This course will investigate some of the major themes in the history of the Jews from the high middle ages to the modern era. Jews constituted a classic, nearly continuous minority in the pre-modern world, and one of the purposes of the course is to examine the ways in which the Jewish community interacted with and experienced other societies, cultures, and politics. It will follow two trajectories that the readings and assignments will revolve around questions of historiography and the process of transformation from a religious community to a community that uses modern national terminology in its self-referencing.

**Program Outcomes:**

1. This course aims to teach students about significant historical moments and cultural developments in Jewish history and cultures.
2. It will prepare students to employ knowledge of Jewish culture, history, religion, and social structure, to critically consider, interpret, and explicate relevant cultural artifacts, and past, present, and future developments in the Jewish world and their relationship to broader geo-temporal trends and issues.
3. It will help students to acquire knowledge of important approaches to the study of Jewish civilization and the presuppositions underlying them; various analytical techniques employed in the humanities and the social sciences for the study of Jewish civilization, the Jews, and their representation.
4. This course will also prepare students for further courses in Jewish Studies.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Students will understand the challenge of Diaspora in Jewish history.

Students will be familiar with the processes of integration and emancipation in early modern Europe.

Students will learn about the new Jewish politics that arose after the failure of integration in Eastern Europe.

After finishing the course, students will understand the restructured Jewish map of the early modern period, and know the background that developed American Jewry.
and Zionism.

**Assessment:**

Students are expected to participate each week in the discussion forums. Each unit includes questions that need to be addressed on the discussion boards, each student is expected to post at least 2 responses. (45 points)

Final project – at the end of the semester students will be hand in a paper of up to 10 pages. The paper will be an interpretive essay on a topic of your choosing. Not a full-fledged research paper, but an essay that poses and seeks to answer an historical question or problem. You will need to do some outside reading for this assignment, but I do not expect a research bibliography. What you will need to include in your paper is a careful analysis of at least one primary source, which should help elucidate the “problem” that you are investigating, or around which you are constructing an argument.

1. **Medieval Jewish Life**


Jacob Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World*, 121-150. [primary Sources]

Discussion questions:

1. In what ways would Jewish-Christian relations be more complicated than pagan-Christian relation?

2. The texts you read mention the sense of security of Jewish communities in Christendom. What affect did this have on Jewish culture?

2. **Jewish Life in Muslim Lands**


Raymond Scheindlin, Merchants and Intellectuals, Rabbis and Poets: Judeo-Arabic Culture in the Golden Age of Islam, in *Cultures of the Jews*, 313-388. [access through Ebrary]

Discussion questions:

1. Why were Jews writing about Jewish topics in Arabic but not in Latin?

2. Is the Golden age a myth or a valid description of Muslim-Jewish relations in the
medieval period?

3. **The Impact of the Spanish Expulsion**

Haim Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, 1-50, 244-279

The edict for the expulsion of the Jews [primary Sources]

[http://sephardicstudies.org/decree.html](http://sephardicstudies.org/decree.html)

Discussion questions:

1. What is the situation the expulsion came to solve?
2. Is this a mere religious clash?

4. **Jewish Philosophy in the Medieval period**


Sa’adia Gaon, *Book of Doctrines and Beliefs*, Prolegomena & Ch. 3 [primary Sources]

Discussion questions:

1. is there “Jewish philosophy” or is it “Jewish Theology”?
2. How would the Text written by Rav Saadya Gaon be used in a polemic debate?

5. **Rabbinic literature in the middle ages**

This unit will include a discussion that will analyze translated rabbinic texts on a specific topic: laws about debt collection.


Discussion questions:

1. How does Halacha differ from a national legal system?
2. Why is there “Oral Torah”? What is the importance of keeping it verbal rather than textual?

6. **Rabbinic Literature in the modern period**

This unit will include a discussion that will analyze translated rabbinic texts on a specific
topic: abortion.


Discussion questions:

1. is rabbinic Judaism a “democratic” model of religion?

### 7. Jewish Mysticism and Shabatai Tzvi

Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* ch. 1,

*Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment* (Daniel Matt Trans.) 127-132 [primary Sources]


Discussion questions:

1. Why is mysticism a corpus of texts that is kept secret?

2. Do esoteric texts have the power to create religious revolutions?

3. Is the Sabatian movement a precursor to modern values?

4. Were Shabtai Tzvi and Yaakov Frank leaders of Jewish groups?

### 8. Hasidism: stories, prayer, life, leadership


*Tanya* English translation with introduction, notes and commentary by I. Greenberg (Brooklyn, N.Y. :Kehot Publication Society, 1995) ch. 32 [primary Source]


Discussion questions:

1. How is Hasidism different from Kabbala?

2. How should religious life look according to Hasidic teaching? How is it different from non-Hasidic perspective?

### 9. Enlightenment and Haskalah and Emancipation


Discussion questions:

1. Why did the supporters of reformation change the name of the Jewish worship house from synagogue to temple?

2. Is emancipation a tool for multiculturalism, acculturation or assimilation?

### 10. Eastern European Haskalah


Lucy Dawidowicz, *The Golden Tradition: Jewish Life and Thought in Eastern Europe*, 113-135. [primary sources]

Discussion questions:

1. How is Eastern European Haskalah different from German Haskalah? Discuss the following criteria: religion, nationalism and russification?

### 11. The rise of Zionism


Revisionists, Zionist [Encyclopaedia Judaica] [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejуд_0002_0017_0_16687.html]

Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (eds.), *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 533. [primary sources]

Discussion questions:
1. Is Zionism a Jewish movement? What makes it Jewish?

2. Is Zionism different from other modern national movements?

12. Holocaust

Dan Stone (ed.) The Historiography of the Holocaust Ch. 1,2,5,14


Discussion questions:

1. Is the Holocaust a Jewish event?

2. Is modern Anti-Semitism completely different from medieval hatred of Jews?

13. Israel


Ilan Fuchs, “Religion in Israel”, Mitchel Bard (ed.) The Israel Studies Anthology


Discussion questions:

1. Is the Schism between religion and Secularism in Israel related to Nationalism?

14. American Judaism

Jonathan Sarna (ed.), The American Jewish Experience, chapter 2 and 5.

The Columbus Platform of the reform movement

http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Columbus_platform.html

Discussion questions:

1. Is American Judaism representing a different model of Jewish identity?

2. Has the American-Jewish project been a success or a failure? If so how?