



RELG/JWST 253
MWF 2:40-3:30
Rice Hall 100B
Office Hours: sign up at tinyurl.com/profrabin

Oberlin College, Spring 2021
Professor Shari Rabin
srabin@oberlin.edu

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

Active Engagement (10%):

This grade assesses your preparedness and engagement, which can be demonstrated by commenting in class, asking thoughtful questions, and/or attending office hours. Completing in-class activities is necessary to earn a high grade, but completing in-class activities alone will not merit an A.

Disability Accommodations:

Students should notify the Office of Disability Resources and their instructor of any disability-related needs. More information at: <http://oberlin.edu/disability-resources>.

On Discussions:

- In a liberal arts course, discussion is one of the main – and best – techniques for learning.
- Everyone is invited to contribute to discussions. When you do so, you should use respectful language and informed arguments that are based on reliable sources. Avoid generalizations

and stereotypes, unsupported claims, and logical fallacies. Racist terms and abusive language will not be tolerated.

-It is also crucial that you make space for other voices to be heard. When your classmates are speaking, you should listen carefully, assume good intentions, and respond – especially if you disagree – by engaging with the substance of their argument.

-You will get the most out of this class if you see it as an opportunity to learn and grow. This means approaching discussions with a spirit of openness to the – sometimes difficult – process of understanding new ideas, receiving feedback, and developing as a thinker.

-During class, please avoid texting, checking your cellphone, or doing other activities that distract you, me, and/or your classmates from our shared pursuit of learning.

On Written Assignments:

-Papers must be written in Times New Roman, 12-point font, double-spaced with standard margins and using Chicago citation style. They should be submitted via email by 5pm, as Microsoft Word or PDF files.

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

-You must adhere to the honor code in all class assignments (more info at: <http://oberlin.edu/studentpolicies/honorcode>). This means submitting your own original work and including clear citations of all sources. If you have questions about this, please contact me!

On Deadlines:

Assignment deadlines have an important function within the larger trajectory of this course, so it is important that you meet them whenever possible. If you need an extension to complete an assignment, please do not hesitate to reach out, but you should do so *before* the missed deadline. You can also make up any missed work for partial credit up until the last day of class.

On Reading:

The assigned reading is the core of this class and the basis for our shared intellectual endeavors. You are expected to read carefully, take notes on material that surprises/interests/confuses you, and come to class prepared to discuss. In this course weekly reading questions will be posted in Blackboard – I suggest that you read with these questions in mind.

Travelogue (30%)

Each week you will write a two-paragraph reflection on “where” you have gone in class the preceding week.

- In the first paragraph you should reflect generally on what you’ve learned about the material and/or about yourself as a student and scholar (you can also let me know if you have any concerns or suggestions).
- In the second paragraph, you should answer one of the weekly reading questions *or* select and unpack a specific quotation from one of the course readings that was intriguing to you.
- Because this assignment is tracking your development over time, it is important that they be submitted weekly, via Blackboard, by Sundays at 5pm. Your work in each unit of the course will count for 10% of your final grade.

Secondary Source Handout (10%)

At the beginning of the semester, I will distribute a worksheet on reading secondary sources. Twice you must complete the handout for a source marked on the syllabus with this symbol:

- The first must be completed by March 12. I plan to use this assignment to shape class discussion, so it is important that you submit it, via Blackboard, before class-time on the day the secondary source is assigned.

Birthright Paper (25%)

In 4-5 pages, analyze the Birthright Israel trip, as described in Shaul Kelner's *Tours that Bind*.

Drawing on class readings and discussions, answer the question, is Birthright a Jewish pilgrimage? Due April 11 at 5pm

Final Exam (25%)

An open-book, open-note essay exam designed to assess your engagement with course materials.

Required Book:

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

*Primary Source

•Secondary Source

Week 1 – Theoretical Approaches	
M Feb 1	Introductions
W Feb 3	•“What does it mean to be religious?,” <i>Keeping it 101 Podcast</i> , episode 105
F Feb 5	•Turner and Turner, “Pilgrimage as a Liminoid Phenomenon,” <i>Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture</i> , 1-38
<u>Part I: Historicizing Jewish Pilgrimage</u>	
Week 2 – The Origins of Pilgrimage	
M Feb 8	Israelite History and Second Temple Judaism
W Feb 10	*Excerpts from the Hebrew Bible
F Feb 12	•Benjamin D. Gordon, “Sightseeing and Spectacle at the Jewish Temple,” <i>AJS Review</i> (2019), 271-292
Week 3 – Jewish Travel in Antiquity	
M Feb 15	Rabbinic Judaism
W Feb 17	*Excerpts from the Babylonian Talmud
F Feb 19	•Eyal Ben-Eliyahu, “Rabbinic Literature confronts Nonrabbinic Jewish Culture and Christianity: The Question of Holy Spaces,” <i>Identity and Territory</i> , 110-130
Week 4 – Medieval Jewish Travel	
M Feb 22	Medieval Jews
W Feb 24	*Excerpts from <i>The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela</i> (c. 1160s) *“Itinerary of Rabbi Samuel Ben Samson in 1210”

F Feb 26	•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 5 – Travel in Modernity	
M Mar 1	•James Clifford, "In Media Res," <i>Routes</i> , 1-16
W Mar 3	•James J. Preston, "Spiritual Magnetism: An Organizing Principle for the Study of Pilgrimage," <i>Sacred Journeys</i> , 31-46
F Mar 5	•Erik Cohen, "Pilgrimage and Tourism: Convergence and Divergence," <i>Sacred Journeys</i> , 47-60
Week 6 – Modern Israel: Destinations I	
M Mar 8	Zionism and the State of Israel
W Mar 10	•Danielle Storper Perez and Harvey E. Goldberg, "Meanings of the Western Wall," <i>The Life of Judaism</i> , 173-193
F Mar 12	•Edith Turner, "Bar Yohai, Mystic: The Creative Persona and His Pilgrimage," <i>Creativity/ Anthropology</i> , 225-252
Week 7 – Modern Israel: Destinations II	
M Mar 15	Zionist Travel Culture
W Mar 17	•Yael Zerubavel, "The Rock and the Vow," <i>Recovered Roots</i> , 114-146
F Mar 19	•Yitzhak Reiter, "Contest or cohabitation in shared holy places?: The Cave of the Patriarchs and Samuel's Tomb," in <i>Holy Places in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict</i> , 158-175
Week 8 – Modern Israel: Itineraries	
M Mar 22	No Class -Wellness Day
W Mar 24	•Hillary Kaell, "Feeling the Gospel: Evangelicals, Place, and Presence," <i>Walking Where Jesus Walked</i> , 76-98
F Mar 26	•Chaim Noy, "Israeli Backpacking Since the 1960s: Institutionalization and its Effects," <i>Tourism Recreation Research</i> , 39-53.
Week 9 – Tours that Bind	
M Mar 29	•Shaul Kelner, <i>Tours that Bind</i> – Group 1
W Mar 31	•Shaul Kelner, <i>Tours that Bind</i> – Group 2
F Apr 2	•Shaul Kelner, <i>Tours that Bind</i> – Paper Workshop
<u>Part III: Diasporic Pilgrimages</u>	
Week 10 – North Africa	
M Apr 5	Jews in North Africa
W Apr 7	•Shlomo Deshen, "Near the Jerba Beach: Tunisian Jews, an Anthropologist, and Other Visitors," <i>Jewish Social Studies</i> , 90-118
F Apr 9	•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
S Apr 11	Birthright Paper due at 5pm
Week 11 – Hasidim	
M Apr 12	Hasidism

W Apr 14	•Akao Mitsuharu, “Hasidic Pilgrimage to Uman, Past and Present: The Ambiguous Centrality of a Jewish Sacred Place in Ukraine,” <i>Jews and Slavs</i> 11 (2003): 121–144.
F Apr 16	•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 12 – History and Heritage I	
M Apr 19	Jews in Modern Europe
W Apr 21	•Nils Roemer, “The City of Worms in Modern Jewish Traveling Cultures of Remembrance,” <i>Jewish Social Studies</i> , 67-91
F Apr 23	*David Slucki, “Return,” <i>Sing this at my Funeral</i> , 78-102
Week 13 - History and Heritage II	
M Apr 26	Jews in the United States
W Apr 28	•Hasia Diner, Jeffrey Shandler, and Beth S. Wenger, “Introduction,” <i>Remembering the Lower East Side</i> , 1-9 *Aaron Galbraith, “A Pilgrimage to the Vanishing Streets of my Grandmother's Lower East Side,” <i>Tablet</i> , December 9, 2013 *Michael Twitty, “I Had Never Eaten in Ghana Before. But My Ancestors Had,” <i>Bon Appetit</i> , August 16, 2018
F Apr 30	•Rachel Gross, “Ghosts in the Gallery: Historic Synagogues as Heritage Sites,” <i>Beyond the Synagogue</i> , 77-115
Week 14	
M May 4	Conclusions