Course Description
This class is intended to serve as a broad introduction to Jewish history beginning with the first centuries of the Common Era until the end of the Middle Ages (18th Cent.). The class will examine some of the central themes and patterns in Jewish history as we focus on the development of the major Jewish communities both in Christian Europe and the Arab/Muslim world, observing the main similarities and differences between them. We will devote our attention especially to the ways in which Jewish culture and identity were constructed in these various communities during the Middle Ages, as well as to the relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish cultures and communities during this time. We will read narrative as well as documentary histories and discuss different theoretical approaches to the writing of Jewish history (historiography).

Required Texts (available at the F & M bookstore)
Jane Gerber, *The Jews of Spain*
Norman Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands*
Leonard Glick, *Abraham’s Heirs: Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe*
Jacob Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World* (Revised Edition Only!)
*The Memoirs of Gluckel of Hameln*

Course Requirements
-- **Reading Response (25% of final grade):** This will consist of ten 1 page responses to thematic questions about the assigned weekly secondary readings. Questions on the weekly readings are included below in the syllabus. The responses are due in class on Friday unless otherwise noted. Additional guidelines will be provided.

-- **Two Primary Text Analysis Essays (each essay is worth 15% of the final grade, 30% total):** This will consist of a 3-4 page close reading of a primary text. Additional guidelines will be provided. Primary text #1 is due on 10/3; Primary Text #2 is due on 11/3.

-- **Group Discussions & Study Questions (20%):** Students will be assigned to discussion groups at the beginning of the semester. Small group discussions will be an integral part of our class, and will make up 1/5 of your final grade. Group discussions will take place on various days, and will last approximately 15-30 minutes depending on the assignment.
Groups will discuss an assigned reading passage and answer study questions, as well as take part in a larger class discussion of the text. Students must bring to class all of the assigned texts for the week. (See accompanying guidelines.)

--Final Essay (25% of final grade): In place of in-class exams, students will write a 6-8 page thematic essay on a broad, cumulative topic, provided by me. The final essay is due on the last day of class (12/12).

Class Format & Policies
--Format: Class time will be divided between lectures and small-group and class discussions. Generally, the first half of class will be for topical overviews, background lectures, etc., with the latter part of class involving some kind of discussion. All students are expected to take part in class discussions and not be afraid to express their opinions and ask questions as this is a valuable part of the learning experience.

--Participation and Attendance: Participation in small group and class discussions is a required part of class and will help determine final grades. All students are expected to take part and actively contribute to discussions; Regular attendance in class is also required; more than 3 unexcused absences will lower your final grade by 1/3 (A to A-, etc.) for each absence. Medical reasons or family emergencies, accidents, etc. count as excused absences when accompanied by proper documentation.

--Class Etiquette: Please arrive on time and don’t leave early without prior notification. Be courteous to me and your classmates by not talking when someone else is, turning off your cell phones, not reading outside materials or playing on your laptops, etc. Laptop use in class is o.k. as long as you are using it for taking notes or doing class-related work.

--Class Readings: Reading of assigned weekly passages should be done as early in the week as possible; reading response papers will be do on Fridays; students must bring assigned primary texts to class (Marcus and Stillman).

--Grading Scale: The following grading scale will be used in this class: 93-100=A; 90-92=A-; 87-89=B+; 83-86=B; 80-82=B-; 77-79=C+; 73-76=C; 70-72=C-; 67-69=D+; 63-66=D; 60-62=D-; 59 and below=F. For assignments receiving straight letter grades, A=96, B=86, C=76, D=66, F=59. All incomplete assignments will receive a 0.

--Academic Honesty: All written course work must be done individually (except for groups discussion questions), and all outside sources included in your work (e.g. books, websites, course lecture notes, etc.) must be cited properly. Proper guidelines for maintaining academic honesty will be distributed.

--Consultation with Professor: Students may consult with me during office hours, or by scheduling an appointment, and are welcome to meet with me whenever the need arises.
Questions can be directed to me in person, via e-mail and through my office tel. # 358-4675.

**Course Resources:**

eDisk: Course materials such as the syllabus, assignment guidelines, lecture outlines, and supplemental readings will be available in the distribution folder for this class located on eDisk.

Websites: In the eDisk distribution folder for this class is a collection of helpful websites that will provide background information, glossaries, etc. that will be invaluable in helping you with difficult terms, concepts, etc. Please only use websites given or approved by me, and if you use material from them in your written work, make sure to cite them properly.

**Course Schedule**

**Week #1 (9/3--9/5) Introduction to Jewish History**

Topics: Introduction to themes of course; defining elements of Jewish history; Discussion of class requirements, format, scope, etc.; Approaches to studying Jewish history

Readings (for 9/5): Excerpt from *Cultures of the Jews*, David Biale (eDisk)

**Week #2 (9/8--9/12) From Roman Antiquity to Early Christian Europe**

Topics: Overview of Diaspora Jewish history in the Roman Empire & beyond; Jews among early Christians; the first European Jews

Readings: Glick, pp. 1-40; Gerber, pp. 1-26; Marcus, pp. 3-8, 22-25, 113-127

Reading Response #1: What were the major sources of friction between early Christians and Jews and in what ways did this friction manifest itself?

**Week #3 (9/15--9/19) the Jews in Arab/Muslim Lands: Origins & the Early Years**

Topics: Jewish Settlement in Pre-Islamic Arabia, centers in the Arab world; Jewish Status under Islam: Law, Society, Economics; Jewish culture and communal life in Arab/Islamic lands; Interactions between Jews and Muslims (and Christians)

Readings: Stillman, pp. 3-39, 149-182

Reading Response #2: How would you characterize the role and status of Jews “under the new order” of Islam in its first three centuries?
Week #4 (9/22--9/26) The Jews of Germany & France to the Crusades (1096)
Topics: Origins of Jewish settlement in Northern Europe; the cultural, religious & intellectual life of Ashkenazi Jews; Jewish communal structures; Jewish-Christian interactions: religion, politics, economics
Readings: Glick, pp. 41-90; Marcus, pp. 340-346, 404-405
Reading Response #3: What were some of the defining features of Jewish life (political, economic, social, religious) in Germany and France during this period?

Week #5 (9/29--10/3) the Jews of Muslim Spain (Sephard) through the Golden Age
Topics: Jewish cultural, political, religious & intellectual life in Muslim Spain; the “Golden Age” of Spain: Medieval Jewish Philosophy, Secular Hebrew poetry, the state of Jewish-Muslim relations
Readings: Gerber, pp. 27-91; Marcus, pp. 335-338, 347-350, 428-432 (top)
Reading Response #4: According to Gerber, what were the essential facets of the “Golden Age” culture of the Jews of Spain?
**Primary Text Analysis #1 due on 10/3**

Week #6 (10/6--10/10) Jews in the Islamic High Middle Ages: A True Golden Age?
Topics: Exploration of Jewish culture in the Islamic world (900-1200 CE); Discussion of the “Golden Age” in the Muslim world: myth vs. reality; theories of cultural symbiosis between Jews, Muslims, & Christians
Readings: Stillman, pp. 40-63, 183-254; Marcus, pp. 209-212, 323-328; Halkin, Cohen & Stillman articles (eDisk)
Reading Response #5: What are some of the problems with considering Jewish history from this time and place a true “Golden Age”?

Week #7 (10/13--10/17) The Crusades and its Aftermath for Ashkenazi Jews
Topics: The Crusades of 1096 & 1147 and the massacres of the Jews of the Rhineland; the social, political, and religious consequences of the Crusades; Religious Movements: The Pietists of Ashkenaz vs. the Tosafists; Spread of anti-Jewish violence & allegations
Readings: Glick, pp. 91-154, 180-183; Marcus, pp. 128-152
Reading Response #6: What were some of the main effects that the Crusader massacres and subsequent anti-Jewish persecutions had on the life and culture of Ashkenazi Jews?

Week #8 (10/22--10/24) Persecution, Expulsion, & Decline in Ashkenaz
No Class on 10/20, Fall Break
Topics: Political and religious persecution of European Jews; the worsening state of Christian-Jewish relations; the economic roles of medieval Jews; Expulsions of the Jews & the Eastward migration of Ashkenazi Jews
Readings: Glick, pp. 155-203, 234-274; Marcus, pp. 46-57, 153-173
Reading Response #7: What are some possible explanations for the decline in Jewish status and the increasing persecution and demonization of the Jews during this period?
Week #9 (10/27--10/31) Jewish life in Christian Spain: Reconquista to Expulsion

Topics: the Reconquista & Convivencia: the place of the Jews in Christian Spain; the state of Christian-Jewish relations: the Purity of Blood laws, Disputations, Conversions; Conversos (New Christians) & Marranos (Crypto-Jews), the Spanish Inquisition & the Expulsion of the Jews in 1492

Readings: Gerber, pp. 91-144; Marcus, pp. 38-44, 59-68, 214-216

Reading Response #8: What were some of the factors in Spanish society most responsible for the increased persecution and ultimate expulsion of the Spanish Jews in 1492?

Week #10 (11/3--11/7) Decline, Stagnation & Revival in the in the Muslim World

Topics: the flourishing Sephardic Diaspora in the Ottoman Empire; Persecution & Marginalization in Arab Lands

Readings: Stillman, pp. 64-94, 255-305; Gerber, pp. 145-175; Marcus, pp. 470-76

Reading Response #9: What were some of the central elements of Sephardic revival in the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century?

**Primary Text #2 is due on 11/3

Week #11 (11/10--11/14) The Journey East: The Jews of Poland (15th-18th cents.)

Topics: the origins of the Polish Jewish community, Jewish-Christian Relations; Jewish Community structure in Poland, Cultural & religious patterns; the place of the Jews in the Polish economy and political structure

Readings: “Jews of Poland” (eDisk); Marcus, pp. 233-238, 508-520, 523-24, 529-531, 391-394

Reading Response #10: What were some of the defining elements of the Jewish community in Poland?


Topics: Sephardic Jews/ Marranos in West Europe; Rationalism & Mercantilism; Sephardic Settlers in the New World

Readings: Gerber, pp. 177-211; Marcus, pp. 80-85, 92-95, 381-388

Reading Response #11: What were some of the major factors accounting for Sephardic mobility and expansion both in Western Europe and especially into the New World?

**Final Essay Topics Assigned on 11/21

Week #13 (11/24 ) Jewish Life in Western Europe 16th-18th Centuries

[No class 11/26-11/28 for thanksgiving Break]

Topics: Background for Gluckel of Hameln

Readings: Memoirs of Gluckel of Hameln, pp. 1-39

No Reading Response
**Week #14 (12/1--12/5) Jewish Life in Western Europe cont.**

**Topics:** Forced Migrations, Expulsions, Readmittance of Jewish communities; Jews & the Reformation; Emergence of Jewish Mercantilism, Court Jews; Expanding role of Jewish women

**Readings:** Gluckel, pp. 40-145; Marcus, pp. 76-78, 178-189, 224-225; 486-488

**Reading Response #12:** What is the predominate picture of German Jewish life that Gluckel paints in her memoir?

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**Week #15 (12/8-12/12) Jews of East & West on the Cusp of Modernity**

**Topics:** Growth of Enlightenment Thought and Civil/Political Rights (Emancipation) for Jews; Beginnings of Religious reforms and transformation: challenge to rabbinic Judaism

**Readings:** Gluckel, pp. 146-221

**No Reading Response**

**Final Essays due on 12/12**