

GENERAL INFORMATION

PROFESSOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Oren Baruch Stier
Phone: N/A
Office Hours: By Appointment
Website: N/A

Course Time Zone | Eastern Standard Time (EST). Course due dates are according to this time zone.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

This course addresses the rich and varied traditions of Jewish mysticism, including Kabbalah, a source of endless fascination and renewed popular interest in contemporary society. What is the nature of this multi-faceted esoteric movement? What are its aims and goals? Our weekly class meetings will consider the major historical trends, basic themes, and key concepts of the kabbalistic worldview. We will explore the Jewish mystic quest through a range of primary and secondary sources. While no prior knowledge of Judaism or of Jewish mysticism is required, students may wish to consult the professor prior to or following the first class meeting regarding background preparation. Students should note that this class will focus on mystical theory and practice from an academic perspective; we will not provide any hands-on exploration of the area of practical and/or magical Kabbalah.

Note to Graduate Students: this class meets concurrently with REL3392; graduate students will also be required to meet for some additional time with Dr. Stier on a schedule to be determined. During that time we will discuss the additional graduate student readings as indicated.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Identify and describe key terms, concepts, texts, and figures in Jewish mysticism.
- Analyze Jewish mysticism in the general context of religious mysticism and evaluate the applicability of general concepts to specific, tradition-based examples, and vice versa.
- Decipher the inner world of esoteric religiosity and its texts.
- Critically appraise a selected text in light of course themes.
- Recognize the symbolic, phenomenological approach to mystical texts and experiences as practiced in the academic study of religions.

Statement Regarding Academic Freedom:

Academic freedom and responsibility are essential to the integrity of the University. The principles of academic freedom are integral to the conception of the University as a community of scholars engaged in the pursuit of truth and the communication of knowledge in an atmosphere of tolerance and freedom. The University serves the common good through teaching, research, scholarship/creative activities, and service. The fulfillment of these functions rests upon the preservation of the intellectual freedoms of

teaching, expression, research, and debate. We affirm that academic freedom is a protected right in addition to a faculty member's constitutionally protected freedom of expression and is fundamental to the faculty member's responsibility to seek and to state truth as he/she sees it. Students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings and subject matter in this course as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates and/or their instructor. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint or belief.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Textbook Title



Textbook Image

Required Texts for All Students:

David S. Ariel, *Kabbalah: The Mystic Quest in Judaism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006). ISBN: 9780742545649.

Gershom Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in Kabbalah*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel, ed. Jonathan Chipman (NY: Schocken Books, 1991). ISBN: 9780805210811.

Daniel C. Matt, *The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism* (Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 1997). ISBN: 9780062511638.

Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Jewish Mysticism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1995). ISBN: 9781851681044.

[NOTE: This title is *out-of-print* and not for sale at the FIU Barnes & Noble; it is still **required** and widely available via online sellers.]

Additional Required Texts for Graduate Students:

Arthur Green, *A Guide to the Zohar* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004). ISBN: 9780804749084.

Selections from Joseph Dan, *The Ancient Jewish Mysticism* (Tel Aviv: MOD Books, 1993).

[NOTE: this title is out of print; scanned photocopies of assigned chapters will be made available].

Selections from Daniel Matt, *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 1 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). ISBN: 978-0804747479.

[NOTE: required pages will be scanned; purchase if you would like to own it; we will read only a fraction of the volume]

You may purchase your textbooks online at the [FIU Bookstore](#).

EXPECTATIONS OF THIS COURSE

This is an online course, which means most (if not all) of the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same for a traditional course. In fact, online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:

- Review the **getting started page** located in the course modules;
- **Interact** online with instructor and peers;
- **Review** and follow the course calendar and weekly outlines;
- **Log in** to the course **at least 3 times** per week;
- **Respond** to emails within **2 days**;
- **Submit** assignments by the corresponding deadline.

The instructor will:

- Log in to the course **at least 3 times** per week;
- Respond to emails within **48 hours (not counting Sabbaths and Jewish holidays)**;
- Grade assignments within **7 days** of assignment closing.

COURSE DETAIL

DISCUSSION FORUMS

Keep in mind that your discussion forum postings will likely be seen by other members of the course. Care should be taken when determining what to post.

- N/A

ASSESSMENTS

Assessment Expectations:

- Take-home Midterm Exam, due SATURDAY, 10/19; 15% of grade (10% for GRAD students)
- Take-home Final Exam, due TUESDAY, 12/10; 20% of grade (15% for GRAD students)
 - Essay format; questions will be provided at least one week in advance.

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment Expectations:

- ALL STUDENTS:
- 10 Journal Entries: due 11:59pm Sundays:
 - All students will submit brief written responses to the prompt(s) posted on the weekly readings as indicated. These responses are private and are read only by the professor. To receive full credit, entries must display evidence of having completed the relevant reading assignment, must quote directly from the assigned readings at least once (with proper author and page citation), and must consist of a minimum of two paragraphs (about 10 sentences, minimum) each. Beyond these requirements, students are free to write whatever they wish in response to the posted questions.
 - Each Journal Entry will be graded according to a rubric and is worth 0-4 points, equal to 0-2% of the final course grade, totaling 20% of the course grade for 10 Journal Entries, and is due by **11:59pm on Sunday nights**.
 - **NOTE:** Journal Entries are always assigned to help students think through the next week's readings. So, for example, Journal Entry 1, assigned during Module 2, features a prompt focused on the readings for Module 3.

- NOTE: The professor will use these Journal Entries to help shape class discussion and may refer to them in general terms in class, possibly asking students to elaborate on their individual entries, but any personal comments will of course be held in confidence
- Attendance/Participation:
 - Class meets weekly via zoom; students will receive 1 point for timely attendance at each class meeting, totaling 15 points for the semester, equal to 15% of the course grade.
 - Students signing in more than 5 minutes late to class, signing off early, or otherwise disrupting the class will receive no points for that week's attendance component.
 - NOTE: regular, repeated tardiness will be counted towards an additional grade deduction; the professor reserves the right to adjust the class attendance grade to account for the quality of class participation, collaboration, engagement, attentiveness, and other factors above and beyond the basic expectations of class attendance.
 - If you know you will be absent for any reason, please inform the professor *before* the class you will miss. Strive for perfect attendance!
- **UNDERGRADUATE students ONLY:**
- Book Analysis: Each student will select a text not already assigned as part of the course, either from a list of titles provided or their own choice, subject to professor's approval). Students will write an essay summarizing the book's argument and assessing its relevance to the course and course themes and will present on their findings during the last class meeting. The assignment is divided into three parts:
 - Book Analysis Proposal: due by 11:59pm on 10/13; 5% of grade
 - Book Analysis: due by 11:59pm on 12/1; 15% of grade, checked for plagiarism using Turnitin and assessed using a rubric.
 - Book Analysis Presentation: during class on 12/3 (and on 12/10 if necessary); 10% of grade, assessed using a rubric
- **GRADUATE students ONLY:**
- Research Paper: 4,500-7,000 words, totaling 40% of final grade (see below)
 - Consultation with the professor is required. Whenever possible, the term paper should fit into the student's wider academic trajectory.
 - Initial Proposals (1-2 pages of narrative, plus preliminary bibliography using MLA style) are due by 11:59 pm on Sun., 10/13 (5% of final grade). Students may be required to submit revised proposals, which are due no later than 11:59 pm on Sun., 10/27.
 - Student Presentations: Each student will prepare a 10-minute oral presentation on his/her research project for delivery and discussion during the last regular class meeting on 12/3 (or during the final exam time block on 12/10, if necessary): 10% of final grade.
 - Final Papers are due no later than 11:59 pm on FRIDAY 12/13 (25% of final grade). Please note that, due to the late due date, no extensions will be permitted, and no late papers accepted. Students failing to submit final papers by the deadline will receive either an IN or an F for the course, depending on the circumstances.
- Policies on **due dates:**
 - **All assignments are due by 11:59 pm on Sundays unless otherwise noted.**
 - As a courtesy, all assignments remain open for a 24-hour grace period to accommodate late submissions, technical difficulties, and the like (no questions asked). Students wishing to submit any assignment after the end of the grace period for any reason must contact the professor and explain their request.
 - **Keep *electronic* copies of all written work!** For your own protection, verify all electronic submissions before logging out of Canvas.
 - **NOTE: No assignments will be accepted after Dec. 14, for any reason.**

Other Course Policies and Expectations:

- READINGS must be completed **before the Module for which they are assigned** (see note re: Journal Entries above). Careful preparation of readings is essential for success in this course!

Students will be expected to actively participate in class discussions of and activities based on the readings.

- **STANDARDS for citation and referencing:** I recommend MLA style (see this [page](#) and follow the links as necessary). Students should use in-text MLA style abbreviated parenthetical references, *i.e.*, (Schwartz 90), and must provide full, accurate bibliographic information in a reference list at the end of every assignment. Points will be deducted for failure to use a proper referencing style. I use rubrics to assess your work and will share them with you in advance of the assignment due dates.
 - INTERNET sources are *acceptable* as references but use them with caution and suspicion: if you do use them, citations must include full url details and date accessed.
 - ALL written assignments must be typed, formatted in 11-12 point standard fonts, **double-spaced**, with one-inch margins.
 - SPELLING, grammar, neatness, clarity, style, organization, etc. all *DO* count! Poor writing will affect your grade. Strive for clarity and use your computer's spell-check program wisely.
 - RE-WRITE and revise your essays *before* turning them in; do not ask to do so afterwards. Ask yourself, Is this clear? Am I communicating my thoughts well? Would a friend in another class understand what I am saying?
- **You are expected to be honest in all academic work, consistent with the academic integrity policy as outlined in the [Code of Student Conduct](#).** Plagiarism and any and all forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is stealing someone else's words or original ideas. All work is to be appropriately cited when it is borrowed, directly or indirectly, from another source. Unauthorized and/or unacknowledged collaboration on any work, or the presentation of someone else's work, is plagiarism.
 - **Plagiarism** occurs in the following forms: (1) uncredited quotations (including words copied from elsewhere but not bracketed by quotation marks and quotations without proper citations and documentation) and (2) uncredited paraphrases.
 - Content generated by an Artificial Intelligence third-party service or site (**AI-generated content**) is another form of plagiarism. Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all writing assignments should be prepared by the student. Developing strong competencies in this area will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism.
 - To avoid plagiarism, students must properly cite the source material and must refrain from using AI-generated content. Only commonly known facts and concepts, general material learned in the course of research and study, and students' original ideas do not require citation. Students found violating standards risk receiving a grade of 0 on the assignment in question, may fail the course, and may be reported directly to the Office of Academic Affairs.
 - If you are unsure about whether something may be plagiarism or another form of academic dishonesty, please reach out to me to discuss it as soon as possible.
 - For useful guidelines, go to the [Plagiarism Prevention section](#) on the FIU Library's website.
 - FIU's [Center for Excellence in Writing](#) offers free services. Take advantage of them!
 - NOTE: Students are not permitted to submit the same work (*i.e.* a paper or essay) for different professors/courses. However, students may continue and extend a specific research project originally conducted for a different course in this course. This can only be done if the paper topic is approached and covered from a different angle, utilizing fresh research. The approval of the professor must be sought prior to undertaking the research, and the student must provide the professor with a copy of the prior work.

Zoom is a video conference tool that you can use to interact with your professor and fellow students by sharing screens, chatting, broadcasting live video/audio, and taking part in other interactive online activities. We will be utilizing this tool to conduct virtual office hours **and live lectures**.

Zoom Meetings will be held on the following dates/time:

- **Tuesdays 5-6:15pm**

GRADING

Late Assignment Submission Policy

N/A

Course Requirements	Number of Items	Points for Each	Total Points Available	UNDERGRAD Weight	GRAD Weight
Journal Entries	10	2	20	20%	20%
Book Analysis/Research Paper Proposal	1	5	5	5%	5%
Take-home Midterm	1	15	15	15%	10%
Book Analysis	1	15	15	15%	N/A
Research Paper	1	25	25	N/A	25%
Book Analysis/Research Presentation	1	10	10	10%	10%
Take-home Final Exam	1	20	20	20%	15%
Class Attendance and Participation	15	1	15	15%	15%
Total	0	N/A	0	100%	100%

Letter	Range (%)	Letter	Range (%)	Letter	Range (%)
A	93 or above	B	83 - 87	C	70 - 76
A-	90 - 92	B-	80 - 82	D	60 - 69
B+	88 - 89	C+	77 - 79	F	59 or less

COURSE CALENDAR

Modules	Topics, Instructional Materials, Assignments
Module 1	<p>Topic</p> <p>Introduction/Orientation: Student introductions. What is mysticism?</p> <p>Read</p> <p>Course <i>syllabus</i></p>
Module 2	<p>Topic</p> <p>Basic Jewish concepts and the roots of mysticism Survey of the history of Jewish mysticism</p> <p>Read</p> <p>Ariel: ix-63</p> <p>Assignments</p> <p>Journal Entry 1</p>
Module 3	<p>Topic</p> <p>Early mystical movements Merkavah mysticism, <i>Sefer Yetzirah</i></p> <p>Read</p> <p>Cohn-Sherbok: 7-86</p> <p><i>Additional Grad Reading: Dan: 7-41; 198-211</i></p> <p>Assignments</p> <p>Journal Entry 2</p>
Module 4	<p>Topic</p> <p>Early medieval texts Sefirot and the body of God</p> <p>Read</p> <p>Cohn-Sherbok: 87-113; Scholem: 15-55; Matt: 1-22, 73-88, 101-108.</p> <p><i>Additional Grad Reading: Dan: 63-77; 93-107.</i></p> <p>Assignments</p> <p>Journal Entry 3</p>

Module 5	<p>Topic</p> <p>Sefirot and the <i>Zohar</i></p> <p>Read</p> <p>Ariel: 65-94; Cohn-Sherbok: 113-118.</p> <p><i>Add'l Grad Reading: Dan: 42-62; 168-182.</i></p> <p>Assignments</p> <p>Journal Entry 4</p>
Module 6	<p>Topic</p> <p>Ein Sof and ayin: No-thing/nothing</p> <p>Read</p> <p>Cohn-Sherbok: 118-132; Matt: 23-72.</p> <p><i>Add'l Grad Reading: Green, 1st half</i></p> <p>Assignments</p> <p>Journal Entry 5</p>
Module 7	<p>Topic</p> <p>Torah and language: Divine speech Safedian mysticism and prophecy</p> <p>Read</p> <p>Ariel: 113-128; Matt: 133-146; Cohn-Sherbok: 133-150.</p> <p><i>Add'l Grad Reading: Green, 2nd half</i></p> <p>Assignments</p> <p>Journal Entry 6</p>
Module 8	<p>Topic</p> <p>Midterm Review</p> <p>Read</p> <p>Catch up on any missed reading assignments.</p> <p>Assignments</p> <p>Book Analysis Proposal</p>

Module 9	<p>Topic</p> <p>Lurianic Kabbalah: Exile and redemption, creation and emanation, tikkun and tzimtzum</p> <p>Read</p> <p>Cohn-Sherbok: 150-171; Ariel: 173-182; Matt: 89-99.</p> <p><i>Add'l Grad Reading: Matt, begin Zohar (continue every week until end of course)</i></p> <p>Assignments</p> <p>Take-home Midterm</p>
Module 10	<p>Topic</p> <p>Shekhinah, and sexuality: The feminine divine</p> <p>Read</p> <p>Ariel: 95-111; Scholem: 140-196.</p> <p>Assignments</p> <p>Journal Entry 7</p>
Module 11	<p>Topic</p> <p>The soul and its journey; Reincarnation</p> <p>Read</p> <p>Ariel: 129-148 (old Ariel: 123-138); Scholem: 197-250.</p> <p>Assignments</p> <p>Journal Entry 8</p>
Module 12	<p>Topic</p> <p>The origins of good and evil</p> <p>Read</p> <p>Scholem: 56-87.</p> <p>Assignments</p> <p>Journal Entry 9</p>
Module 13	<p>Topic</p> <p>Hasidism and the Tzaddik</p>

	<p>Read</p> <p>Cohn-Sherbok: 172-205; Ariel: 171-202 (old: 163-189); Scholem: 88-139.</p> <p>Assignments</p> <p>Journal Entry 10</p>
Module 14	<p>Topic</p> <p>Living the Mystic Quest; Course review and conclusions; Final Exam review</p> <p>Read</p> <p>Ariel: 149-170; 203-219; Matt: 109-131, 147-163.</p>
Module 15	<p>Topic</p> <p>Student Presentations</p> <p>Assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take-home Final Exam • Book Analysis Presentations • Book Analysis