

JEWES AND CHRISTIANS IN THE ROMAN WORLD

GS/ Huma 6209 = Hist 5027

Fall/Winter 2010–2011

NB: This is a draft, sketched in rough (early April 2010) for the sole purpose of informing prospective students about the aims, scope, and nature of the course. The final syllabus will include week-by-week readings and clear indications of the means of assessment.

Instructor: Steve Mason

Meeting Schedule: Mondays, 4:00 to 7:00 p.m., Ross N 837

Aim and Scope

Relations between Jews and Christians have provided one of the primary, even defining, themes of western history for nearly two millennia. Because we are led to study these relations in antiquity because both traditions have survived and continue to interact today, it is a nearly irresistible temptation to project what seem obvious assumptions today—for example, that Judaism and Christianity are “religions”—onto the ancient landscape. Yet an effort to understand their origins and early encounters in historical terms requires careful attention to the categories and conditions that obtained in the Graeco-Roman world. This course takes up such an investigation for approximately the first three and half Christian centuries: to the point at which Christians gained the support of Roman rulers, and their ascendancy decisively altered relations with the Jews. Our methods are therefore historical (seeking to recover ancient conditions, discourses, categories, events, and their contextual meaning), not theological or confessional, and we shall need to reflect constantly on what historical method means. Because most of our evidence is literary, we also need to think about the interpretation of ancient texts, with due attention to rhetorical education and its values. Where we have material evidence (e.g., coins, building sites and small finds, inscriptions), we try to make informed use of it as well.

Needless to say, a single graduate course tackling these issues must be extremely selective. It cannot be an introductory survey of the material in question, though it may provide some students with their first encounter with these issues. The course does not presuppose specialist knowledge, but it must focus on a few issues. These relate especially to methods (i.e., reflection on what we are trying to achieve and how we proceed) and categories. For example, we discover early that what we now call “Judaism” and “Christianity” are anachronisms. Their ancient counterparts were very different kinds of phenomena. To help us enter imaginatively into the ancient situation, we devote the first few weeks to identifying and understanding categories relevant to “religion” in the Graeco-Roman world: ethnography, city culture, temple states, priesthoods, sacrificial cult, myth, philosophical schools, and imagery. The second part of the course takes up relevant aspects of Jewish (Judaean) life at the time. This includes examination of relations between Judaeans and Romans through the

three major revolts against Roman rule (66–74, 116–117, 132–135 CE) and their consequences. The third part of the course examines key moments in the origins and development of the diverse groups we call Christianity, with particular attention to various Christian attitudes toward Judaeans and, where evidence exists, Judaeans' reactions.

This course is, then, a sustained inquiry into problems of cultural identity and interaction in one of the most consequential periods of human society.

Provisional Outline

1. Introductory Class: central problems in the study of ancient Judaism and Christianity

Part I. Some Relevant Categories in the Graeco-Roman World

2. Ethnography: peoples, places, and customs; laws and ancestral traditions. Regional variation.
3. *Polis* and *chōra*: social structures in the Greek city; aristocracies and priesthoods
4. Sacrificial cult: the Gods must have their due. Cults public and private. Roman imperial cult. Myth, its representation, and its meanings. Criticism of myth and cult.
5. Repent and live right: philosophical schools.

Part II. Judaeans and their Cultures in the Graeco-Roman World

6. The *polis* Jerusalem, its *chōra* Judaea, and their neighbours.
7. Developments under Hasmoneans and King Herod; relations with Rome.
8. Lethal conflict: wars against Rome (66–74, 116–117, 132–135 CE).
9. Graeco-Roman perceptions of Judaeans and their culture.
10. Judaeans' philosophers: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes.
11. Judaeans in Rome.
12. Judaeans in Greece and Asia Minor.
13. Judaeans in Alexandria and Egypt.

Part III. Christian Efforts at Self-definition in Relation to Judaeans and Roman Society

14. The earliest known Christian writer: Paul, Paulinism, and the Judaeans

15. Early reactions: Matthew and Luke-Acts
16. Varieties of Christian philosophy: Q, Thomas, Justin, Clement
17. Graeco-Roman perceptions of the early Christians: Celsus, Porphyry
18. Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho, a Judaeon*; material evidence of relations
19. Judaizing tendencies in early Christianity, from Ignatius
20. Marcion to Tertullian: Christianity's redefinition of categories
22. Eusebius of Caesarea on Judaeon culture; emperor Constantine
23. John Chrysostom, Judaeans, and Judaizing in Antioch
24. The emperor Julian, the Christians, and the Judaeans: reasserting old categories

Representative Readings

NB: This short list is offered for students who may wish to read ahead. The required course texts will be chosen from among those marked with asterisks*, though I need more time to consider the optimal selection (and find out what is available).

Barclay, John M. G. *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996.

Beard, Mary, and John North with Simon Price. *Religions of Rome*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998.

Benko, Stephen. *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984

Bilde, Per, ed., *Ethnicity in Hellenistic Egypt*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1992.

*Curtis, Adrian, ed., *Oxford Bible Atlas*, 4th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Dignas, Beate, and Kai Trampedach, eds., *Practitioners of the Divine: Greek Priests and Religious Officials from Homer to Heliodorus*. Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2008.

Donaldson, Terence L., ed., *Religious Rivalries and the Struggle for Success in Caesarea Maritima*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000.

*Grabbe, Lester L. *Judaic Religion in the Second Temple Period: belief and practice from the Exile to Yavneh*. London: Routledge, 2000.

*Grabbe, Lester L. *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*. London: T. & T. Clark, 2004.

Granskou, David M., Peter Richardson, S. G. Wilson, eds., *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity*. 2 vols. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986.

Isaac, Benjamin H. *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Kasher, Aryeh. *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt: the Struggle for Equal Rights*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985.

Kasher, Aryeh. *Jews and Hellenistic Cities in Eretz Israel: Relations of the Jews in Eretz-Israel with the Hellenistic Cities During the Second Temple Period (332-70 CE)*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990.

*Lieu, Judith. *Image and Reality: the Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996.

Leon, Harry J. *The Jews of Ancient Rome*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1960.

*Mason, Steve and Tom Robinson. *Early Christian Reader*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2004.

Modrzejewski, Joseph Méleze. *The Jews of Egypt: From Rameses 2 to Emperor Hadrian*, trans. Robert Cornman. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Price, Simon R. F. "Gods and Emperors: The Greek Language of the Roman Imperial Cult." *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 104 (1984): 79-95.

Price, Simon R. F. *Rituals and Power: the Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

*Rives, J. B. *Religion in the Roman Empire*, Blackwell Ancient Religions. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2007.

*Rüpke, Jörg, and Richard Gordon. *Religion of the Romans*. Cambridge: Polity, 2007.

Rutgers, Leonard V. *Making Myths: Jews in Early Christian Identity Formation*. Leuven: Peeters, 2009.

*Sanders, E. P. *Judaism, Practice and Belief, 63 BCE – 66 CE*. London; Philadelphia: SCM; TPI, 1992.

Schäfer, Peter. *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1997.

*Schäfer, Peter. *The History of the Jews in the Greco-Roman World*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Stern, Menahem. *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism: Edited with Introductions, Translations and Commentary*. 3 vols. Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences, 1974-84.

Trebilco, Paul. *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Vaage, Leif E., ed., *Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006.

*Whittaker, Molly. *Jews and Christians: Graeco-Roman Views*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

*Wilken, Robert Louis. *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*. 2nd edn. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.

*Wilson, Stephen G. *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70-170 C.E.* Minneapolis; Fortress Press, 1995.

Evaluation

I have not yet settled on the means of evaluation. Most likely, students will be asked to prepare one paper each term, with one or two preliminary elements (proposal, outline, bibliography).

The course-participation component of the evaluation may include one or more of these: weekly prepared questions and/or summary of the week's reading for submission; in-class review of a book or substantial article relevant to one's research for the paper; leading one week's discussion through half a session; presentation of work in progress. Because there is so much relevant literature, and so little that we shall all be able to read together in the time available, I incline toward including in-class reviews of books and articles, for our general enlightenment.