

Jews in the Ancient World

JWST/RELS 3373

Dr. Caryn Tamber-Rosenau

T/Th 10-11:30 a.m.

McElhinney 107

E-mail: cmtamber@central.uh.edu

Phone: 713-743-9341

Office hours: By appointment via Zoom. You can make an office hours appointment to discuss the course, questions you have, assignments, etc.

Please call me: Dr. Tamber-Rosenau, Prof. Tamber-Rosenau, Dr. T-R, Prof. T-R, or just Professor (she/her pronouns)

How to get in touch: Send me an email! I generally respond within 24 hours during the week and within 48 hours over a weekend. If I don't reply within that time frame, please contact me again.



A model of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, as renovated by King Herod the Great. Image by Michael Avi-Yonah.

Course description:

While the biblical period is an important precursor to the Jewish religion, what happened in the centuries afterward truly shaped Judaism into what it is today—and served as the background for the even larger religion that grew out of Judaism, Christianity. This course will give students an overview of that exciting era of Jewish history, from the Persian period through the rise of the rabbis (roughly 500 B.C.E.-500 C.E.). Topics discussed will include the development of the Diaspora, the Maccabean Revolt and the Hasmonean Dynasty, King Herod the Great and his descendants, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the formation of the Bible, the growth and demise of Jewish sectarianism, the rise of Christianity, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., and the development of the synagogue. Throughout the semester, students will sample texts produced during this period, including biblical materials, Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and rabbinic texts. Also key for this semester will be discussing how to evaluate and compare sources to write history, and how ideology affects the production of history.

Course goals:

- To be able to recount and write about ancient Jewish history, with special attention to Jewish interactions with the various empires of the time.
- To explore the different kinds of Jewish literature produced in this period, and to be able to speak intelligently about the content and reliability of each.
- To draw some general conclusions about the reliability of different kinds of sources for writing history.
- To explore how ideology affects history writing.
- To develop an appreciation for how the religion of the Bible developed into rabbinic Judaism, and how rabbinic Judaism became the dominant and enduring form of the religion.
- To recognize and be able to discuss the enduring importance of ancient Jewish history for Judaism, Christianity, and wider Western culture today.

Required books:

An edition of the Bible. I recommend *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version* (5th edition), New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. This study Bible contains helpful footnotes, essays, and maps, but any straightforward translation (i.e. *not* The Message, the Good News Bible, God's Word to the Nations, New Living Translation—all interpretive paraphrases) is fine. You may *not* use a Bible app or website in class. Bring a physical copy of the Bible to every session.

All other readings will be provided on Blackboard.

Course requirements and policies:

1. New concepts will be introduced every class session, so students are strongly encouraged to make attendance and punctuality a priority. Attendance will be taken.

2. You are entitled to three 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 Dr. Tamber-Rosenau for them to count as excused. *Experiencing COVID symptoms and needing to get tested is always an excused absence, as long as you let me know at the time. Never come to class if you are experiencing COVID symptoms. Never come to class when you have a pending COVID test.*
3. Class participation is important! Please come to class prepared to contribute to class discussions and take part in group activities. I have provided you with questions to guide your reading for each class session; please come prepared to explore these questions together.
4. Laptops, tablets, phones, and other electronic devices are permitted only for class-related uses. Do not text, post, or chat during class. No earbuds or headphones may be worn in class. Failure to honor these rules will result in a lowered attendance and participation grade.
5. I strongly encourage you to use paper and pen to take notes; research has shown that retention of class material is improved when students use pen and paper rather than a computer for notetaking.
6. In between class sessions, I will occasionally need to communicate important information to the class via e-mail. It is your responsibility to check your university e-mail regularly.
7. *Written work:* Several times during the semester, you will write short reflections on reading and/or lecture materials. These will be generally be in the 250-300-word range, or about one page, double-spaced. Grades for these reflections will be check (adequate understanding of the material; corresponds to 85), check-plus (superior understanding of and engagement with the material; corresponds to 100), check-minus (deficient understanding of the material; corresponds to 70), or 0 (complete misunderstanding of the material, very incomplete, or missed assignment).
8. *Exam:* There will be a take-home final exam, which will be due **Thursday, December 5** at noon.
9. *Symposia:* Twice during the semester, we will engage in role-playing games designed to put you in the shoes of a member of the ancient Jewish community as that community finds itself at a crossroads. In both games, you will be graded on two components:
 - a. Your production of a character sheet of about 500-600 words (two pages, double-spaced) that sets out the essential elements of your character and their position on the relevant issues of the day.
 - b. Participation in the in-class symposium that reflects careful preparation and understanding of the issues.
10. There will be opportunities to earn extra credit points by attending events and/or completing an extra (fun!) assignment. Stay tuned for more information.
11. To succeed in this class:
 - a. You should expect to spend at least 4-6 hours per week *outside of class* on work for this course: reading, taking notes, asking questions, working on written assignments, and studying.
 - b. Make sure to keep a document on your computer or in a notebook where you record your observations about the course material. Write down notes when

reading, record your answers to any guiding questions or prompts, and keep a record of your thoughts and important quotes from your readings. Make sure to write down questions that occur to you, or objections you have to what you are reading. These will be useful for your other activities.

- c. Communicate with me regularly.
12. We are (still) in the midst of a global pandemic that is upending all facets of our lives. There may be circumstances where following the above guidelines becomes challenging or impossible for you. Please keep me in the loop if this happens, and we will work together to find a solution. Additionally, there may be COVID-related circumstances in which it becomes impossible to meet in person on a particular day. I am prepared to pivot any individual session to synchronous online instruction if necessary, and I will give you as much notice as possible if this needs to happen.
13. This syllabus is subject to change. If I make any changes, I will notify you.

Diversity statement: This class includes and honors students of all backgrounds. The following will not be tolerated: hate speech, belittling others’ religious traditions, arguing about whose religion is best/most valid/closest to “the truth,” and proselytizing (also known as evangelizing, missionizing, seeking converts, or witnessing).

Citations:

Bible:

Genesis 1 means the book of Genesis, chapter 1.

Genesis 1:4 means chapter 1, verse 4 of Genesis.

Genesis 1–3 means chapters 1–3 of Genesis.

Genesis 1:1–5:6 means from chapter 1, verse 1 through chapter 5, verse 6.

Genesis 1:1–5; 2:4–6 means chapters 1, verses 1 through 5; and then chapter 2, verses 4 through 6.

Media:

Film titles should be in *italics*.

Book titles should be in *italics*.

Article or chapter titles should be in “quotation marks.”

Writers should be referred to on first reference as Firstname Lastname. On subsequent reference, use Lastname. Example: “In her article, Amy-Jill Levine argues that the Pharisees are unfairly maligned. Levine uses three examples to support her point.”

Grading:

Written reflections:	40%
Biblical origins reflection:	5%
Hellenism reflection	5%
“Can I trust this source?” reflection:	5%
Pop cultural or political reference to Pharisees find and reflection:	5%

<i>Apocalypse Later</i> reflection:	5%
Jews and the Jesus movement reflection:	5%
Babatha reflection:	5%
Exorcism reflection and participation in mock exorcism demonstration:	5%
Symposia:	20%
“Should I support this revolt?” reflection and participation in symposium	10%
“Now what?” reflection and participation in symposium	10%
Attendance and participation:	20%
Take-home final exam:	20%

Grading for assignments will be on the following scale. Please note that the highest *final course grade* the University permits is A.

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

Course schedule:

Week 1

Tuesday, August 24: Introductions, syllabus review, and origins of Judaism and Jews

Thursday, August 26: Chronology, terms, periods, and sources

Read: Christine Hayes, *The Emergence of Judaism* pp79-80 (Philo) and pp84-85 (Josephus)

Shaye D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, pp6-8, 12-14

- Sketch a timeline of the major events in the Jewish history of this period.
- Who were Philo and Josephus? Can you get a sense of their reliability as historical narrators?
- What terms does Cohen use to describe the religion of this period? What is at stake in how we label the Judaism of this time, i.e. why does it matter for us today?
- Does Cohen argue for unity, diversity, or a balance of the two among early Jews?

Week 2

Tuesday, August 31: Biblical origins

Read: Christine Hayes, *The Emergence of Judaism*, pp1-14

Genesis 11:27-12:7, Exodus 19-20, 2 Samuel 7

[“Ancient Tablets Disclose Jewish Exiles’ Life in Babylonia.”](#) *Ha’aretz*

Due: Biblical origins reflection

- Where did the Israelites come from? How did they get to the land of Israel? Why did they get expelled from the land, and how did they return? What empires did they contend with along the way?
- How do these biblical texts describe God?
- How do they describe God's relationship with Israel?
- What do these ancient tablets reveal about Jews living in exile?

Thursday, September 2: Persians, Samaritans

Read: Christine Hayes, *The Emergence of Judaism*, pp14-15, 73-77

Ezra 1-3, Ezra 4:1-5, 7, 9-10, Nehemiah 8, Isaiah 45:1-8

- In the pre-exilic period, being anointed with oil (anointed one → Hebrew *mashiah*, Greek messiah) meant being chosen by God for a role or mission, such as kingship, priesthood, or prophecy. How does the application of the term to a non-Jewish ruler in the Isaiah passage signal changes in the meaning of the word and its accompanying theology?
- What is the significance of the event in Nehemiah 8?
- How is exile described in Ezra and Nehemiah? Who are the "insiders" of the text? Who are the "outsiders"?
- Who are the foreign women in Ezra 9-10?
- Who are the Samaritans and where do they come from?

Week 3

Tuesday, September 7: NO CLASS (Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year)

Thursday, September 9: Diaspora

Read: Shaye Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, pp38-41

Josephus: The Temple of Onias, An Anti-Semitic Pogrom; Dedicatory

Inscriptions: Evidence of Jewish Religious Life in Hellenistic Egypt; Elephantine

Temple Papyrus, Marriage Contract from the Ananiah Archive

- According to Cohen, what is the difference between anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism? Which do we see in the ancient world?
- Who was Onias and why did he build a temple?
- What caused the anti-Jewish violence in Alexandria?
- How would you assess the status of Jews in Egypt based on the inscriptions?
- What is the relationship between the community at Elephantine and the Jews in Jerusalem? Between the Elephantine community and the Persians?
- According to Deuteronomy, sacrifice may be offered only at Jerusalem. How do you explain the presence of a Jewish temple at Elephantine?
- What does the marriage contract tell you about marriage and women's rights among the Jews at Elephantine?

Week 4

Tuesday, September 14: Hellenism

Read: Shaye Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, pp26-37

Pausanias: The Greek Cultural Institutions, Josephus: Alexander and the Jews,
Babylonian Talmud: Meeting of Alexander and the High Priest

Due: Hellenism reflection

- What do scholars mean by Hellenism? What is Hellenization? What is Hellenistic Judaism?
- What did a Hellenized city look like?
- What would have been the advantages and disadvantages of Hellenism for the Jews? Was it an all-or-nothing proposition, or could a Jew be a little bit Hellenized?
- What can Josephus and the Rabbis tell us about Jewish perceptions of the Greeks? What limitations are there on using these sources?

Thursday, September 16: NO CLASS (Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement)

Week 5

Tuesday, September 21: Canon and Septuagint

Read: Shaye Cohen, *The Emergence of Judaism*, pp173-176, 181-185

The Letter of Aristeas, Babylonian Talmud: Translation of the Torah into Greek

Due: "Can I trust this source?" reflection

- What is a canon? Did the Jews have one in the Hellenistic period?
- Which books were authoritative to Hellenistic period Jews? How do we know?
- Why might the answers to these questions be relevant for people who read the Bible today?

Thursday, September 23: Apocrypha

Read: Judith 8-16, Tobit 1-14

- Have you read either of these texts before? In what context?
- What surprises you about these texts?
- What might we learn about ideas of women in ancient Judaism from the Book of Judith? What can we learn about conversion?
- What does the Book of Tobit tell us about ideas of angels and demons in the Second Temple period?

Week 6

Tuesday, September 28: The Maccabean Revolt

Read: Christine Hayes, *The Emergence of Judaism*, pp16-18, Shaye Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, pp22-23

1 Maccabees 1-4; 2 Maccabees 2:19-3:40, 6-7

- What do we know about the structure of the Jewish community immediately before the revolt?
- What were the causes of the revolt? Do different sources posit different causes?
- How do the perspectives of 1 and 2 Maccabees on the revolt differ?
- How did the goals of the revolt change over time?

Due: “Should I support this revolt?” reflection

In class: Jewish community symposium and vote on whether to fight the Seleucids

Thursday, September 30: The Hasmonean Dynasty

Read: 1 Maccabees 10-15 (skim), Josephus on the Hasmoneans

- How did the Hasmoneans become kings? What sources of authority did the Hasmoneans claim for their rule?
- Who were the allies and opponents of the Hasmoneans?
- What were the implications of a revived Jewish monarchy in Palestine?
- What challenges did the Hasmoneans face in maintaining their power? Why did their dynasty fall?
- What was the relationship of the Hasmoneans to Hellenism?

Week 7

Tuesday, October 5: Apocalypticism, Messianism, and Sects

Read: Cohen pp123-135

Shayna Sheinfeld, “Messianism”

Matthew 22, 23:15-26; Acts 23

Short writings on the sects from Josephus, Philo, the Mishnah, and the Gemara

- What is a sect? What Jewish sects may be identified in the Second Temple period?
- What is apocalypticism, and what is its relationship to sectarianism?
- What were some of the key disagreements among the Jewish sects?
- What did each sect believe, according to the sources you have read? (It might be helpful to draw yourself a chart.)
- What are the benefits and problems with using each of these sources to reconstruct sectarianism in the Second Temple period?

Thursday, October 7: The Afterlives of the Pharisees; Jewish Identity in Antiquity

Read: Amy-Jill Levine, “Quit Picking on the Pharisees!”

Shaye Cohen, “How Do You Know a Jew in Antiquity When You See One?”
pp1-3, 39-41

Due: Pop cultural or political reference to “Pharisees” with explanation

- Why does Levine have a problem with negative statements about the Pharisees?
- What do people get wrong about the Pharisees, according to her argument?
- So how *did* you know a Jew in antiquity?

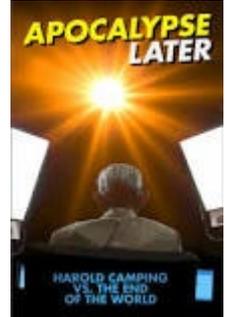
Week 8

Tuesday, October 12: *Apocalypse Later: Harold Camping vs. The End of the World*

Thursday, October 14: Pseudepigrapha, Introduction to the Dead Sea Scrolls

Read: Genesis 34, selections from Jubilees and Testament of Levi

- How do the texts of Jubilees and Testament of Levi interact with the biblical material from Genesis?
- The authors of Jubilees and T. Levi seem very comfortable with rewriting the Bible. What does that suggest about the status of the Bible in ancient Judaism?
- What problems or issues in Genesis 34 do Jubilees and T. Levi seem to want to explain or correct?



Due: *Apocalypse Later* reflection

Week 9

Tuesday, October 19: The Dead Sea Scrolls

Read: The Rule of the Community, The Damascus Document, The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness

- What did the people in this community believe?
- How did this community relate to other Jews?
- Would you have wanted to hang out with them?

Thursday, October 21: The Herodian Dynasty and Judea under Rome

Read: Christine Hayes, *The Emergence of Judaism*, pp18-20

Josephus on Herod, the Rabbis on Herod; Josephus on Berenice, Josephus on Jewish Legal Status in Rome, Tacitus on Jewish Origins and Rituals

- How did Herod gain power?
- How do you evaluate Herod's rule?
- How does Josephus evaluate Herod?
- How do the rabbis evaluate Herod? What characteristics do they ascribe to him?
- What status does Josephus ascribe to the Jews under Roman rule? How much can we rely on Josephus for this purpose?
- How does Tacitus describe Judaism?

Week 10

Tuesday, October 26: The Great Revolt and the Destruction of the Temple

Read: Josephus on the Great Revolt; The Siege of Jerusalem, Tacitus: Roman Earthworks at Jerusalem, Babylonian Talmud: Rabbinic Account of the Siege, Josephus: The Final Roman Victory, Dio Cassius: A Roman Account of the Revolt

- What were the causes of the revolt?
- What might have led someone to support or oppose rebellion against Rome?
- How do the accounts of the siege and conquest given by Josephus, Dio Cassius, and the rabbis differ?
- How did the rabbis deal with the destruction of the Temple?
- In what ways does Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai both break with and ensure continuity with the past? Is he a traitor? What is his relationship to Vespasian?

Thursday, October 28: What becomes of Judaism after the destruction?

Due: "Now what?" reflection

In class: "Now what?" symposium

Week 11: Texts; Judaism

Tuesday, November 2: The Rise of Christianity

Read: Shaye Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, pp231-258

Acts 1-7, 15

Writings from Jews about Jesus-followers and from Jesus-followers about Jews

Due: Jews and the Jesus Movement reflection

- What is the relationship of early Christianity to Judaism? To Jewish sectarianism?
- How does Acts describe the first followers of Jesus? What debates do they have about their relationship to Judaism?
- What do early followers of Jesus say about their fellow Jews? What do Jews say about early followers of Jesus?
- What is the *Birkat ha-minim*? What does it tell us about early Jewish reactions to the emergence of the Jesus movement?
- Why do Christians and Jews split? What role does Rome play? At what point can we begin speaking about Judaism and Christianity as separate religions?

Thursday, November 4: The Bar Kochba Revolt

Read: Jerusalem Talmud on Rabbi Akiva and Bar Kochba

- What were the causes of the revolt?
- Why did it fail?
- What role did Rabbi Akiva play?

Week 12

Tuesday, November 9: The Rise of the Rabbinic Class

Read: Christine Hayes, *The Emergence of Judaism*, pp89-123, Shaye Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, pp222-226
Mishnah Avot

- Where did the rabbis come from? How does rabbinic leadership become the dominant form of religious governance in ancient Judaism, when rabbis are mentioned nowhere in the Bible?
- How does the rabbis' position in Jewish society evolve over time?
- How do the rabbis portray their own origins and rise to power?
- Why does sectarianism decline during this period, according to Cohen?
- What do the rabbis appear to be looking for in a leader?
- To what extent is rabbinic Judaism a continuation of pre-70 C.E. Judaism and to what extent is it an innovation?
- What is "Oral Law"? How does this idea develop?
- What is the relationship between Mishnah and Talmud?
- Why are there two Talmuds?

Thursday, November 11: Ancient Synagogues

Read: Chad Spigel, ["First Century Synagogues"](#)

- What were synagogues used for?
- What are our sources of information about ancient synagogues?
- How did synagogues become a major site for Jewish worship?

Week 13

Tuesday, November 16: Daily Life Revealed through the Babatha Archive

Read: Selections from the Babatha Archive
Due: Babatha reflection

- What can we learn about Babatha from this archive?
- How might she be representative or unrepresentative of other Jewish women in this period?

Thursday, November 18: Rabbinic Literature and Canon Revisited

Read: Shaye Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, pp185-210, 226-228
Targum to Exodus: The Ten Commandments, Babylonian Talmud: The Order of Scripture, Mishnah Yadayim: The Debate over the Biblical Canon, Tosefta Yadayim: The Biblical Canon and Divine Inspiration, rabbinic statements on apocryphal books

- How did the rabbis conceive of God and God's relationship to humans?
- How did the rabbis write about other Jews, about non-Jews, and about conversion to Judaism?

- What do the rabbis have to do with the development of canon? What do the rabbis say about noncanonical books? Why?
- Why did some books make it into the Jewish canon and others did not?

Week 14

Tuesday, November 23: NO CLASS: Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature

Thursday, November 25: NO CLASS: Thanksgiving

Week 15

Tuesday, November 30: Magic and mysticism

Guest speaker: Dr. Sara Ronis, St. Mary's University

Read: Selected texts on magic in ancient Judaism

Thursday, December 2: Exorcism and wrap-up

Due: Exorcism reflection

In class: Mock exorcism demonstration

Take-home final exam due Tuesday, December 7 at 11:59 p.m. via TurnItIn

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 me. I have a zero-tolerance policy towards any type of academic dishonesty (including plagiarism) and will refer all violations to the department hearing officer. According to plagiarism.org, plagiarism includes:

- “turning in someone else's work as your own
- copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit
- failing to put a quotation in quotation marks
- giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation
- changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit
- 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) 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

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 who have a disability. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines, the Student Accessibility Center strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids to students who request and require them. If you believe that you have a disability requiring an academic adjustments/auxiliary aid, please call the Justin Dart, Jr. Student Accessibility Center at [\(713\) 743-5400](tel:7137435400) or email them at JDCenter@central.uh.edu.

Title IX reporting: Please note that the instructor is a mandatory reporter for sexual misconduct and other concerns related to Title IX (including sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual intimidation, intimate partner violence, or stalking). Moreover, recent changes to Texas law impose increased reporting requirements and more drastic penalties for failure to report. According to the UHS Sexual Misconduct Policy and state law, a disclosure regarding either a past or recent incident, or mention of your identity as a survivor of past misconduct, is sufficient to trigger reporting requirements. Thus, all students should be aware that no faculty member in a teaching role can agree to confidentiality in discussing these topics, and no statement from a faculty member should be taken as granting confidentiality. If you (in person or in writing) disclose any such information, it will be reported consistent with Texas law and UH policy. Please know that if a report is made, you will hear from UH Equal Opportunity Services (EOS)/the UH Title IX Office regarding your rights under the Sexual Misconduct Policy and the campus and community resources available to you, but you are not required to respond. Additionally, EOS/the UH Title IX Office will not compel you to make a police report, though it will assist you in doing so upon your request. Please know also that there are places on campus where you can instead make a confidential report: the Student Health Center, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Sexual Misconduct Support Services, and the A.D. Bruce Religion Center.

Face Covering Policy: To reduce the spread of COVID-19, the University strongly encourages everyone (vaccinated or not) to wear face coverings indoors on campus including classrooms for both faculty and students.

Presence in Class: Your presence in class each session means that you:

- Are NOT exhibiting any [Coronavirus Symptoms](#) that makes you think that you may have COVID-19
- Have NOT tested positive or been diagnosed for COVID-19
- Have NOT knowingly been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or suspected/presumed COVID-19

If you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms that are not clearly related to a pre-existing medical condition, do not come to class. Please see [Student Protocols](#) for what to do if you experience symptoms and [Potential Exposure to Coronavirus](#) for what to do if you have potentially been exposed to COVID-19. Consult the (select: [Undergraduate Excused Absence Policy](#) or [Graduate Excused Absence Policy](#)) for information regarding excused absences due to medical reasons.

COVID-19 Information: Students are encouraged to visit the University's [COVID-19](#) website for important information including on-campus testing, vaccines, diagnosis and symptom

protocols, campus cleaning and safety practices, report forms, and positive cases on campus. Please check the website throughout the semester for updates.

Vaccinations: Data suggests that vaccination remains the best intervention for reliable protection against COVID-19. Students are asked to familiarize themselves with pertinent [vaccine information](#), consult with their health care provider. The University strongly encourages all students, faculty and staff to be vaccinated.

Excused Absence Policy: Regular class attendance, participation, and engagement in coursework are important contributors to student success. Absences may be excused as provided in the University of Houston [Undergraduate Excused Absence Policy](#) and [Graduate Excused Absence Policy](#) for reasons including: medical illness of student or close relative, death of a close family member, legal or government proceeding that a student is obligated to attend, recognized professional and educational activities where the student is presenting, and University-sponsored activity or athletic competition. Under these policies, students with excused absences will be provided with an opportunity to make up any quiz, exam or other work that contributes to the course grade or a satisfactory alternative. Please read the full policy for details regarding reasons for excused absences, the approval process, and extended absences. Additional policies address absences related to [military service](#), [religious holy days](#), [pregnancy and related conditions](#), and [disability](#).