

# Welcome to “Jew-Ish: An Introduction to Jewish Culture and Religion”

Fall 2018 | Time: TBD

Location: TBD | 2 units P/NP

Facilitators: Reni Forer

Email: [reni.forer@berkeley.edu](mailto:reni.forer@berkeley.edu)

Office Hours: upon request

Faculty Sponsor: Benjamin Brinner

Email: [brinner@berkeley.edu](mailto:brinner@berkeley.edu)

Office Hours: upon request

## Introduction to Jewish Culture and Religion Course Policies

Course Overview and Learning Outcomes:

This course will expose students to an overview of Jewish life, covering both cultural and religious topics, in addition to case studies to illuminate the content. This course will cover some key, basic concepts in Judaism, including life cycle rituals and the Autumnal holidays, looking at multiple perspectives within each topic. This course will allow Jewish students to gain a clearer sense of how they want to personally practice Judaism, as well as expose non-Jewish students to aspects of Judaism that can be incorporated into any person’s life, while giving all students the opportunity to evolve their own spiritual or religious identity. This course is meant to not only expose students to what common Jewish rituals are, but to develop an understanding of a traditional Jewish lifestyle. This will be accomplished through weekly readings, class discussion, guest speakers, and field trips outside the classroom.

### Attendance Policy

- Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Class participation is a major part of your grade, therefore attendance is mandatory.
- If you need to leave early, email the facilitators before class and give an appropriate reason. Do not abuse this privilege.
- You are allowed two excused absences or one unexcused absence, after which you will receive a No Pass grade.
  - If you must be absent, please email the facilitator at least 24 hours in advance of class start time.
  - In cases of emergency, please notify the facilitator as soon as possible.
  - Conflicts with midterms will not count towards your excused absence limit.

### Classroom Policies

- Be on time. Show respect to guest speakers and your fellow classmates by avoiding late arrivals.
  - Consistent tardiness may result in a No Pass grade.
- No laptops will be allowed in class. This is to preserve attention and respect our speakers. Spending class time on Facebook will not help you learn anything.

### Class Participation

- Participation in classroom discussion is **required** and will be a part of each student's final grade.
- Everyone has something to add to discussion whether it be an observation, a question, or a personal experience that relates. Please make an effort to contribute!
- If the facilitator notices that you have consistently not been participating they will give you a warning. If such a lack of participation continues it may result in a No Pass for the class.

### Written Assignments

- This is meant to be a class centered on discussion surrounding the topics we are learning about. The written assignments are a way to reflect on class material, readings, and outside events and how our personal thoughts and experiences relate to them.
- There will be a **mandatory** weekly written assignment due the day before class every week that is based on either the readings for that week, an event students attended, or their personal reflections.
- If a written assignment is not satisfactory, the facilitator may ask you to redo the assignment. You must complete ALL reflections to receive a Pass.
- Please see the "Reflections" section below to read in more detail about these assignments.

### Readings

- Judaism is diverse and broad in both religious and cultural contexts. As such, readings from different perspectives is necessary to obtain even a basic grasp of an overview of Judaism.
- **Weekly** readings will be assigned and students are **required** to complete all readings ahead of class time.
- Discussion in class will center around the readings so students should come prepared with their comments and thoughts regarding the readings.
- Some weeks students are required to write a reflection on the readings (see "Reflections- Reflection Type #2").
- On the weeks that a "Reading Reflection" (Reflection Type #2) is not assigned students will have a short, in-class quiz on the readings to ensure they have completed them ahead of time.

### Field Trips

- This course aims to expose students to Judaism as both a culture and a religion and allow them to explore in what ways, if any, they want to incorporate Judaism into their daily life. As such, it will be **mandatory** for students to attend AT LEAST THREE field trips to cultural events throughout the semester. Additionally, it will be strongly recommended that students attend at least one religious event.
- Proof of attendance at three events is required by the last class of the semester or the student will receive a no pass grade (ex: ticket from a Jewish-related museum exhibit, selfie at Shabbat, etc.).
- Some weeks students are required to write a reflection on a field trip (see "Reflections- Reflection Type #3").
- A list of possible excursions that would fulfill these requirements will be given to students at the beginning of the semester and added to as new events come up.

- Examples of cultural events could include Shabbat dinner at Hillel/Chabad/a different shul, visiting the Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, attending a lecture on the topic of Jewish life or religion put on by institutions such as the Jewish Studies Dept. at Berkeley, going to see a movie produced/directed by a Jewish filmmaker (with Jewish themes), attending a Passover seder, etc.
- Examples of religious events include Shabbat services at Hillel/Chabad/another shul, holiday services at Hillel/Chabad/another shul, attending a Passover seder, etc.
- These examples are by no means comprehensive as the Bay Area has a large and thriving Jewish community. If you are unsure as to whether an event would count towards the cultural field trip requirement please ask a facilitator.

**Plagiarism**

- Plagiarism is considered academic dishonesty and any cases of plagiarism on assignments in this class will result in a No Pass grade, as well as possible disciplinary action from the University Office of Student Conduct.

**Grading**

- Grades are based on attendance, class participation, and completion of assignments (including readings, reflections, and mandatory field trips).
- Assignments will be graded on a pass/fail basis.
  - ✓ = assignment was satisfactory
  - X = assignment was not satisfactory, please redo for next week
- Grade Breakdown:
  - Participation- 5%
  - Readings/Reading Pop-Quizzes- 15%
  - Written Assignments- 50%
  - Field Trips- 30% (10% per event attended)
- If more than 30% of a student’s grade consists of failed assignments they may receive an overall No Pass grade for the class.

## Lecture Schedule

\*\*Note: This schedule is tentative and subject to change. Please check bCourses and the course Facebook page, as well as come to class to receive updates.

Week Number (Monday’s Date)	Topic (* = reading quiz will be given in class since a “Reading Reflection” is not due but completion of the readings is still expected)	Speaker(s)	Written Assignments (all are due before the next class through bCourses) <i>(for readings see pg. 6-7 of syllabus)</i>
1 (August 27)	Rosh Hashanah: The Sweetest Day of the Year	TBA	Reflection Type #1: Personal
2 (Sept. 3)	NO CLASS	XXX	Reflection Type #2: Reading

3 (Sept. 10)	Yom Kippur: Beyond Fasting and Affliction	TBA	Reflection Type #2: Reading
4 (Sept. 17)	Marriage: A Jewish Communal Celebration	TBA	Reflection Type #2: Reading
5 (Sept. 24)	Conversion: What does becoming Jewish involve?	TBA	Reflection Type #3: Event
6 (Oct. 1)	Patriarchy of Judaism/Women in Judaism	TBA	Reflection Type #2: Reading
7 (Oct. 8)	Death: The Psychology of Jewish Mourning and Tradition	TBA	Reflection Type #2: Reading
8 (Oct. 15)	Kashrut: Who's in and who's out	Bracha Leeds	Reflection Type #2: Reading
9 (Oct. 22)	Inclusivity in Jewish Communities	TBA	Reflection Type #2: Reading
10 (Oct. 29)	Birth: The Ultimate Naming and Cut of All Cuts	Carol Booth	Reflection Type #3: Event
11 (Nov. 5)	Torah and Tanakh: Why is it so holy? <i>and</i> Sukkot: The First Pilgrimage Festival	Rabbi Adam Naftalin-Kelman	Reflection Type #2: Reading
12 (Nov. 12)	Music in Jewish Rituals and Life	Professor Ben Brinner	Reflection Type #2: Reading
13 (Nov. 19)	Judaism and LGBTQ	TBA	Reflection Type #2: Reading
14 (Nov. 26)	The Jewish American Deli	TBA	Reflection Type #4: Personal + Reflection Type #5: Course Evaluation
15 (Dec. 3)	NO CLASS (Dead Week)	n/a	n/a

## Reflections

Reflection Type #1: Personal Reflection- What does it mean to be Jewish?

- Students should answer this from a personal perspective even if they are not Jewish. The facilitators do not want to see two sentences explaining that Judaism is a religion-- we already know that! Please reflect on what Judaism, in terms of either culture or religion (or both), mean to

you and what role it plays in your life. If you are non-Jewish it may be helpful to think about this assignment in terms of discussing what your current perception of Judaism is. You can also discuss any questions or topics you would like to know more about. There is no wrong answer to this question!

- Minimum 500 words
- 12 pt. Font, Times New Roman, double spaced
- Please submit via bCourses before the start time of the second week's lecture

#### Reflection Type #2: Reading Reflection

- This class includes many different readings from multiple perspectives to help students broaden their view of Judaism. Please choose one reading from that week's assigned readings and reflect on your thoughts regarding the piece. This can include comments, criticisms, praise, questions that it made you have, etc. Please address how this reading shifted your perception of Judaism and how you will incorporate what you learned from the reading into your daily life.
- Minimum 1 pg., double spaced
- 12 pt. Font, Times New Roman
- Please submit via bCourses any time before the start time of the next week's lecture

#### Reflection Type #3: Event Reflection

- This class involves participation in culturally Jewish events (and strongly suggested participation in at least one religious event) to help students expand their experiences with Judaism. Please choose one event that you attended and reflect on your experience. Summarize the event, discuss what you liked and/or didn't like about the event, if the event changed any of your preconceived opinions, and what you feel you learned/gained from attending the event.
- Questions to consider:
  - Did you have any expectations for the event? If so, did the event meet your expectations or take a different approach?
  - What parts of this event did you enjoy? Why did you enjoy those elements more than others?
  - Would you want to take any of the elements of this event and incorporate it into your own life?
  - Would you attend an event like this again? Why or why not?
- Minimum 1 pg., double spaced
- 12 pt. Font, Times New Roman
- Please submit via bCourses any time before the start time of the next week's lecture

#### Reflection Type #4: Personal Reflection- What does being Jewish mean to you? Pt. 2

- Again, this is meant to be from a personal perspective. Reflect on what Judaism means to you, how that has changed since the beginning of this course, and where you think your journey will continue (if at all) from this point on. Please include a lecture, reading, or event that you attended that changed your perception of Judaism and how it did so.
- Questions to consider:
  - Is there a ritual you learned about that you are inspired to incorporate into your life?

- Is there a ritual that is already part of your Jewish life that you are now inspired to recommit to? How so?
- Which part of your previous perception of Judaism was shifted the most by this course?
- Minimum 1 pg., double spaced
- 12 pt. Font, Times New Roman
- Please submit via bCourses any time before the start time of the last week's lecture

Reflection Type #5: Course Evaluation

- This will be completed **in class** during the last week of classes. Please come prepared to fill out a sheet with questions regarding your feelings on the lecture topics, the lecturers, the facilitators, and any other constructive criticism and/or comments that you may have.

## Reading List (subject to change)

Week	Readings
1	<a href="http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/shabbat-101/">http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/shabbat-101/</a> ; excerpts from <i>My Jewish Year: 18 Holidays, One Wondering Jew</i> by Abigail Pogrebin; <a href="http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/shabbat-in-the-modern-world/">http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/shabbat-in-the-modern-world/</a> ; <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITxfUOlslfI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITxfUOlslfI</a>
2	<a href="http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/rosh-hashanah-101/">http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/rosh-hashanah-101/</a> ; Excerpts from <i>My Jewish Year: 18 Holidays, One Wondering Jew</i> by Abigail Pogrebin
3	Excerpts from <i>My Jewish Year: 18 Holidays, One Wondering Jew</i> by Abigail Pogrebin; <a href="http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/yom-kippur-2017/">http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/yom-kippur-2017/</a>
4	<a href="https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/bible-101/">https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/bible-101/</a> , <a href="https://midwestmessianic.com/q-a/how-to-find-the-answers-to-life/34-what-is-the-torah-and-the-tanakh/">https://midwestmessianic.com/q-a/how-to-find-the-answers-to-life/34-what-is-the-torah-and-the-tanakh/</a> , <a href="http://www.slate.com/articles/life/faithbased/2012/07/daf_yomi_what_can_you_learn_from_reading_a_page_of_talmud_every_day_.html">http://www.slate.com/articles/life/faithbased/2012/07/daf_yomi_what_can_you_learn_from_reading_a_page_of_talmud_every_day_.html</a> , <a href="https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/hebrew-bible/">https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/hebrew-bible/</a> , <a href="http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/how-to-properly-study-the-torah">http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/how-to-properly-study-the-torah</a> , <a href="https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/torah-study-101/">https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/torah-study-101/</a>
5	<a href="http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-weddings-101/">http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-weddings-101/</a> ; <a href="http://thisisarq.com/read/weddings">http://thisisarq.com/read/weddings</a> ; <a href="http://thisisarq.com/read/weddings-part-ii">http://thisisarq.com/read/weddings-part-ii</a> ; article from Lilith
6	<a href="#">When Jewish Parents Decide Not to Circumcise</a> ; <a href="#">Jewish Newborn Ceremonies 101</a> ; <a href="#">Judaism 101: Birth and the First Month of Life</a> ; <a href="#">Why Jewish Baby Names Are So Important</a>
7	<a href="#">Life, Death, and Mourning</a> ; <a href="#">What to Expect at a Jewish Funeral</a> ; <a href="#">Does Judaism believe in Heaven and Hell?</a> ; <a href="#">The American Jewish Way of Death</a> ; <a href="#">For Some Jews It Only Sounds Like 'Taboo'</a> ; <a href="#">Judaism and Suicide</a>
8	<a href="#">Kashrut 101</a> ; <a href="#">Eating a BLT</a> ; <a href="#">What is Eco-Kosher?</a> ; <a href="#">ethical kashrut</a> , <a href="http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2014/09/lab_grown_meat_is_it_kosher.html">http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2014/09/lab_grown_meat_is_it_kosher.html</a> , <a href="http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/explainer/2012/06/hebrew_national_lawsuit_what_happens_to_jews_who_eat_non_kosher_food_.html">http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/explainer/2012/06/hebrew_national_lawsuit_what_happens_to_jews_who_eat_non_kosher_food_.html</a> , <a href="http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/196294/orthodox-union-certifies-medical-marijuana-deems-its-use-a-mitzvah">http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/196294/orthodox-union-certifies-medical-marijuana-deems-its-use-a-mitzvah</a> , <a href="http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/148835/foodie-kosher-restaurant">http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/148835/foodie-kosher-restaurant</a>
9	<a href="https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-03-28/selling-judaism-religion-not-included">https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-03-28/selling-judaism-religion-not-included</a> ;

	<a href="http://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/lifestyles-of-the-jew-curious/comment-page-1/">http://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/lifestyles-of-the-jew-curious/comment-page-1/;</a> <a href="http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/inclusivity-and-access/">http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/inclusivity-and-access/;</a> <a href="http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/237080/transgender-and-jewish;">http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/237080/transgender-and-jewish;</a> <a href="http://www.slate.com/articles/life/family/2013/10/american_jews_embrace_your_secular_intermarried_selves.html">http://www.slate.com/articles/life/family/2013/10/american_jews_embrace_your_secular_intermarried_selves.html</a>
10	<a href="https://www.kveller.com/when-i-converted-to-judaism-i-expected-anti-semitism-but-not-this/">https://www.kveller.com/when-i-converted-to-judaism-i-expected-anti-semitism-but-not-this/;</a> <a href="https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-conversion-process/">https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-conversion-process/;</a> <a href="http://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/opinion-converted-judaism/">http://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/opinion-converted-judaism/;</a> <a href="https://www.xojane.com/relationships/convertng-to-orthodox-judaism">https://www.xojane.com/relationships/convertng-to-orthodox-judaism,</a> <a href="https://reformjudaism.org/open-letter-those-who-converted-judaism">https://reformjudaism.org/open-letter-those-who-converted-judaism</a>
11	<a href="http://www.jpost.com/Jewish-World/Jewish-Features/Being-Jewish-in-a-modern-world-328676">http://www.jpost.com/Jewish-World/Jewish-Features/Being-Jewish-in-a-modern-world-328676,</a> <a href="http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/14382.html">http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/14382.html,</a> <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/26/books/review/semitism-jonathan-weisman.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/26/books/review/semitism-jonathan-weisman.html,</a> <a href="http://bostonreview.net/books-ideas/lucy-mckeon-yascha-mouk-jewish-modern-germany">http://bostonreview.net/books-ideas/lucy-mckeon-yascha-mouk-jewish-modern-germany</a>
12	<a href="http://www.jewishfolksongs.com/en/jewish-weddings">http://www.jewishfolksongs.com/en/jewish-weddings,</a> <a href="https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/music-and-jewish-prayer/">https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/music-and-jewish-prayer/;</a> <a href="http://www.hebrewcollege.edu/top10_segment1">http://www.hebrewcollege.edu/top10_segment1,</a> <a href="https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/music-101/">https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/music-101/;</a> <a href="http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/54218/the-guide-to-the-list">http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/54218/the-guide-to-the-list</a>
13	<a href="http://www.jewfaq.org/women.htm">http://www.jewfaq.org/women.htm,</a> <a href="http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1802936/jewish/Woman-in-Judaism.htm">http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1802936/jewish/Woman-in-Judaism.htm,</a> <a href="http://www.aish.com/ci/w/48955181.html">http://www.aish.com/ci/w/48955181.html,</a> <a href="https://reformjudaism.org/jewish-views-womens-rights-reproductive-choice">https://reformjudaism.org/jewish-views-womens-rights-reproductive-choice,</a> <a href="https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/orthodox-women-religious-leadership/">https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/orthodox-women-religious-leadership/;</a> <a href="https://pjmedia.com/faith/2016/10/24/how-orthodox-judaism-elevates-the-status-of-women/">https://pjmedia.com/faith/2016/10/24/how-orthodox-judaism-elevates-the-status-of-women/;</a> <a href="https://www.huffingtonpost.com/leora-tanenbaum/female-rabbis-prohibited-_b_827082.html">https://www.huffingtonpost.com/leora-tanenbaum/female-rabbis-prohibited-_b_827082.html,</a> <a href="http://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/ou-backs-women-leaders-just-not-rabbis/">http://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/ou-backs-women-leaders-just-not-rabbis/</a>
14	<a href="http://www.slate.com/articles/life/food/2008/11/a_short_history_of_the_bagel.html">http://www.slate.com/articles/life/food/2008/11/a_short_history_of_the_bagel.html,</a> <a href="https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-food-101/">https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-food-101/;</a> <a href="http://www.jewfaq.org/food.htm">http://www.jewfaq.org/food.htm,</a> <a href="https://interfaithfamily.com/holidays/shabbat_and_other_holidays/a_jewish_food_cheat_sheet/">https://interfaithfamily.com/holidays/shabbat_and_other_holidays/a_jewish_food_cheat_sheet/;</a> <a href="https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/12/why-american-jews-eat-chinese-food-on-christmas/384011/">https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/12/why-american-jews-eat-chinese-food-on-christmas/384011/;</a> <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/28/dining/everything-new-is-old-again.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/28/dining/everything-new-is-old-again.html,</a> <a href="http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/188125/michael-twitty-kosher-soul">http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/188125/michael-twitty-kosher-soul,</a> <a href="https://www.juf.org/news/thinking_torah.aspx?id=28094">https://www.juf.org/news/thinking_torah.aspx?id=28094,</a> <a href="http://www.writing.ucsb.edu/sites/secure.lsit.ucsb.edu.writ.d7/files/sitefiles/publications/2013%20Leavitt.pdf">http://www.writing.ucsb.edu/sites/secure.lsit.ucsb.edu.writ.d7/files/sitefiles/publications/2013%20Leavitt.pdf</a>

## Assistance

The facilitators want this class to be a learning and growing experience for you. If you have questions about a topic covered in class do not hesitate to reach out to the facilitators. If you want to learn more about a particular topic that was mentioned but do not know where to begin, please ask the facilitators for suggestions regarding reading material, Jewish teachers to contact, learning opportunities in the Bay Area, etc. Do not hesitate to contact the facilitators regarding any other types of questions or comments you may have! We are here for you and want to help you benefit from this course. Additionally, this course was developed with the help of Leah Kahn, the Senior Jewish Educator at Berkeley Hillel. Students can also contact her at [leah@berkeleyhillel.org](mailto:leah@berkeleyhillel.org) with questions, concerns, or comments.