

## HST 302/JST 302

### Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Medieval World

#### **Important Information**

Instructor: Stanley Mirvis

Stanley.Mirvis@asu.edu

M/W/F: 10:45–11:35

EDB L1–27

Office Hours: M/W 2:00–5:00, COOR 4552

#### **Course Description**

“Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Medieval World” explores the relationship between three Abrahamic religions from the fourth to the fourteenth century. It takes an expansive geographic view that includes Central Asia, North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and Western Europe. This course investigates how Jews, Christians, and Muslims evolved both in cooperation and in conflict with each other. In order to fully appreciate that complex interaction, our story is told principally from a Jewish perspective. As a minority group under both Islamic and Christian rule, Jews provide a rich case study of both polemical and productive interreligious exchange. Major themes of the course include competing eschatologies, shared philosophies, inter-communal violence, and the negotiation of settlement rights.

#### **Learning Outcomes**

The principal goal of “Jews, Christians, and Muslims in The Medieval World,” is to cultivate a well-rounded historical and geographical perspective on how three religions, that continue to shape our world today, evolved both in cooperation and in conflict with each other. This historical perspective will help to inform your understanding of current events and will enhance your appreciation for the shared heritage of these three religions. You will come away with a nuanced and in-depth understanding of the fundamental beliefs of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, their differences and similarities, their historical trajectories, and their geographic scope.

#### **Important Dates to Remember**

September 30: NO CLASS: Rosh Hashana

October 9: NO CLASS: Yom Kippur

October 14: NO CLASS: Sukkot/Fall Break

October 21: NO CLASS: Shemini Azeret

November 11: NO CLASS: Veterans’ Day

November 29: NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break

#### **Required Texts**

Custom Source Reader: Available on Canvas

Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton University Press, 1994) ISBN 978-0-691-13931-9 (Available at Sun Devil Bookstore)

**Course Requirements:** (See Assignment Prompts Page for Details)

Participation:	15%
Short Essays:	15%
Sectional Quizzes:	50%
Reading Reflections:	20%

## Schedule of Classes

### **August 23**

Introduction to Medieval Abrahamic Religions

## Sections I: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Early Middle Ages

### **Week 1: The Birth of Rabbinic Judaism**

Reading 1: The Jewish Relationship with Other Nations

Reading 2: The Jewish View of The Messiah

### **August 26**

Jews and Judaism[s] Under Pagan Rome

### **August 28**

Exile and Redemption: Jewish Diasporas

### **August 30**

The Babylonian Talmud and the Birth of Rabbinic Judaism

### **Learning Outcome Week 1**

Comprehend the transition of Judaism from a priestly/sacrificial religion to the rabbinic religion, that it to this very day. Understand the geographies and ideologies of Jewish “Diaspora” in late antiquity and today.

### **Week 2: The Foundations of Christian Rome and The Spread of Christianity**

Reading 3: The Church Fathers and the Jews

Reading 4: A Seventh-Century Jewish Apocalypse

### **September 2**

By This You Shall Conquer: The Great Persecution to Constantine

### **September 4**

The Fourth-Century Church Fathers: Augustine, Ambrose, and Jerome

### **September 6**

Heraclius’ War: Jews, Byzantines, and Sasanians

### **Learning Outcome Week 2**

Assess the historical process by which Christianity evolved from a persecuted sect of Judaism to a new form of religious expression. Identify the catalysts of Christian identity formation in the fourth century. Understand the geographic spread of Christianity in the early middle ages and how that continues to inform our world today.

### **Week 3: The Rise of Islam and Dhimmitude**

Reading 5: The Treachery of the Banu Nadir

Reading 6: The Status of the Dhimmi

#### **September 9**

The Sun Rising Upon A People: Arabia, Himyar, and The Life of Muhammed

#### **September 11**

The Spread of Islam: The First Fitnah, and the Origins of Shi'a Islam

#### **September 13**

Dhimmitude and The Rise of the Umayyad Caliphate in Damascus

### **Learning Outcome Week 3**

Identify the main causes and personalities behind the rise of Islam in the seventh century. Assess the full geographic scope of early Islamic expansion. Identify how the earliest theological and political schisms within Islam continue to inform our world today, particularly between Shi'a and Sunni Islam.

### **Week 4: Abbasid Baghdad and the Geonim**

Reading 7: The Inauguration of the Exilarch

Reading 8: The Correspondences of the Geonim

#### **September 16**

Jewel of the World: The Abbasid Caliphate and the Rise of Baghdad

#### **September 18**

The Baghdad Exilarchs, North Africa, and The Caliphal Heartlands

#### **September 20**

A Dominion of Letters: The Geonim and their Distant Networks

### **Learning Outcome Week 4**

Define the central role the Geonim played in the formation of Judaism, the fixity of the Talmud, and liturgical expressions of Judaism to this day. Assess the political relationship between the Jews of "Babylonia" and the Abbasid court. Evaluate the full geographic reach of Geonic authority throughout the Middle East and the Mediterranean and their methods of communication. Comprehend the impact the Geonim played on Jewish life in the medieval world as well as to this very day.

## **Section II: Convivencia and A Mediterranean Society**

### **Week 5: Conquest and Reconquest**

Reading 9: The Jews Under the Visigoths

Reading 10: Christian and Islamic Accounts of the Conquest of Spain

#### **September 23**

Tyranny and Triumph: Visigothic Spain and the Jews of Septimania

#### **September 25**

Tempestuous Straights: The Islamic Conquest of Spain

#### **September 27**

City of Splendor: The Rise of Umayyad Cordoba

### **Learning Outcome Week 5**

Recognize the persecutory relationship of Visigoths to the Jews of Hispania. Appreciate the long-lasting implications of that relationship into the fifteenth century and to today by defining inter-ethnic versus religious prejudice. Analyze the varying Christian, Jewish, and Islamic accounts of the Umayyad conquest of Spain and the impact that event continues to have to this very day, including in the spread of Islam into both Spain and West Africa.

### **Week 6: Spanish Convivencia in Global Context**

Reading 11: Hasdai Ibn Shaprut and the King of Khazaria

Reading 12: Selected Hebrew Poems from Al-Andalus

#### **September 30**

NO CLASS: Rosh Hashanah

#### **October 2**

The Courtier and the Khazar: Convivencia in the Court of Abd Al-Rahman III

#### **October 4**

The Andalusian Tradition: Flowering of Poetry and Philosophy

### **Learning Outcome Week 6**

Define the term *convivencia*. Identify both the evidence in favor of interfaith coexistence in medieval Spain and the evidence against it. Appreciate the global reach of the Umayyad court of Cordoba through the efforts of the Jewish courtier Hasdai ibn Shaprut. Understand the global orientation of the Khazars and how their conversion to Judaism continues to inform Jewish identity in eastern Europe and Central Asia to this very day.

### **Week 7: The Taifa States, Samuel ibn Naghrela, and the Almoravids**

Reading 13: The Rise and Fall of Samuel Ibn Naghrela

Reading 14: The Conquest of Toledo and the Almoravids

#### **October 7**

Samuel ibn Naghrela: The Jewish Warrior Poet of Granada

#### **October 9**

NO CLASS: Yom Kippur

#### **October 11**

The Christian Capture of Toledo and the Arrival of the Almoravids

### **Learning Outcome Week 7**

Buttress and problematize the notion of *convivencia* through assessing the life and career of the great Jewish warrior poet of the Taifa of Granada, Samuel ibn Naghrela. Understand the rise of the Almoravids and their conflict with Alfonso VI after the Christian “reconquest” of Toledo in 1085. Appreciate how the Almoravid dynasty shaped the architectural landscape of Morocco and Western Sahara to this very day.

### **Week 8: The End of the Golden Age of Spain**

Reading 15: Yehuda ha-Levi's Kuzari

Reading 16: Maimonides' Epistle on Martyrdom

#### **October 14**

NO CLASS: Sukkot/Fall Break

#### **October 16**

The Distant Dove: Yehuda ha-Levi Between Islam and Christendom

#### **October 18**

Cordoba to Cairo: The Life and Times of Maimonides

### **Learning Outcome Week 8**

Identify some of the causes and symptoms of the end the golden age of Spain and the decline of Convivencia in the wake of both the Almoravid and Almohad conquests of the Taifa states of Spain. Explore the end of the golden age through the Jewish supremacy of Yeudah ha-Levi articulated in his classic work of religious philosophy, the Kuzari. Assess the end of the golden age through the life and career of Maimonides, particularly through his Letter on Martyrdom, responding to the Almohad persecution of Jews, and his law code Mishneh Torah. Appreciate the ways Maimonides is revered by Jews and non-Jews to this very day throughout the world and his impact on our present-day cultural expression.

### **Week 9: A Mediterranean Society**

Reading 17: A Mediterranean Jewish Family Chronicle

Reading 18: Selected Geniza Documents

#### **October 21**

NO CLASS: Shemini Azeret

#### **October 23**

The Rise of the Fatimid Empire and the Jews of Sicily, Egypt, and Ifriqiya

#### **October 25**

The Hidden Treasures of the Cairo Geniza

### **Learning Outcome Week 9**

Explore the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian cultural hybridity of southern Italy and Sicily, particularly in the Norman Kingdom of Sicily. Understand the Jewish place in early middle ages Sicily through the chronicle known as the *megilat ahima'atz*. Define the shi'a Islam and rise to power of the Fatimid dynasty in North Africa. Identify the Cairo Geniza and appreciate its unique and valuable place in medieval history.

## **Section III: The Crusades and The Twelfth-Century Renaissance**

### **Week 10: The Jews of Ashkenaz and the Crusades in Global Context**

Reading 19: The Mainz Anonymous

Reading 20: The Second Crusade and the Jews

#### **October 28**

The Carolingians and the Birth of Ashkenaz

#### **October 30**

The First Crusade and the Rhineland Martyrs

**November 1**

Portugal to Persia: The Crusades in Global Context

**Learning Outcome Week 10**

Locate the Jewish presence in northern Europe under the Carolingians and assess the paths of migration to the land known to Jews as “Ashkenaz.” Identify the major themes and achievements of the Carolingian Renaissance. Understand the bid for Jewish autonomy in Septimania (Narbonne) during the eighth century. Identify the main causes and outcomes of the first Crusade. Explore Ashkenazi martyrology through the reading of Hebrew crusade chronicles. Appreciate the global impact of the first and second crusade, particular the renewal of the Reconquista in Portugal and the Jewish messianic revolts in Persia and how these movements continue to inform our world today.

**Week 11: The Twelfth-Century Renaissance**

Reading 21: Rashi and the Victorine Biblicists

Reading 22: The Scholastics, Peter Abelard, and the Tosafists

**November 4**

Battling with the Bible: Rashi and the Victorine Biblicists

**November 6**

The Scholastics, Peter Abelard, and the Tosafists

**November 8**

Monasticism and the Hasidei Ashkenaz

**Learning Outcome Week 11**

Explore the evolution of biblical exegesis during the twelfth century Renaissance by investigating Rashi’s influence on the Victorine Biblicists. Appreciate the shared intellectual world of Jewish and Christian scholastics/tosafists during the twelfth-century in their efforts to reconcile discordant canons. Compare and contrast Christian monasticism, throughout the world, to the Jewish ascetic movement of the twelfth century known as Hasidei Ashkenaz. Appreciate the ways the Hasidei Ashkenaz continue to influence Jewish practices to this very day.

**Week 12: Aristotelianism and The Confluence of Traditions**

Reading 23: The Aristotelianism of Averroes, Maimonides, and Aquinas

Reading 24: The Maimonidean Controversies

**November 11**

NO Class: Veterans’ Day

**November 13**

The Aristotelian Confluence: Averroes, Maimonides, and Aquinas

**November 15**

The Maimonidean Controversies in Global Context

### **Learning Outcome Week 12**

Define medieval “Aristotelianism” and the efforts during the twelfth-century Renaissance to reconcile faith and reason within the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim context respectively. Compare and contrast the Aristotelianism of Averroes, Maimonides, and Thomas Aquinas. Appreciate the different intellectual layers and full geographic scope of the Maimonidean Controversies and the ways the Jewish rejection of philosophy continues to inform our lives today.

## **Section IV: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the High Middle Ages**

### **Week 13: Medieval Judeophobia**

Reading 25: Selected Charters Granted to Jews

Reading 26: The Host Desecration and Ritual Murder Accusations

#### **November 18**

The Social Status of European Jewry: Servi Camerae, Moneylending, and Sicut Judaeis

#### **November 20**

A Simple Twist of Faith: Host Desecration and Ritual Murder Accusations

#### **November 22**

Devils, Menstruates, and Sows: Popular Medieval Judeophobia

### **Learning Outcome Week 13**

Define the social status and political rights of Jews living in late middle ages Christendom. Assess the ways Jews were forced into moneylending practices by the Capetian monarchy of France and the economic role of Jews in late middle ages Europe. Investigate various episodes of Host Desecration and Ritual Murder libels against the Jews. Assess popular anti-Jewish attitudes against Jews and determine the ways these attitudes continue to inform popular and overtly hostile depictions of Jews around the world to this very day.

### **Week 14: The Jews of Christian Spain**

Reading 27: Kabbalah Mysticism and Neoplatonism

Reading 28: The Barcelona Disputation

#### **November 25**

An Illuminated Orchard: The Aljama and the Birth of Kabbalah

#### **November 27**

Dominicans and Disputations: The Reversal of the Augustinian Doctrine

#### **November 29**

NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break

### **Learning Outcome Week 14**

Define thirteenth century kabbalah, the Zohar, Neoplatonism and the Jewish mystical rejection of Aristotelianism. Appreciate the nature of Jewish public life in Christian Spain, particularly through the careers of two Aragonese luminaries, Nahmanides and Solomon ibn Adret. Explore the creation of the Dominican order in response to the Albigensian heresy and the Dominican role in rooting out heresy. Identify the Dominican rejection of the Augustinian Doctrine through their efforts to publicly dispute the Talmud.

## **Week 15: The Terrible Fourteenth Century**

Reading 29: The Expulsions of Jews from France

Reading 30: The Black Death and the Jews

### **December 2**

Scattered Like Dust: The Expulsions of Jews From England and France

### **December 4**

Religious Violence: Rintfleisch Massacre, Albigensian Crusade, Shepherds' Crusade

### **December 6**

The Black Death: A Global Catastrophe

## **Learning Outcome Week 15**

Investigate the circumstances leading to the catastrophic expulsion of Jews from England in 1290 and France in 1305. Appreciate the global implication of Jewish migration patterns as a response to expulsion and how that continues to inform the world today. Assess the nature of inter-religious violence as a result of the reversal of the Augustinian Doctrine. Investigate the global scale of the catastrophe of the Black Death and how it affected Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities in different ways. Determine the ways the catastrophe of the Black Death continues to inform our world today.



## Assignment Prompts

### **Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Medieval World: Fall 2019**

#### **I. Participation (15%)**

Participation accounts for 15% of your final grade. It is based on your attendance record. Be sure to mark yourself present on **the daily sign-in sheet**. It is very much encouraged to engage in classroom discussions at the designated times.

#### **II. Sectional Quizzes (50%)**

You are required to complete four sectional quizzes based on classroom lectures. These are take-home projects. They are made up mostly of quantitative (Multiple Choice and True/False) questions with a few short answers. They should take no more than an hour each to complete. Each quiz will be available for a period of 10 days before they are due and will close at 11:59 PM on the due date:

**Quiz 1: Due September 30, 2019**

**Quiz 3: Due November 25, 2019**

**Quiz 2: Due November 4, 2019**

**Quiz 4: Due December 11, 2019**

#### **III. Reading Reflections (20%)**

This class is a reading course. The goal is to immerse yourself in new material and to familiarize yourself with reading primary sources. Primary sources are texts (images, objects, etc.) from the period under investigation. They are witnesses to historical events. The reading reflections assignment is meant to help guide your reading of primary sources. You will not be graded on the quality of your writing or the sophistication of your insights. Think of this assignment as a series of journal entries. You can write as much as you like, but, your response must be **At least 70 words**. Full credit will be awarded to every entry that meets that basic requirement: An easy way to secure 20% of your final grade!

There are two primary source readings assigned each week. Reflections for both of them are due on Fridays. If you choose, you can do them all in advance. But, **the weekly reading reflections assignments will close each Friday at 11:59 PM**. It is recommended to do them at your leisure throughout the week. Don't wait until Friday. Other than the minimum word requirement, there are no hard and fast rules. Use this assignment as a way to express your honest and sincere reactions to the readings.

You can respond to the reading in any way you see fit. Did you enjoy the reading? Why or why not? Were you annoyed having to read it? Why or why not? Were you confused by it? Why or why not? Did you learn something new? Was there something surprising about the reading that challenged your views? Was it funny? Was it tragic? Did it upset you? Do you think the source you read was biased in some way? How? How did that bias color the way the author described events? Did this reading remind you of something going on in the world today? Are there lessons to be learned from the reading that can be applied today? Was this reading in some way personal to you? The sky's the limit!

Feel free to discuss only a single aspect of the reading. It does not have to be holistic. If you're unsure what to write, you can choose to respond to one or more of the six guided reading questions included in each reading but you are not required to do so.

#### **IV. Short Essays (15%)**

The short essays are expanded reading reflections meant to help guide your interactions with texts. They are not research essays. You will not be graded on the quality of your writing or the sophistication of your insights. The critical criterion of success is that you have demonstrated a sincere interaction with the reading.

##### **Essay 1: The Travelers Project**

In the Middle Ages, as today, there was no better way to interact with other peoples and cultures than through travel. Medieval Eurasian peoples, in general, were consummate travelers. Vast networks of trade connected merchants in China to merchants in Spain. The devout made pilgrimages to Jerusalem, Rome, or Mecca. Ambassadors traveled to distant lands to solidify alliances or collect intelligence. Knights errant traveled thousands of miles on crusade, etc.

Please **Select one of the three** travelogues found on Canvas. **Your essay should be between 500–800 words: Due on Friday, November 8, 2019 by 11:59 PM.** You can, of course, submit your travelers reflection any time before, but **the assignments page will close on Friday, November 8, 11:59 PM.** If you choose, you can also compare and contrast two or all three of the accounts, but, you only need to read one.

1. The Travelogue of Benjamin of Tudela (d. 1173): A Jewish traveler from Spain who reached the Chinese borderlands.
2. The Travelogue of Marco Polo (d. 1324): A Venetian Christian merchant who traveled to Yuan China.
3. The Travelogue of Ibn Battuta (d. 1369): An Islamic qadi who traveled from Morocco throughout the Islamic World including large parts of Africa and India.

Here are some questions you might want to consider in your short essay: Who were your travelers? Where did they go? Why did they travel? Do you believe their accounts? Why or why not? How did they perceive other peoples and cultures? Did they have favorable or prejudicial views of others? In what ways did the religion of the travelers inform where they went or how they perceived or depicted others? In what ways did the world look different to your traveler than it does today? What made you choose to write about your specific traveler?

##### **Essay 2: Book Review: Under Crescent & Cross**

One of the principle goals of our course is to understand the interaction between Jews, Christians, Muslims. One way we achieve that understanding is by focusing on the Jewish experience, that is, the experience of a minority under both Christian and Islamic rule. Such an analysis begs the question: Were Jewish minorities treated better in Islamic or Christian realms? And, what does the treatment of minorities reveal about majority cultures? This is precisely the question taken up by the distinguished historian Mark R. Cohen in *Under Crescent & Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages*.

Essay 2 is a book review of *Under Crescent & Cross*. **Your review should be between 800–1000 words: Due December 11, 2019 by 11:59 PM.** You can of course submit your book review any time before, but **the assignments page will close on Wednesday, December 11, 2019 at 11:59 PM.**

Here are some questions you might want to consider in your book review: What are Cohen's central questions? How does he answer those questions? Do you agree or disagree with his assessment? How did he organize the book? Why do you think he organized it in the way he did? Was that organization effective? What kinds of sources does he use? Is there a problem with the way he uses sources? Is there a particular part of the book that interested you? Did you like Cohen's book? Why or why not? Did you hate it? Did you find it surprising in some way? Why or why not? Is there some aspect of the book that you found helpful in understanding the world today?

You are of course not limited to these questions. Feel free to respond to *Under Crescent & Cross* any way you see fit. But, be sure to include a discussion of some key information: The organization, argument, sources, and content of the book.