



# SPRING BREAK



March 9-13: "Jewish Denominationalism"

- **Reading: Holtz 7**
- Orthodox [\*Orthodox\*](#)
- Conservative [\*Conservative\*](#)
- Reform [\*Reform\*](#)
- Reconstruction
- Hassidism [\*Hasidism\*](#)

[\*What is \(fill in the blank\) Judaism?\*](#)

March 16-20: Celebrating Ethnicity: If it Feels Jewish...

- **MARCH 20: HOME TOWN HISTORY DUE**
- Holy People: The "American" Rabbi
- Holy Space: Jewish Community Centers
- Holy deeds: The Federation System

[\*Jewish Federations\*](#)

## March 23-27: A History of a Nation in Exile

- How Jews Got to Europe
- Ashkenasim and Sepharadim
- Expulsions and Inquisitions

### [Everything You Want to Know About Sepharadim](#)

## Mar 30-Apr 3: Out of the Ghetto: Can a Jew be a German?

- **Begin Reading Elie Wiesel**
- Emancipation
- Modern "racial" Antisemitism
- Holocaust

### [Some Links on Antisemitism](#)

### [The U.S. Holocaust Museum](#)

### [Other Holocaust links](#)

### [Holocaust Denial](#)

## April 6-10: Zionism -- A "Secular" Theology?

- **APRIL 6: REVIEW OF ELIE WIESEL DUE**
- What is Zionism and how did it take shape?
- The Founding of the State of Israel
- The State of Zionism Today

### [Everything you ever wanted to know about Zionism](#)

### [Information on Israel](#)

### [Information on the PNA](#)

### [Visit the Golan Heights](#)

## April 13-20: Being Jewish at the Turn of the Millennium

- **APRIL 17: SPECIAL PROJECT DUE**
- Israel -- a Jewish state or a state of Jews?
- "Who is a Jew" revisited
- Diaspora Jews and Israel
- American Judaism: From Marketing to Moshiach

### [What's in the Jewish News Today](#)

APRIL 29: REVIEW OF HARRIS DUE

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