

KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Of The City University Of New York
Department of History, Philosophy and Political Science

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Title: Jewish History: Post Biblical Times
To The Enlightenment

Number : HIS 67

Credits/Hours: 3 credits/hours

INTRODUCTION

High points of Jewish development from the Babylonian exile to the mid - 17th century. Topics include: the role of the exile, Ezra and Nehemiah, the political, social and religious developments during the Second Commonwealth, the Talmud and its influence, the relationship with Christianity and Islam and the communal institutions developed in the various parts of the Diaspora.

OBJECTIVES

1. Analyze and discuss role of political and social institutions and the changes and adaptations over different periods of Jewish history.
2. Demonstrate awareness of the contributions and influences of the different civilizations which Jews came in contact with.
3. Compare and contrast the profound changes of the pre and post exile periods.
4. Understand the relationship between the Jews in their homeland and the diaspora.
5. Ability to explain the causes of the rise of the new religions of Christianity and Islam and their effects on Jewish life.
6. Develop an understanding of the hatred of Jews in Hellenistic, Christian and Islamic civilizations.
7. Familiarity with literature developed during this period - The Talmud, Apocrypha and Apocalypse.
8. Understanding the role of the different factions developed during this period and their impact upon Jewish and non-Jewish society.
9. Demonstrate the ability to examine critically the primary and secondary readings assigned.
10. Ability to explain the forces contributing to the survival of the Jewish people.

ASSESSMENT

1. Discussion of major issues
2. Analysis and comprehension of primary sources
3. Oral presentations
4. Effective use of technological instruments, audio visual aids, computers and the internet
5. Ability to use the historical method in the discipline

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Improving analytical and critical thinking
2. Relating information acquired in class to contemporary society
3. Ability to read newspaper articles and reach an independent judgement of what is closest to the truth
4. Understanding conflicting interpretations of historical issues and reach a valid decision
5. Using the computer and internet for resource

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Evidence of having read assignment
2. Active class participation
3. Term paper demonstrating ability to conduct research and use of electronic resources
4. Evidence by ability to analyze critical primary and secondary readings.
5. Regular attendance
6. Successful completion of three examinations

COURSE OUTLINE

- I. Judaism as a Result of the Babylonian Exile and Ezra's Innovations
 - A. The Impact of the Babylonian Exile on the Development of Jewish History.
 - B. The Return of the Babylonian Exile and the Contributions of Ezra.
 - C. The Elephantine Community in Egypt
- II. Meeting the Greek World: A Challenge to Ezra's Foundations
 - A. Historical Outline
 - B. The new elements introduced by Greek Civilization
 - C. New problems
 - D. Reactions of Jews to Hellenism
 - E. The literary activity of the Jews
 - F. Maccabean revolt - its causes and results
 - G. Internal rule and conflicts in the Hasmonean period
 - H. The new groups arising as a result of independence
 - I. The literary activities of the Hasmonean period

III. The Roman World

- A. Rome's appearance in Judea
- B. King Herod in the service of Rome
- C. Direct Roman Rule
- D. Jews in the Roman Diaspora
- E. Jewish struggle against Rome: Justice vs. Power
- F. The revolt against Rome
- G. The effect of the Revolt on Diaspora Jewry
- H. Proselytizing activities of Jews and its effect on persecution of Jews
- I. The Jewish communities outside the Roman empire-
Babylonia

IV. The Rise and Influence of Christianity upon the Development of Jewish History in Palestine

- A. The Rise of Christianity
- B. Christianity, a State Religion 312 C.E.
- C. The division of Christianity into East and West - Byzantium and Rome 395 C.E.

V. The Talmudic Period

- A. The Yavneh Academy
- B. The Bar Kochba Revolt
- C. Canonization of the Bible
- D. The Oral tradition and beginning of the Talmud
- E. The Compilation and Redaction of the Mishnah

VI. The Growth of the Babylonian Jewish Community and Completion of the Talmud

- A. Jewish Community life in Babylonia
- B. Scholarship Revolving around the Mishnah in Babylonia and Palestine
- C. Redaction of the Talmud
- D. Character of the Talmud
- E. The Talmudic way of Life
- F. The Influence of the Talmud
- G. The Midrashim

VII. The Jews in the Mohammedan World

- A. The Jews in Arabia and Arab - Jewish relations before Mohammed
- B. Mohammed's Appearance: His personality and teachings.

VIII. The Gaonic Period and Institution

- A. Revival of the Exilarchy and Jewish autonomy
- B. The origin of the Gaonite Institution
- C. Talmudic Scholarship and consolidation of the Gaonim
- D. Conflict between the Exilarch and the Gaonim
- E. Conflict between Babylonia and Palestine Gaonim for Supremacy
- F. New Jewish Center

IX. A Challenge to Rabbinic Judaism: The Karaites

- A. Origin of Karaism
- B. Basic Beliefs of Karaism
- C. Failure of Karaism
- D. The Positive Results of the Struggle with the Karaites
- E. The Literary Activities of the Period

X. Jews in Western Europe

- A. Jewish Settlement in Italy
- B. Jewish Origins in France and Western Germany
- C. The Jews in Spain
- D. Jews in a Feudal Society
- E. The rise of towns and international commerce
- F. Jewish Autonomous Life
- G. The Jew and Church: The period of the Crusades
- H. The Crusades

XI. The Golden Age in Spain and Rabbinic Literature in the West

- A. The Political Situation in Spain
- B. The Khazars and their contact with A Spain.
- C. Jewish Culture in the Spanish Peninsula
- D. The Cultural and Philosophical Environment in Spain
- E. Maimonides
- F. The Feud between the pro - and anti - Maimonidians
- G. Mysticism
- H. The Tragedy of Spanish Jewry and the end of an Era
- I. The rise of New Jewish Centers

XII. The Life of the Jew in Eastern and Western Europe

- A. Jewish Settlement in Crimea
- B. The Khazars
- C. The Jews in Russia
- D. First Jewish Settlement in Poland
- E. Community Life
- F. Jewish Self - Government in Eastern Europe

XIII. East and West Meet on the Philosophical and Legal Plane

- A. The New Centers of Jewish Life
- B. The Spiritual Climate Created by the Expulsion from Spain
- C. Safed
- D. The Influence of Lurian Mysticism on Later Generations

XIV. The Jew in Isolation: The Ghetto - A Blessing or a Curse

- A. Origin and Meaning
- B. Life in the Ghetto
- C. Some Prominent Ghettos
- D. Evaluation

XV. The Jewish Community of Amsterdam: A New Hope and A New Spirit

- A. The Relationship Between the Netherlands and Spain
- B. The Jewish Community of Amsterdam
- C. The Economic Activities of Jews in Amsterdam
- D. Religious Dissent in the Amsterdam Jewish Community
- E. Messianic Aspirations