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
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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, Essene, Christians and other sects
- The Classics of the Rabbis: Mishnah, Talmud

Jan 23-30: The Classics of the Rabbis Continued
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
III. Judaism as an Ethnicity

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

*Other Web-links for American Jewish History*

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**SPRING BREAK**

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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*

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IV. Judaism as an Nationality
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