

**God and Man in Judaism, REL 3720 – formerly REL 319; LBS 5904 , 45391 (online)**  
Fall 2018, Dr. Michael Pytlik, [Pytlik@oakland.edu](mailto:Pytlik@oakland.edu). Office hours are available on request  
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About your professor:

I hold a bachelor's degree in History and Philosophy, a Masters of Science in Jewish Studies and Jewish Education and a Doctoral degree in Jewish Studies, specializing in the archaeology of King David and related historical factors related to the early monarchy in Judah. I have been at Oakland since 2009, and full time since 2012. I am the Director of Judaic Studies at Oakland and teach in the Anthropology Department where I teach the Archaeology of Israel. Each summer we also go to Israel on the Study Abroad trip for an archaeological field school and tour of the country. I welcome your interest in this trip for summer 2019. I am fascinated by many religions, and I have spent a great deal of time learning and experiencing many faiths. I think this brings a nuanced approach to my teaching. I also teach courses in Jewish history, Monotheistic Mysticism, Archaeology of Israel, Archaeology of Sacred Sites and in Jerusalem, Introduction to Judaism, and the Written Tradition of Judaism.

I am very interested in the human proclivity toward spiritual or religious seeking, without specifying a particular religion, although I am a practicing Reform Jew.

I approach all of my courses with the idea that the instructor is a guide through a potentially fascinating field of study, but the student is a partner in the endeavor and must bring his or her own interests and curiosity to any course.

**This is an online class. See Moodle online for the weekly syllabus/requirements.**

**Course Purpose:**

A. To acquaint students with the religion of Judaism, its historical development, the social and cultural elements of the faith, its theological context from its biblical foundation to modern times. We are exploring elements of Jewish theology, or what Judaism thinks of itself and its ideas of God and Man. A number of themes will be explored on a weekly basis.

B. Provide students the opportunity to write about a variety of topics throughout the course.

C. Students will be able to identify and discuss core concepts of Judaism, ideas of God and what Judaism thinks of a variety of ideas like evil, the afterlife, attributes of God, the role of mankind in creation, the problem of evil and more.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Students will be able to Identify and explain major themes of Jewish theology, what it is and what it attempts to do.

...Discuss some major contributions of Judaism to western and world civilization

...Speak with confidence about some theological aspects of Judaism - God, Afterlife, Torah, etc.

...Discuss how the tradition of Judaism is flexible enough to shed light on contemporary problems, with reference to case studies pertaining to such topics as "Why be Good?", "The Importance of Religious Thinking," and "Human and Being Human," and more.

...appreciate themes that appear in Judaism and other faiths, such as the Afterlife, reason and religious thinking, creation and creativity, and interfaith-relations that pertain to overlapping topics, such as philosophy and theological topics.

**Cross-Cutting Capacities** involved in this course:

1. Effective Communication is promoted through a variety of writing exercises and oral discussions.
2. Critical Thinking is developed through text analysis and various interpretations.

3. Social Awareness in this course is elevated by examining core concepts as they developed over time within the tradition of Judaism. Students are exposed to social and cultural norms of Jews and Judaism that have historical and contemporary relevance for modern problems, matters of difference in the workplace and society, and religious literacy.

**Textbook:** Byron Sherwin's *Faith Finding Meaning* – in the OU bookstore, or available online. It is newly in paperback.

All other reading materials are online in Moodle for each week's session.

**Each topic and corresponding reading and any assignments are listed in the weekly format on Moodle - all materials are listed there.**

**Course Requirements/Grading: Based on weighted categories.**

- A.** Class Participation – 9 “forums” (@ 10 points each = 90 pts for 25% of grade. This is based on online attendance and student input using the online forums. *See expectations below for the forum rubric.*
- B.** Short Essays – 6 @ 25 pts each = 150 pts. for 25% of grade. These are generally short responses of 2 pages; they are based on a prompt or you choose from a list and answer 1 or 2.
- C.** Term Paper – 1 at 75 pts for 25% of grade. See detail below and online Moodle.
- D.** Final Exam for 100 points for 25% of grade. Exam includes short answer, essay, multiple-choice questions, T/F.

The grading system is described below

**LBS/MALS program additional:** Students taking this course for the LBS graduate program will complete the assignments and requirements stated above with the modification that the “research paper”, item C, above, will be extended to 20 pages in length. The paper topic and any further requirements will be determined (approved) during the course.

Most of the grade is based on writing/feedback and evaluation. You should, however:

- Write in a formal manner with correct rules of grammar, citation, and punctuation.
- There are a variety of writing styles involved – see assignments.
- At least one of the assignments, in this case the term paper, will be evaluated and returned to you with comments.

**A. Participation – 25%** (10 points each x 9 / 90 total): assigned through the “forums” that are assigned at certain class weeks. The way to determine how grading occurs for this is below. You’ll be asked to comment on other colleague’s entries as part of this assignment. This allows you to bounce off ideas and to help you with

your own – it’s not about trying to convince someone of your point of view or to shout someone down. In nearly all cases we can learn something from others.

**Forum Grading** (adapted from Cathy Cheal at OU).

Criteria	Outstanding A grade, 10 or 9 points	Above Average B grade, 8 points	Average C grade, 7-6 points	Insufficient D grade, 5 points
Critical Thinking	Has a strong theme that is clearly argued and well-details with related examples.	Has a strong theme that is clearly argued for the most part and has some details with related examples.	Has an ambiguous theme that is not very clearly argued with few details or related examples.	Has an ambiguous theme that is not well argued with any details or examples.
Connections and Organization	Connected to readings and well planned with a beginning sentence, conclusion, and sentences and paragraphs that relates one to the other.	Little connection to readings and less well planned with a beginning sentence, conclusion, and sentences and paragraphs that relate one to the other.	Little connection to readings and not as well planned with a beginning sentence, conclusion, and sentences and paragraphs that relate one to the other.	No evidence of readings and no internal organization.
Originality	Has an authentic voice, without sarcasm and no use of clichés.	Has an authentic voice, without sarcasm and little use of clichés.	Has an authentic voice with some mockery and use of clichés.	Appears to be copied, or unoriginal with trite phrasing.
Style Mechanics	No grammatical errors, either in spelling or grammar.	Few grammatical errors, either in spelling or grammar.	Many grammatical errors, either in spelling or grammar that hinder the reader.	So many grammatical errors, either in spelling or grammar that the reader can’t understand the meaning.
Timeliness	All postings are submitted on time	All postings are on time, but responses to colleagues are missing or shorter than required	Postings are not completed, and/or missing responses to others’ if required.	Forum responses are not submitted
Critiques of other’s postings	Courteous, (but not sarcastic)	Courteous, (but not sarcastic)	Less courteous or sarcastic	Discourteous or sarcastic

	and pointing out spelling and grammatical mistakes. Also commenting on the content, including any of the above points.	and pointing out spelling and grammatical mistakes. Not commenting on the content, including any of the above points.	without much commenting on the content, including any of the above points.	without commenting on the content, including any of the above points.
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**B.--Short Essays 25%** – 6 @ 25 pts for 150 points. These occur every so often, and are not term papers, but are essay answers based on the previous few lessons. These essays will help you keep on track. Answer some number of the questions offered. Questions are about the previous readings to that time. You should answer in full sentences and paragraphs. This is not a term paper, but for each question a solid three – four paragraphs should be written for full credit – if you quote a text, give the reference. More instructions will be posted with the assignment.

**C.--Term Paper 25%** based on 75 points. A term paper is due by **December 6, 2018** by midnight (please upload via Moodle or email to [pytlik@oakland.edu](mailto:pytlik@oakland.edu) – no extensions due to the lateness of this in the course. Plan ahead. As you read, think of topics that interest you. They can be on anything that we have covered in the course, but that you would like to learn more about. The best term papers are well thought out and well-designed. **Please submit a short paragraph of your topic statement and/or problem you’d like to research by week 11 (November 11)** – I will help you with any parts of it and perhaps suggest how you can narrow the focus of it so you can stay on track. The term paper should be about 8-10 pages, and should follow all rules of citation, grammar and good writing. If you use another writer’s ideas, you should cite them in your text. There are many resources for citation and good writing. I am here to help as you decide on your topic and as you write. Rough drafts are welcome, at least a few weeks before the due date. Please use double space, no more than 12-point font. The purpose is to allow you to look into a topic more closely; 8-10 pages is not long, so keep your topic to a single issue. As we get closer to this, we can set up a chat session for this topic and talk about topics and ideas.

- a. **ALTERNATIVE:** if you wish, you can write on set questions that are listed under week 14, the due date is the same, December 6. If you choose, you can write an 8 page paper on one question, or you can take two questions and write about 4-5 pages for each.
- b. **EITHER WAY, the term paper of your topic, or the set questions (found in week 14), the papers are due by December 6.**

**D.--Final exam 25%** for 100 points. The exam will be on the last week and will be part multiple choice and short essay (online).

**In fall of 2018 Oakland is adopting a letter-grade system.**

**Your grade is calculated in this manner:** A given number of points are assigned each assignment. The total of your achieved **points** for each assignment is calculated for each category, A, B, C, etc. (above). Each category represents a percentage of the total grade (or 100% possible) - “Class Participation” is 25% of the whole. Each category is calculated as a weighted percentage of 100%. If you achieved all possible points in the “short essays” category, you would earn 100% of 25% of the total grade. Each weighted category is then extended and calculated as a portion of the 100% possible; added together, this result provides a percentage that gives a percentage of 100%. This final percentage then is calculated against the highest possible grade (or 100%) of the 400 point system, and then converted to the letter grade, below. Students’ grades are calculated on an Excel spreadsheet and are available for student review. The OU grading system is available here:

[http://catalog.oakland.edu/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=483#Grading\\_System](http://catalog.oakland.edu/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=483#Grading_System)

Numerical grades are converted to the following OU letter grade system:

Points	380-400	360-379	340-359	320-339	300-319	A-B range
%	95	90	85	80	75	
Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	
Points	280-299	240-279	220-239	200-219	180-199	C-D range
%	70	60	55	50	45	
Grade	C+	C	C-	D+	D	
Points	0-179	Failing range				
	F					

**Policy of Professionalism:**

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Always cite sources that you use in any academic work. Do not copy someone else's work (that means a fellow student's or an author's work). For whichever assignment you are caught cheating you will fail that assignment, but you may be subject to penalties from the university: Academic misconduct: cheating, plagiarism or any other form of academic misconduct will be reported to the Academic Conduct Committee of the University Senate for review and may result in failure for the course, university probation, suspension from the university, expulsion or other penalties. The "Academic Conduct" section of the catalog explains your due process rights and responsibilities. Contact me if you have questions or doubts. Plagiarism also means that you copy material from online sources into your assignments without citation. All online sources should be vetted carefully before you use them, and WIKIPEDIA is not allowed as a source in this course. Always cite your sources; if you use the lecture for the week as a source, please indicate (Lecture, [date or week or lecture]). If you do use materials not your own without proper citation you can face these potential penalties: failure of the question or a portion of the assignment, the entire assignment, or the course (in the latter example, the university panel on plagiarism will be notified for a hearing). Take this seriously.

**Health issues:** You should be aware that you can be seen for an illness at the Graham Health Center on campus for a nominal charge if you do not have health insurance, and if medicine is required, there will be a nominal charge for that as well. The Health Emergency Plan is available to any student on request. The only requirement is that you contribute to this program at some later time if/when you are able to do so.

**Students with Disabilities:** students who require any special arrangements due to disabilities should contact me so that we may resolve the issue with in-classroom alterations, or so that we may take advantage of university offerings. A student with a documented learning or physical disability must contact the Office of Disability and Support Services, 121 North Foundation Hall, (248) 370-3266, and inform the professor of special needs during first week of classes. For more information, visit <http://www.oakland.edu/dss>. Disability Support Services acts as an advocate for students with disabilities.

**Your preferred name and personal pronoun:** if you do not identify with the name that is listed with the registrar, please notify me so that I may appropriately amend my records. In addition, if you prefer to go by a different pronoun, please inform me.

**Add/Drop:** The OU University add/drop policy will be strictly followed. You are responsible for being aware of all deadline dates on the registrar's office website.

**Late Assignments:** unless approved beforehand, all assignments must be submitted on the due dates published in the syllabus or on the assignment listed online. For any assignment handed in late, a 2 point reduction per day will be deducted. No assignment will be accepted after five days past the original due date and a 0 will be entered for that assignment. Failure to respond to a forum in the dates provided will also be included in this late policy.

**POLICIES, PROCEDURES:** Attendance is required. I consider you to be in attendance if you log in, download articles, and participate in forums...not doing so will constitute an “absence” for that week. **I can see when you access or download articles.** I will not accept work-related excuses for missing class or for late papers. This course adheres to the OU Excused Absence Policy for OU events and activities: [http://www2.oakland.edu/provost/web/reports/OU\\_Excused\\_Absence\\_Policy\\_Final.pdf](http://www2.oakland.edu/provost/web/reports/OU_Excused_Absence_Policy_Final.pdf)

**Participation in online activities counts as class attendance. Students who miss more than three combined weeks of class are not eligible to receive a grade above 0.0.**

Due to the nature of this online course, you can set your own schedule on doing readings, but you must adhere to the due dates for forum responses, which means that you would have already read the material for that week and plan your response to submit it on time. Consider the reading and assignments in a weekly format, usually from Sunday through the following week. It is worth your while to plan your reading and study time and when you will submit any assignments.

If you must miss a class, I urge you to let me know. However, I expect you to find a way to get the material covered in class on the day you missed on your own – since you don’t have to “attend” class on a specific time each week, you should have every opportunity to attend an online class and participate. Participation is vital.

Health issues: You should be aware that you can be seen for an illness at the Graham Health Center on campus for a nominal charge if you do not have health insurance, and if medicine is required, there will be a nominal charge for that as well. The Health Emergency Plan is available to any student on request. The only requirement is that you contribute to this program at some later time if/when you are able to do so.

**CONTACTING YOU:** I will use your official OU email or through Moodle for any updates and information about the class. **It is your responsibility to check this email.**