

Pilgrimage, Travel, and Judaism

RELG/JWST 253
Oberlin College, Spring 2020
King 321
MWF 2:30-3:20

Professor Shari Rabin
Office: Rice Hall 324
srabin@oberlin.edu

Office Hours: Wednesday, 3:30-5:30pm or by appointment (sign up at tinyurl.com/profrabin)

The desire to seek spiritual fulfillment in a far-away place is a hallmark of many religious traditions, including Judaism. In this course we will trace the ancient and medieval roots of pilgrimage and various Jewish pilgrimage practices that have emerged in the modern period, in Israel as well as in Europe, North Africa, and the United States. Together, we will ask, what has motivated Jewish travelers? Have they found what they were looking for? How have their travels shaped – and been shaped by – the histories of their places of origin and of destination? How do we distinguish between pilgrimage and travel?

Learning Goals:

- to gain familiarity with Jewish history, religion, and culture
- to develop critical analyses of pilgrimage and travel, using historical and anthropological methods
- to strengthen abilities in writing and communication

Participation (10%):

This grade is based on your level and quality of attendance, preparedness, and engagement. This class requires that you do the reading and actively join in discussions and activities with good faith and generosity. You can take 3 (THREE) “personal days” over the course of the semester. If you miss more than three class sessions, it will affect your grade. Perfect participation grades are reserved for those who miss three or fewer classes *and* who distinguish themselves in their preparedness and participation.

Recap Quizzes (20%)

Four times during the semester, there will be a cumulative in-class quiz combining multiple choice and short answer questions (each worth 5%). These quizzes will be open-note and will be given on: February 17, March 2, April 13, and April 27.

On Written Assignments:

-Papers must be written in Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced with standard margins and using APA citation style. They should be submitted by email or via Blackboard, as Microsoft Word or PDF files.

-You can submit an optional draft 3 days before each deadline to receive feedback.

-You will be allotted one no-questions-asked 48-hour extension on an assignment.

Otherwise, 5 points will be deducted for each day that an assignment is late.

-You must adhere to the honor code in all class assignments. This means submitting your own original work and including clear citations of all sources. If you have questions about this, please contact me!

Travelogue Analysis (15%)

In 3 pages, read and analyze “Itinerary of Rabbi Samuel Ben Samson in 1210” in light of course readings and discussions. Due March 9 by 5pm.

Birthright Paper (20%)

In 4-5 pages, analyze the Birthright Israel trip, as described in Shaul Kelner’s *Tours that Bind*. Drawing on class readings and discussion, make an argument about the extent to which Birthright is continuous or discontinuous with traditional Jewish pilgrimage. Due April 6 by 5pm.

Research Project Proposal (35%)

In consultation with the professor, you will craft a 5-7-page research proposal for a topic related to the themes of the course. A 200-250 word abstract will be due April 20 by 5pm (5%) and you will give a brief presentation of your proposal during the last week of class. Final due May 16 at 7pm.

Required Book:

Shaul Kelner, *Tours that Bind* (available in the bookstore or as a free e-book through the Oberlin College library)

Week 1 - Introductions	
M Feb 3	Introductions
W Feb 5	Bruce Lincoln, “Theses on Method”
F Feb 7	<i>No Class Meeting</i>
Week 2 – Theorizing Pilgrimage and Travel	
M Feb 10	Studying Pilgrimage
W Feb 12	•James J. Preston, “Spiritual Magnetism: An Organizing Principle for the Study of Pilgrimage,” <i>Sacred Journeys</i> , 31-46
F Feb 14	•Erik Cohen, “Pilgrimage and Tourism: Convergence and Divergence,” <i>Sacred Journeys</i> , 47-60
<u>Part I: Historicizing Jewish Pilgrimage</u>	
Week 3 – The Origins of Pilgrimage	
M Feb 17 •Quiz #1	Israelite History and Second Temple Judaism
W Feb 19	•Exodus 23 •1 Kings 6-8 •Psalm 122
F Feb 21	•Benjamin D. Gordon, “Sightseeing and Spectacle at the Jewish Temple,” <i>AJS Review</i> (2019), 271-292
Week 4 – Jewish Travel in Antiquity	
M Feb 24	Rabbinic Judaism
W Feb 26	•Tziona Grossmark, “Talmudic Itineraria and Talmudic Pilgrimage: Tracing the Genre in the Babylonian

	Talmud,” <i>Mediterranean Studies</i> , 88-108
F Feb 28	•Eyal Ben-Eliyahu, “Rabbinic Literature confronts Nonrabbinic Jewish Culture and Christianity: The Question of Holy Spaces,” <i>Identity and Territory</i> , 110-130
Week 5 – Medieval Jewish Travel	
M March 2 •Quiz #2	Medieval Jews Under Crescent and Cross
W March 4	•Excerpts from <i>The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela</i> (c. 1160s)
F March 6	•Martin Jacobs, “Facing a Gentile Land of Israel,” <i>Reorienting the East: Jewish Travelers to the Medieval Muslim World</i> , 83-107
<u>Part II: Modern Destinations and Itineraries</u>	
Week 6 – Modern Israel: Destinations I	
M March 9 •Travelogue Analysis due at 5pm	Zionism and the State of Israel
W March 11	•Danielle Storper Perez and Harvey E. Goldberg, “Meanings of the Western Wall,” <i>The Life of Judaism</i> , 173-193
F March 13	•Edith Turner, “Bar Yohai, Mystic: The Creative Persona and His Pilgrimage,” <i>Creativity/ Anthropology</i> , 225-252
Week 7 – Modern Israel: Destinations II	
M March 16	•Yael Zerubavel, “The Rock and the Vow,” <i>Recovered Roots</i> , 114-146
W March 18	•Tamar Katriel, “Touring the Land: Trips and Hiking as Secular Pilgrimages in Israeli Culture,” 6-13
F March 20	•Julia Chaitin, “Here’s the border wall?: Political Tourism in the Holy Land,” <i>Conflict Resolution Quarterly</i> , 39-59
<i>Spring Recess</i>	
Week 8 – Modern Israel: Itineraries	
M March 30	•Shaul Kelner, <i>Tours that Bind</i>
W April 1	Christians in the Holy Land
F April 3	Israelis Abroad
Week 9 – Hasidim	
M April 6 •Birthright Paper due at 5pm	Hasidism
W April 8	•Alla Marchenko, “In the Eyes of Uman Pilgrims: A Vision of Place and its Inhabitants,” <i>Contemporary Jewry</i> , 227-247
F April 10	•Stefanie Halpern, “A Meeting of Life and Death: Ritual and Performance at the Ohel, the Grave of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson,” <i>Journal of Ritual Studies</i> , 21-34

Week 10 – North Africa	
M April 13 •Quiz #3	Jews in North Africa
W April 15	•Shlomo Deshen, “Near the Jerba Beach: Tunisian Jews, an Anthropologist, and Other Visitors,” <i>Jewish Social Studies</i> , 90-118
F April 17	•Andre Levy, “To Morocco and Back: Tourism and Pilgrimage among Moroccan-Born Israelis,” in <i>Grasping Land: Space and Place in Contemporary Israeli Discourse and Experience</i> , 25-46
Week 11 – History and Heritage I	
M April 20	Jews in Europe
W April 22	•Nils Roemer, “The City of Worms in Modern Jewish Traveling Cultures of Remembrance,” <i>Jewish Social Studies</i> , 67-91
F April 24	•Jackie Feldman, “Marking the Boundaries of the Enclave: Defining the Israeli Collective through the Poland ‘Experience,’” <i>Israel Studies</i> , pp. 84-114. •Selections from David Slucki, <i>Sing this at my Funeral</i>
Week 12 – History and Heritage II	
M April 27 •Quiz #4	Jews in the United States
April 28 - Film Screening: <i>Yippee: A Journey to Jewish Joy</i> (2006), Wilder 101	
W April 29	•Jack Kugelmass, “Turving the Slum: New York City’s Tenement Museum and the Politics of Heritage,” <i>Remembering the Lower East Side</i> , 179-211
F May 1	•Michael Twitty, “I Had Never Eaten in Ghana Before. But My Ancestors Had,” <i>Bon Appetit</i> , August 16, 2018 •Jennifer Moses, “Glimmers of Jewish Glory Days in Baltimore,” <i>New York Times</i> , April 5, 2013
Week 13 – Conclusions	
M May 4	Presentations
W May 6	Presentations
F May 8	Presentations and Conclusions