

**HISTORY 311: JEWISH SOCIETY IN ISLAMIC LANDS, 632-1517
SPRING 2019**

Queens College, History Department

HIST 311.01, Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:10-4:25 PM

Powdermaker 114

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Course Description

This course will explore the political, cultural and religious history of Jews in the Islamic world from the rise of Islam to the 16th century. Topics to be covered include the historical relationship between Judaism and Islam, the organization and structure of the Jewish community, and developments in Jewish law, philosophy, religious writing and literature. Particular attention will be given to points of contact between the two societies and the ways in which the Jewish experience was shaped by the surrounding Islamic environment.

Textbook Information

Required texts available through the QC online bookstore (qcbookstore.com) and other vendors:

- Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405: The Making of a Civilization* (Pearson, 2003). [ISBN: 978-0130983893]
- Norman Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book* (Jewish Publication Society, 1998) [ISBN: 978-0827601987]

Additional required readings are available through the Blackboard site for this course (see below) under the tab "Readings."

Online Resources

We will be using the Blackboard site for much of the class activities. It can be accessed through the Queens College website at www.qc.cuny.edu. We will go over how to access the site and its topography during the first week of class. If you have any questions about your Queens College email address or your password, or if you have any problems accessing the site please contact the Helpdesk.

Attendance Policy

You are expected to come prepared to participate actively in class. This means doing the reading and writing assignments before class, being willing to contribute to class discussion and bringing assigned primary texts to class. Classes will consist of lectures and discussions. I will regularly call on you to comment on the reading and homework assignments or what others have said. Class Participation counts for 20% of your grade.

Because class work is an important part of the course, I will take attendance regularly. Except for documented emergencies, you will lose a point off your class-participation grade for each absence. If you have an emergency, please notify me ahead of time. There are no make-up classes. You are required to come to class on time. If you cannot arrive on time owing to extenuating circumstances let me know in advance. If you are not present at the beginning, you will be marked absent.

Discipline/Course Specific Learning Objectives

LO 1: To distinguish between primary and secondary sources; to identify and evaluate evidence.

LO 2: To formulate a clear argument, support the argument with appropriate and thorough evidence, and reach a convincing conclusion.

LO 3: To compare and contrast different processes, modes of thought, and modes of expression from different historical time periods and in different geographic areas.

LO 4: To recognize and articulate the diversity of human experience, including ethnicity, race, language, sex, gender, as well as political, economic, social, and cultural structures over time and space.

CUNY Common Core

All Flexible CORE Courses must meet the following three learning outcomes:

FC 1: Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.
FC 2: Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
FC 3: Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.

In Addition, all WCGI courses must satisfy at least three of the following learning outcomes:

WCGI 1: Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring world cultures or global issues, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, economics, ethnic studies, foreign languages (building upon previous language acquisition), geography, history, political science, sociology, and world literature.
WCGI 2: Analyze culture, globalization, or global cultural diversity, and describe an event or process from more than one point of view.
WCGI 3: Analyze the historical development of one or more non-U.S. societies.
WCGI 4: Analyze the significance of one or more major movements that have shaped the world's societies.
WCGI 5: Analyze and discuss the role that race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation play in world cultures or societies.
WCGI 6: Speak, read, and write a language other than English, and use that language to respond to cultures other than one's own.

Assignments and Exams

Response papers - You are to complete three response papers. These assignments ask you to gather and interpret a range of sources, medieval and modern. For the specific instructions for each, see below in the calendar (**classes 8, 16 and 22**). These are to be submitted via the "Assignments" tab on Blackboard by 9 PM of the day on which they are due. In aggregate, response papers meet the following learning outcomes: FC 1, FC 2, FC 3, WCGI 1, WCGI 2, WCGI 3, and WCGI 5.

Midterm – An in-class exam on material from both readings and lectures (see below, **class 12**). The midterm will be made up of two parts: I) identification and discussion of primary source passages; II) an essay question. Grading of part I will be based on the ability to properly identify the historical circumstances in which a primary source was composed and evaluate its argument in light of those circumstances. Grading of part II will be based on the ability to produce a well-reasoned argument about a broad phenomenon or theme that incorporates evidence from a variety of sources and components of the course. The midterm will satisfy the following learning outcomes: FC 3, WCGI 1, WCGI 2, WCGI 5, and LO 2.

Final paper – A four-page analysis of the representation of “Al-Andalus” in contemporary pop culture. Full instructions are given below, under **class 28**. Grading will be based on students’ ability to gather appropriate sources and analyze them in light of the historiographical study read for **class 25**. To be submitted via the “Assignments” tab on Blackboard. The final paper will satisfy the following learning outcomes: FC 1, FC 2, FC 3, WCGI 1, WCGI 2, WCGI 3, LO2, and LO 3.

Final Exam – A two-hour in-person exam covering material from the entire semester (see **class meeting 29**). The final will be made up of two parts: I) identification and discussion of primary source passages; and II) an essay question. Grading of part I will be based on the ability to properly identify the historical circumstances in which a primary source was composed and evaluate its argument in light of those circumstances. Grading of part II will be based on the ability to produce a well-reasoned argument about a broad phenomenon or theme that incorporates evidence from a variety of sources and components of the course. The final exam will satisfy the following learning outcomes: FC 3, WCGI 1, WCGI 2, WCGI 5, and LO 2.

Late Assignments and Makeup Exams

Response papers will not be accepted late. Late final papers will drop a third of a letter grade per day late. A student with a legitimate emergency and documentation will be permitted to take a makeup exam.

Statement on Differently Abled Assistance

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: 1) register with and provide documentation to the Special Services Office, Frese Hall, Room 11. This should be done during the first week of class. For more information about services available to Queens College candidates, contact Dr. Miriam Detres-Hickey at QC.SPSV@qc.cuny.edu.

Calculating the Final Grade

Participation: 15%
Response Papers: 3 x 10% each = 30%
Midterm: 15%
Final Paper: 20%
Final Exam: 20%

Course Calendar

Class Meeting	Day & Date	Topic	Readings/Assignments	Objectives/ Criteria Met
1	Mon, Jan 28, 2019	Introduction		
2	Wed, Jan 30, 2019	World of Late Antiquity	Reading: Egger, 1-20	WCGI 5
3	Mon, Feb 4, 2019	Muhammad and his Message	Reading: Egger, 20-31 Stillman, 3-21 The flood story in the epic of Gilgamesh, the Old Testament and the Quran	FC 1, LO 3, LO 4
4	Wed, Feb 6, 2019	Muhammad and the Jews of Medina: Take I	Reading: Stillman, <i>Jews of Arab Lands</i> , 122-23 ("The Affair of the Banu Qaynuqa")	FC 2
5	Mon, Feb 11, 2019	Muhammad and the Jews of Medina: Take II	Reading: Stillman, <i>Jews of Arab Lands</i> , 115-18 ("Muhammad's Ordinance for Medina") Michael Cook, "Muhammad"	FC 2, LO 1
6	Wed, Feb 13, 2019	Jewish Reactions to the Conquests	Reading: Egger, 44-54 Stillman, 22-29, 152-155 (The Pact of Umar) "The Prayer of Rabbi Simon ben Yohay"	
7	Wed, Feb 20, 2019	The Abbasid Empire	Reading: Egger, 62-84 Stillman, 30-39	
8	Mon, Feb 25, 2019	Jewish Culture in an Arabic Context	Reading: Barnavi, "In the Abbasid Empire" Due: Response 1 This response assignment asks you to apply the critical approach introduced in the Michael Cook reading (see class 5) to our exploration of Muhammad's interactions with the Jews of Medina. How do	FC 1, FC 2, FC 3, WCGI 2, WCGI 5

			<p>traditional Islamic sources, like those examined in classes 3 and 4, depict that relationship? Based on Cook, why should we, as historians, be skeptical about those sources? What alternative sources might we use instead to learn about early Islam's treatment of the Jews? Select 3 texts relating to the Jews from Robert Hoyland's collection of primary sources, <i>Seeing Islam as Others Saw It</i> (Darwin Press, 1997). At least two should be from different genres (i.e. chronicles, apocalyptic writings, polemics, etc). Can you detect differences in approach in the different genres? Considered in aggregate, do Hoyland's sources suggest a different pattern of relations between Muslims and Jews than the traditional Islamic sources? Explain.</p>	
9	Wed, Feb 27, 2019	Jewish Leadership	<p>Egger, 114-122, 219-223 Stillman, 171-179, 181-182 (letters of investiture) Barnavi, "The Period of the Geonim"</p>	FC 1
10	Mon, Mar 4, 2019	A Radical Traditionalist: Saadiah ben Joseph	<p>Reading: Selections from <i>The Book of Beliefs and Opinions</i></p>	FC 1, WCGI 3, WCGI 4, LO 2
11	Wed, Mar 6, 2019	Karaite Challenge and Rabbanite Response	<p>Reading: Daniel Lasker, "Karaism" Selections from Salmon ben Yeruham, "Wars of the Lord" Letter of Sahl ben Masliah</p>	FC 2
12	Mon, Mar 11, 2019	In-class Midterm Exam		FC 3, WCGI 1, WCGI 2, WCGI 5, LO 2
13	Wed, Mar 13, 2019	Muslim Spain and Hebrew Poetry	<p>Reading: Masha Yitzhaki, "Arabic Ars Poetica"</p>	FC 1, WCGI 5

			Barnavi, "Men of Letters in Medieval Spain"	
14	Mon, Mar 18, 2019	Muslim Spain and Hebrew Poetry, part II	Reading: Selections of medieval Hebrew poetry	FC 1, WCGI 5, LO 2, LO 3
15	Wed, Mar 20, 2019	Aristotelian Philosophy	Reading: Herbert Davidson, "The Study of Philosophy as a Religious Obligation" Stillman, <i>Jews of Arab Lands</i> , 226-228 ("A Medieval Curriculum")	FC 1
16	Mon, Mar 25, 2019	Aristotelian Philosophy, part II	Reading: Excerpts from Moses Maimonides, <i>Guide of the Perplexed</i> Excerpts from Avicenna, <i>On the Proof of Prophecies</i> Due: Response 2 This assignment asks you to explore the different ways contemporary scholars have understood the homoerotic imagery in medieval Hebrew poetry from Spain that we encountered in class 14 (see, for example, the poem "The Cruel Lover" and "The Treacherous Fawn"). Using a research tool like JSTOR, find three different scholarly articles that reflect at least two different approaches to this material. Explain how the approaches differ and why you think there is disagreement about the imagery's significance.	FC 1, FC 2, FC 3, WCGI 1, WCGI 2, WCGI 5
17	Wed, Mar 27, 2019	Opposition to Philosophy	Reading: Al-Ghazali, excerpts Judah Halevi, <i>Kuzari</i> , excerpts	FC 1, LO 3
18	Mon, Apr 1, 2019	Records of Daily Life	Reading: Marina Rustow, "The	FC 1

			Cairo Geniza"	
19	Wed, Apr 3, 2019	Screening of "From Cairo to the Cloud"		
20	Mon, Apr 8, 2019	Economic Life	Reading: Mark Cohen, <i>Maimonides and the Merchants</i> , 1-23	FC 1
21	Wed, Apr 10, 2019	Women and Children	Eve Krakowski, <i>Coming of Age in Medieval Egypt</i> , 178-212	FC 1
22	Mon, Apr 15, 2019	Persecution and Polemic	<p>Reading: Mark R. Cohen, "Persecution, Response, and Collective Memory" Poem of Abu Ishaq of Elvira</p> <p>Due: Response 3</p> <p>This assignment builds on our discussion of documentary sources in classes 18 and 19. Using the websites of the Cambridge Genizah collection (https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/genizah/1), the Friedberg Jewish Manuscript Society (https://fjms.genizah.org/) and the Princeton Geniza Project (http://geniza.princeton.edu/pgpsearch/), choose 4 sources on a specific individual, incident or topic, 3 of which should be of different genres (i.e. letters, court records, literary texts, magic spells, legal documents, medical works, religious writings, etc). You'll have an easier time if you choose broad topics that are likely to span various genres, like Moses Maimonides (a towering figure in this period), marital issues (an eternal problem), eye ailments</p>	FC 1, FC 2, FC 3, WCGI 1, WCGI 2, WCGI 3

			(people were always complaining about them), taxes (people love to complain about them), etc. Describe the context in which each of your sources was composed. Are there differences in the way your topic is discussed in each kind of source? How do you account for those differences?	
23	Wed, Apr 17, 2019	Mysticism	Reading: Paul Fenton, "Judaism and Sufism"	FC 1
24	Mon, Apr 29, 2019	Jewish Literature in Medieval Iran	Reading: Vera Basch Moreen, "The Jews in Iran" and "Judeo-Persian Literature"	FC 1
25	Wed, May 1, 2019	Historiography	Reading: Mark Cohen, <i>Under Crescent and Cross</i> , chapter 1	FC 2, WCGI 1, LO 3
26	Mon, May 6, 2019	Screening of "Jews and Muslims: Intimate Strangers"		FC 2, LO 3
27	Wed, May 8, 2019	Conclusion		
28	Mon, May 13, 2019	Final Review	<p>Due: Final Paper</p> <p>This paper asks you to apply the historiographical insights introduced in the Cohen reading in class 25 to contemporary popular writing and culture and (i.e. non-academic writing). For this exercise I want you to consider the way the idea of medieval Al-Andalus is invoked in four contemporary cultural contexts. You are to choose a recent film, musical album, historical novel and newspaper op-ed, each of which includes explicitly or implicitly an argument</p>	FC 1, FC 2, FC 3, WCGI 1, WCGI 2, WCGI 3, LO2, LO 3

			about what “Al-Andalus” symbolizes. In your paper identify your sources, discuss relevant differences in the way the idea appears in the different genres, and then situate each of your sources in terms of Cohen’s paradigm. Can you find an overarching attitude towards “Al-Andalus” in the sources you’ve selected? Why might that be the case?	
29	Mon, May 20, 2019	Final Exam		FC 3, WCGI 1, WCGI 2, WCGI 5, and LO 2