This class is an introduction to Jewish beliefs, practices, and history from the biblical period to the present. Students will become familiar with Jewish holidays, lifecycle events, and philosophical issues by reading key texts of the Jewish tradition. The diversity within the Jewish world - according to geography, gender, and modern religious movement - will be represented.

**Required texts** (available at the USC bookstore – please bring the designated texts to class)


Course reader.

**Course Requirements**

I. Regular attendance and participation are essential for the creation of a stable, stimulating learning environment and are therefore required. You will be held responsible for all material presented in class, as well as the reading assignments.

II. Critical comprehension of assigned readings and knowledgeable engagement in class discussions are essential. Because class discussion will revolve around the readings, you will
be expected to come to class having completed all of the reading. Once again, you must prepare for each class in order to participate effectively.

III. Three mini-assignments
Assignment #1: Writeup of Shabbat experience (Shabbat dinner or Shabbat services) (2-3 pages)
Assignment #2: Writeup of Simchat Torah synagogue visit (2-3 pages)
Assignment #3: Writeup of museum visit (1-2 pages)

IV. Research paper (8-10 pages – see possible topics below)

V. A final exam

Grading
Your grade in the course will be based on the following formula:
- Class participation: 20% (attendance and informed discussion)
- Research paper: 25%
- Other 3 assignments: 30% (10% each)
- Final examination: 25%

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is the unacknowledged and inappropriate use of the ideas or wording of another individual. Most simply, plagiarism can be characterized as “academic theft.” As defined in the University Student Conduct Code, plagiarism includes: “The submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student’s own work whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near verbatim form;” “The submission of material subjected to editorial revision by another person that results in substantive changes in content or major alteration of writing style;” and “improper acknowledgment of sources in essays or papers.” Because of the serious penalties for plagiarism, you should ensure that any writing you submit represents your own assertions and abilities and incorporates other texts in an open and honest manner. In academic assignments, writing is assumed to be the original words and thoughts of the student unless otherwise noted (i.e., material from other sources is clearly and properly cited). The best way to avoid plagiarism is to be careful to document your sources, even when you are only making use of data or ideas rather than an actual quote. Students who violate academic standards will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards. In accordance with these standards, plagiarism will result in an ‘F’ grade for the course and possible suspension or expulsion from the University.

Accommodation of Disabilities
Students requesting academic accommodations due to disabilities must register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) as early in the semester as possible (STU 301, tel. 740-0776, open 8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday). Please bring me your letter of verification for approved accommodations, and let me know if you need any assistance with this process.
Schedule
Readings marked (cr) are in the course reader. Readings marked (d) will be distributed in class before they are due.

Aug 23: First class

Aug 25: Introduction to Judaism
Pirkei Avot (Chapters/Ethics of the Fathers/Ancestors), Chapters 1, 2. Siddur Sim Shalom, 603-619. (cr)

Aug 30: Tanakh (Bible)
Back to the Sources 31-37 (excerpt from “Biblical Narrative” by Joel Rosenberg).
Selections from the Tanakh:
- Genesis chapters 1-3, 12:1-9
- Deuteronomy 12-16
- I Samuel 17-20
- Jeremiah 1-2:22
- Psalms 19
- Proverbs 1-2

Sept 1: Rabbinic literature: stories
Back to the Sources 177-212 (“Midrash” by Barry W. Holtz).
In class: selections of Midrash (bring Tanakh)

Sept 6: Rabbinic literature: law
Back to the Sources 129-172 (“Talmud” by Robert Goldenberg).
In class: selections from the Talmud (bring Tanakh)

Sept 8: Rosh Hashanah (New Year)
The Jewish Way 17-33.
The Jewish Way 182-199.
Blessings in Siddur Sim Shalom 708-715. (d)
In class: discuss God (bring Tanakh)

Sept 13: Reform Judaism
Guest speaker: Rabbi Zoë Klein, Temple Isaiah
Sept 15: Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)
The Jewish Way 200-215. (bring Tanakh)
“Avinu Malkenu.” In Siddur Sim Shalom. 124-127. (d)
In class: discuss sin, atonement, teshuva, ba’alei teshuva

Sept 20: Orthodox Judaism
“Rabbi Avraham Yesh’a’ayahu Karelitz on Extremism.” In The Blackwell Reader in Judaism.
Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck, eds. 245-6. (cr)
Additional reading on Jewish mysticism. (d)
Guest speaker: Rabbi Dov Wagner, Chabad @ USC

Sept 22: Sukkot (Booths)
The Jewish Way 94-118. (bring Tanakh)
“Amidah.” In Siddur Sim Shalom. 106-123. (cr)
In class: visit HUC sukkah

Sept 27: Diversity of religious practice in the Diaspora, synagogues
The Jewish Cultural Tapestry 1-19, 85-117
In-class: visit HUC sanctuary, images of synagogues around the world
Shabbat experience should be completed by now

Sept 29: Simchat Torah (Rejoicing in Torah), musical manifestations of Judaism
The Jewish Cultural Tapestry 175-195.
In class: listen to religious and secular Jewish music

Oct 4 – no class (Rosh Hashanah)

Oct 6: Marriage
105-119.
In class: wedding videos, discuss niddah (laws of ritual purity)
Assignment #1 due

Oct 11: Chanukah
The Jewish Way 258-282.
Stephen J. Einstein and Lydia Kukoff, eds. New York: UAHC Press. 29-35. (cr)
In class: discuss secular Judaism, “assimilation”

Oct 13 – no class (Yom Kippur)

By Monday, October 17, please e-mail your proposed research paper topic to sbenor@huc.edu.
Oct 18 – no class (Sukkot)

Oct 20: Birth, Bar Mitzvah

In class: decide where each student will go for Simchat Torah services

Oct 25 – no class (Shmini Atzeret, Simchat Torah), but –
Attend services tonight! Each student goes to a different synagogue.

Oct 27: Purim (Lots)
The Jewish Way 224-257. (bring Tanakh)
Assignment #2 due

Nov 1: Linguistic manifestations of Judaism
The Jewish Cultural Tapestry 49-67.
In class: Babel story (bring Tanakh), discussion of Jewish English

Nov 3: Reconstructionist Judaism
Guest speaker: Rabbi Rick Brody, Temple Ami Shalom

Nov 8: Pesach (Passover)
The Jewish Way 34-65.

Nov 10: Pesach, visual manifestations of Judaism
In-class: Look at illuminated Haggadot, images of Sacrifice of Isaac (bring Tanakh)

Nov 10: Shavuot (Weeks)
The Jewish Way 66-93.
Ruth (In JPS Tanakh)
In class: discuss kashrut

Nov 15: Conservative Judaism
Readings on Conservative Judaism: (Emet Ve-Emunah – A Statement of Principles; A Responsum on Sabbath Observance; Joel Roth: Ordination of Women; Dorff:
Homosexuality and Sexual Ethics). In *The Blackwell Reader in Judaism*. Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck, eds. 256-267. (cr)
Guest speaker: Rabbi Brian Schudlenfrei, Sinai Temple

Nov 17: Tisha B’Av (The Ninth of Av) and Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day), Anti-Semitism
*The Jewish Way* 283-303, 314-341.
Lamentations (In *JPS Tanakh*)

Nov 22: Yom Ha’atzma’ut (Israeli Independence Day) and Zionism
*The Jewish Way* 373-388.
Contemporary debate about Zionism between Rabbi Daniel Gordis and Rabbi Jill Jacobs. (d)

Nov 24 – no class (Thanksgiving)

Nov 29: Shabbat
*The Jewish Way* 127-181.

Dec 1: Last class
Brief student presentations of research, wrap-up

Dec 8: Research papers due

**Takeaway messages for this class**

1. Being Jewish is not just adhering to a religion but also belonging to a people
2. There is a chain of Jewish knowledge, belief, textual production, and practice stretching from Biblical times to the present
3. Judaism and Jewish culture have had diverse manifestations around the world and throughout history, influenced and affected by local non-Jewish cultures
4. Three of the most important aspects of Judaism are God, Torah, and Israel
5. Judaism emphasizes actions over beliefs

**Research paper: Suggested topics**

1. Compare how two movements deal with one issue in contemporary American Judaism.
2. Trace the historical development of one philosophical issue in three time periods.
3. Discuss the manifestations of the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition in one Jewish community outside of North America.
4. Another topic: must be approved by instructor.
When writing your papers, please follow the specifications and suggestions in the writing guide, to be distributed in class. I recommend that you set up an appointment to discuss your topic with me.

**Suggestions for further reading (on reserve in the HUC library)**

*Artscroll Siddur* (Orthodox prayer book).  
*Sim Shalom* (Conservative prayer book).  
*Sha’are Tefilah: Gates of Prayer* (Reform prayer book).  

**Useful websites**

My Jewish Learning  
[http://myjewishlearning.com](http://myjewishlearning.com)  
Interactive Jewish Calendar  
Jewish History Resource Center  
[http://www.dinur.org/*1.html](http://www.dinur.org/)  
Jewish Language Research Website:  
Jewish Music Web Center  
Modiya: Jews/Media/Religion  
[http://dlibdev.nyu.edu/modiya/](http://dlibdev.nyu.edu/modiya/)