

# Jewish-Muslim Relations

JWST 3397/ARAB 3397/RELS 3396

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Wednesday 2:30-5:30

Agnes Arnold Hall 201

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**Course description:** Students will learn from instructors, guest speakers, texts, and videos the complex but often symbiotic relationship between Jews and Muslims, how this relationship has evolved over more than a millennium, and what its future prospects are in our world. Jewish-Muslim relations are often viewed exclusively through the lens of conflict, which only tells part of the story. What is lost in this characterization is that both peoples have also influenced one another, intermarried, and sometimes shared the same fate and fortune. We will discuss dealings between Jews and Muslims during the rise and spread of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, during the Middle Ages under both Christian and Muslim empires, and during the Ottoman period. We will also explore how relations between Jewish and Muslim communities have fared since the rise of Zionism and the founding of the modern state of Israel. We will spend several weeks on modern Jewish-Muslim relations, especially in the U.S., and we will hear from members of both

communities about the challenges and opportunities of Jewish-Muslim dialogue in the contemporary world.

**Course goals:**

- Become familiar with the broad outlines of Jewish and Muslim religion, especially places where the two faiths have influenced one another or share common elements.
- Develop an understanding of patterns of relationship between Jews and Muslims from the rise of Islam to the present day.
- Be able to explain how political, religious, and economic developments have influenced relations between Jews and Muslims.
- Develop your ability to read and respond, both orally and in writing, to primary and secondary source texts in a scholarly, critical manner.

**Required Texts:**

- Abdelwahab Meddeb & Benjamin Stora, *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations: From the Origins to the Present Day*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- Reza Aslan and Aaron Hahn Tapper, *Muslims and Jews in America: Commonalities, Contentions, and Complexities*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Both of these texts will be available on reserve at the M.D. Anderson Library.

Selected articles and short videos will be posted on Blackboard.

**Course requirements and policies:**

1. Attendance is required at all sessions. If you must miss class, please *let either or both professors know in advance* if possible; it will be your responsibility to make up work that you have missed.
2. You are entitled to two absences, no questions asked, without your attendance and participation grade suffering. Further absences will affect your grade unless they are excused. Examples of excused absences include holidays, personal illness, or family emergency. Documentation of absences may be requested by the professors for them to count as excused.
3. This class is discussion- and participation-based. Therefore, except in cases of serious extenuating circumstances, students missing more than one-quarter of the total number of class sessions will be ineligible for a passing grade in the course.
4. Class participation is important and counts significantly toward your grade! Please come to class prepared to contribute to class discussions. You are expected to do the assigned readings for every class, share insights or ask questions, and thus contribute to the class discussions.

5. It is impossible to pay attention and participate if you are on Facebook or Twitter, so please refrain from using your computer, tablet, or phone during class time for any non-class-related purpose. You are strongly encouraged to use paper and pen to take notes.
6. Bring assigned readings to class each session.
7. In between class sessions, we may occasionally need to communicate important information to the class via e-mail. It is your responsibility to check your university e-mail regularly.
8. Students will complete the following coursework:
  - a. Weekly response papers: Students will write weekly responses to course readings. Responses should be about one page double-spaced, or roughly 250 words. Please do your best to stick to the word limit. Responses should be handed in via TurnItIn by class time each week. Response questions will be sent via e-mail each week. Response papers will be graded as check (adequate understanding of and engagement with the readings; corresponds to 85), check-plus (superior understanding of and engagement with the readings; corresponds to 100), check-minus (deficient understanding of and engagement with the readings; corresponds to 70), or 0 (complete misunderstanding of the readings, very incomplete answers, or missed paper). The lowest two response paper grades will be dropped.
  - b. Take-home midterm: Students will complete a take-home midterm exam, which will be posted on February 28 and due on **March 6**. The maximum word count for this assignment is 750 words, or about three pages.
  - c. Take-home final: Students will complete a take-home final exam, which will be posted on April 24 and due on **May 1**. The maximum word count for this assignment is 750 words, or about three pages.
  - d. Students will work together in groups to create virtual museum exhibits on the history of Jewish-Muslim relations. Groups will present their work on the final day of class, **April 24**.
9. Extra credit points will be available for attending campus events and/or completing an additional assignment. Please stay tuned!
10. This syllabus is subject to change, but we will notify you of any substantive changes with as much notice as possible.

**Grading:**

Attendance and participation	20%
Weekly response papers	30%
Take-home midterm	15%
Take-home final	20%
Group project	15%

97-100: A+	77-79: C+
93-96: A	73-76: C
90-92: A-	70-72: C-
87-89: B+	67-69: D+
83-86: B	63-66: D
80-82: B-	60-62: D-
	<60: F

### **Academic integrity:**

Students at the University of Houston are required to adhere to the university's academic honesty policy. If you are unsure how the honesty policy applies to a given assignment in this course, please ask. There will be zero tolerance towards any type of academic dishonesty (including plagiarism) and all violations will be referred to the department hearing officer.

According to plagiarism.org, plagiarism includes:

- a. "turning in someone else's work as your own
- b. copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- c. failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- d. giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- e. changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- f. copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not" (<http://www.plagiarism.org/plagiarism-101/what-is-plagiarism>)

### **CAPS Statement:**

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) can help students who are having difficulties managing stress, adjusting to college, or feeling sad and hopeless. You can reach CAPS ([www.uh.edu/caps](http://www.uh.edu/caps)) by calling 713-743-5454 during and after business hours for routine appointments or if you or someone you know is in crisis. No appointment is necessary for the "Let's Talk" program, a drop-in consultation service at convenient locations and hours around campus. [http://www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets\\_talk.html](http://www.uh.edu/caps/outreach/lets_talk.html)

### **Special accommodations for students with disabilities:**

The University of Houston System complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids for students with a disability. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines, the University of Houston strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them. Students seeking accommodation in this course should contact the instructor after obtaining the appropriate documentation through the UH Center for Students with Disabilities.

### **Course Schedule:**

JAN 16: Introductions, Syllabus & Overview

Reading: Syllabus

JAN 23: Judaism and Islam; Methodological Questions

Reading: Selections from *Sharing the Well: A Resource Guide for Jewish-Muslim Engagement*: [http://www.isna.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/sharing\\_the\\_well\\_final.pdf](http://www.isna.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/sharing_the_well_final.pdf); All read pp11-12

Meddeb and Stora pp13-23

JAN 30: Rise of Islam; Muhammed, Jews & Arabia

Reading: Meddeb & Stora pp. (28-38) 39-74

FEB 16: In Islamic Lands I

Reading: Meddeb & Stora pp. 75-110

FEB 13: In Islamic Lands II

Reading: Meddeb & Stora pp. 110-145

Mark R. Cohen, “The Neo-Lachrymose Conception of Jewish-Arab History”

FEB 20: In Christendom

Reading: Meddeb & Stora pp. 145-163

FEB 27: In Ottoman Territory

Reading: Meddeb & Stora pp. (164-170) 171-222

Guest speaker: Dr. Cengiz Sisman, UH Clear Lake

MAR 6: Middle East & North Africa

Reading: Meddeb & Stora pp. 223-268

\* MIDTERM (Take home) \*

\*\* MAR 13: NO CLASS—Spring Break \*\*

MAR 20: Relations with the European World; British Mandate Palestine & Birth of Israel

Reading: Meddeb & Stora pp. 269-285

Film: *The Other Son*

MAR 27: Israel and Palestine

Reading: Cleveland pp. 221-251

APR 3: Muslims and Jews in America I: Cases and Identity

Reading: Aslan & Tapper pp. 1-5, 9-19, 21-32, 33-44, 45-53

APR 10: Muslims and Jews in America II: Challenges, Opportunities & Feminism

Reading: Aslan & Tapper pp. 57-70, 71-92, 133-144

Guest speakers: Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom

APR 17: Jews and Muslims in Modern France—A Case Study

Reading: TBD, plus Aslan & Tapper 145-156, 159-172

APR 24: Conclusion and Prospects

Reading: Aslan & Tapper pp. 173-176, 177-189, 191-199, 201-202

Meddeb and Stora, pp. 606-610

Wrap-up and presentations

\* FINAL (Take home) \*