

COURSE TITLE
INTRODUCTION TO EUROPEAN JEWISH RELIGION, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY
Language of Instruction: English
Course tutor Prof. Jonathan Webber
<p>Prof. Webber is a British social anthropologist with special expertise on European Judaism and European Jews. He taught for eighteen years at the University of Oxford, and then for eight years was the UNESCO Chair in Jewish and Interfaith Studies at the University of Birmingham (UK) before moving in 2011 to take up a professorship at the Institute of European Studies of the Jagiellonian University. Since 1988 Prof. Webber has been researching and documenting the rich history of Polish–Jewish relations and the cultural heritage of Polish Jews, and he is chairman of the Galicia Jewish Museum in Kazimierz.</p>
Course description
<p>This course is intended to give students the opportunity to look in depth into the culture and social organization of an important European minority group with a distinctive religious tradition and history. (It is important to emphasise the strongly European character of the Jews: in the middle of the nineteenth century nearly 90% of the world's Jews lived in Europe.) The sessions will therefore focus both on reading in translation some of the key primary classical Jewish sources (for example, the Five Books of Moses, the Jewish prayer-book, the Talmud) and also on the sociology of present-day Jewish identities in eastern and western Europe (including, for example, assimilation and secularisation, diversity in religious practice and cultural orientation, gender issues in traditional and modern Jewish life). The course will include a study visit to two synagogues in Kazimierz. Some attention will be given to Jewish history, but the main emphasis will be on a more cultural and sociological approach.</p>
Type of course
MA level, elective course: Holocaust Focus course for Studies in Holocaust and Totalitarian Systems; "Additional" for other specialisations
Year of Studies: 1 or 2
Number of ECTS
4.5
Pre-requisites (if applicable)
There are no pre-requisites for this course.
Intended Learning Outcomes
<p>By the end of this course students should</p> <p>EK1. have extended their knowledge about the Jewish contribution to the European cultural heritage, as well as the functioning of the most important institutions in this field (K_W17.1+++);</p> <p>EK2. have the ability to search, gather and interpret data and information based on relevant sources, and have the ability to evaluate the importance of sources (K_U01++);</p> <p>EK3. be capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas (K_U05++); and</p> <p>EK4. have the ability to effectively work individually as well as interact and work in a group, performing different roles in it (K_K02+++).</p> <p>In particular, students should have developed the appropriate skills and intellectual methodology (at least at an introductory level) to represent an insider view of a minority religious culture in Europe, and especially be able to:</p>

- locate Jewish cultural practice in the context of the major periods of Jewish history
- identify and describe a basic range of traditional Jewish religious practices
- identify and analyse different varieties/definitions of Judaism and Jewishness and their respective patterns of identity
- demonstrate a basic familiarity with key primary Jewish sources (in translation)

Course communication

jonathanwebber2@gmail.com or jonathan.webber@uj.edu.pl

Notices and announcements

By e-mail

COURSE ORGANISATION

Autumn Semester

Time and Place: will be posted by CES in the online calendar

Course type (seminar/lecture/workshop, etc.)

The course will consist entirely of classroom lectures, apart from one study visit to three local synagogues and also the last session, which will be devoted to presentations by students (i.e. a student seminar). The lecture format is based on the assumption that this is an introductory course and that probably most of the material will be entirely new to the students. This approach has four important consequences: (1) students will be welcome, and indeed expected, to ask questions at any point during the lectures; (2) the end-of-course student presentations can be sensibly based only on the material that has been covered in the course (and/or on additional readings done during the course), which is why they have been positioned at the end of the course; (3) attendance at the lectures is mandatory; and (4) students will be expected to do the readings in advance of each lecture, in particular to read the biblical Five Books of Moses (one book at a time, according to the advertised timetable), in order to understand and get the benefit of the tutor's lectures devoted to commenting on and analysing them; this applies even to the first double session of the course. Students are therefore expected to obtain a copy of the Bible (Old Testament), in any translation of their choice, and also to bring it with them to those classes devoted to biblical study (or alternatively to find it on the internet and also have it readily accessible on their laptop during those classes), beginning with the first double session of the course. However, lectures focusing on the Bible will alternate with lectures focusing on historical, cultural, and sociological perspectives.

The study visit to synagogues in Kazimierz is an important element of the course, giving the students the opportunity to think about a number of issues, including the role of spirituality in Jewish culture (for example as evidenced in the Jewish prayer-book) and synagogue architecture (especially in relation to differences here between Orthodox and Reform Judaism). It is hoped that an Orthodox rabbi and a Reform rabbi will be with us during the study visit to make short presentations and answer questions. If there is time we will also go to the Jewish Community Centre and have a presentation by its director, focusing on how Jewish identity functions today outside a synagogue setting altogether.

All the lectures, including the study visit, will take place as double sessions, i.e. one lecture following on from the other with a short break in the middle. Five of the lectures will be concluded with the screening of two relevant British documentary films set in the UK—one about the celebration of the Jewish Sabbath (split into four parts) and the other about the celebration of the Jewish festival of Passover—so as to help situate contemporary Jewish life in a European social context.

Contact hours: 30 hours of lectures
Balance of ECTS credits Participation in the classes: 30 hours Independent study of the topics of the lectures: 30 hours Preparation of the oral presentation: 21 hours Preparation of the written essay: 31,5 hours Total: 112,5 hours ECTS: 4,5
Didactic methods used Lectures Analysis and interpretation of primary classical sources Study trip to visit local synagogues Films about present-day Jewish life Leading classroom discussions Student seminar
Mode and criteria of assessment of learning outcomes K_W17.1, K_U01, K_U05, K_K01, and other learning outcomes listed above – oral presentation, written essay, and participation in the student seminar
Assessment Students are expected to participate actively in the classes. To qualify for assessment, attendance at the classes is obligatory. Students missing three or more lectures (or more than one double session) will need to meet with the course tutor with a clear proposal how they intend to make up for the missing classes. Missing 50% or more of the classes will result in failure of the course and the need to retake it the following year. Assessment consists of two parts: (1) An end-of-course oral presentation at the student seminar in session 15 (valued at 30% of the final grade for the assessment): students can choose any relevant topic they are interested in (within the broad field of European Jewish religion, culture, and society) and speak for about 10-15 minutes (that length of time will depend on the number of students presenting that day), and followed by a seminar-style discussion of about 5–10 minutes. Marks will be based on three equally ranked criteria, each of them marked out of 10% of the final grade: content (research, knowledge, and understanding of the chosen topic), quality of argument and style (i.e. communication skills), and participation in the end-of-course seminar discussion. Students are at liberty to discuss their choice of topic informally with the course tutor, but must make a decision no later than session 12 of the course by sending an e-mail to the course tutor, who will then confirm its suitability (or otherwise). Students who miss giving their oral presentation at the student seminar will automatically lose up to half of the available marks (out of the 30% for the final grade) because of their non-participation in the seminar discussion and potential lack of evidence of their communication skills, but they may otherwise submit a written version of their planned presentation. (2) A written essay, prepared at home (valued at 70% of the final grade for the assessment): a 3,000-word take-home essay. A list of essay questions, together with standard instructions on how to present the essays, will be circulated early in the course. Students who fail to present an essay will automatically lose 70% of the available marks and will thus fail the course.

SCHEDULED CLASSES	
Title of the session	Format (lecture, seminar, combination?)
1. Introduction to the course: Who are the Jews? A brief history of the Jewish people and a survey of some basic methodological issues	Lecture (with questions and discussion as appropriate)
2. Key cultural issues in the Torah (Five Books of Moses): Book 1 (The book of Bereshit/Genesis)	Lecture (with questions and discussion as appropriate), followed by screening of the first part of a film about the Jewish Sabbath set in London (to help situate Jewish life into a social context)
3. Key cultural issues in the Torah (Five Books of Moses): Book 2 (The book of Shemot/Exodus)	Lecture (with questions and discussion as appropriate)
4. Key cultural issues in the Torah (Five Books of Moses): Book 2 (The book of Shemot/Exodus), <i>continued</i>	Lecture (with questions and discussion as appropriate), followed by screening of the continuation of the film about the Jewish Sabbath
5. Key cultural issues in the Torah (Five Books of Moses): Book 3 (The book of Vayikra/Leviticus)	Lecture (with questions and discussion as appropriate)
6. The Development of Reform and Progressive Judaism	Lecture (with questions and discussion as appropriate), followed by screening of the continuation of the film about the Jewish Sabbath
7. Orthodox Judaism: The nature of traditional Jewish theology	Lecture (with questions and discussion as appropriate)
8. Key cultural issues in the Torah (Five Books of Moses): Book 4 (The book of Bemidbar/Numbers)	Lecture (with questions and discussion as appropriate), followed by screening of the last part of the film about the Jewish Sabbath
9. Three-hour study visit to three synagogues in Kazimierz: (1) the Rema (Orthodox) in Szeroka Street, (2) the Kupa (Orthodox) in Miodowa Street, and (3) the Tempel (originally a Reform/Progressive synagogue). Also (if there is time) the Jewish Community Centre in Miodowa Street.	Lecture (with questions and discussion as appropriate)
10. <i>Continuation of the study visit</i>	Lecture (with questions and discussion as appropriate)
11. Key cultural issues in the Torah (Five Books of Moses): Book 5 (The book of Devarim/Deuteronomy)	Lecture (with questions and discussion as appropriate)
12. The role of the festival calendar in Jewish religion, culture, and society	Lecture (with questions and discussion as appropriate), followed by screening of the whole of a short film about the Jewish Passover festival
13. Modern European Jewish society: eight key issues for analysis and discussion (part 1)	Lecture (with questions and discussion as appropriate)
14. Modern European Jewish society: eight key issues for analysis and discussion (part 2)	Lecture (with questions and discussion as appropriate)
15. Student presentations	Seminar style