



Short Syllabus

Course Title	Credits
Kabbalah in its Middle Eastern Context	4
Lecturer	
Prof. Ronit Meroz	
Contact details	
rmeroz@tauex.tau.ac.il; office hours: Mondays, 14:00-15:00	
Semester	
B	
Short Description	
<p>Kabbalah is the major form of Jewish mysticism, aspiring to go beyond the ordinary boundaries of religion by informing us about God’s nature and creating intimate contact with the Divine. Kabbalah also represents a significant trend in Jewish thought and has significantly impacted Jewish history. Kabbalah even plays an important, indirect role in contemporary politics in Israel.</p> <p>The common position among scholars is that Kabbalah first emerged in (Christian) Provence at the end of the 12th or the beginning of the 13th century and only later penetrated the Iberian Peninsula and the Muslim countries.</p> <p>In this course, we will focus on two essential books of Kabbalah – the Book Bahir and the “Book of Zohar” and explore the evidence for an alternate history of Kabbalah, starting in Moslem Babylon in the 9th or 10th century and 11th century Fatimid Palestine, and only later migrating to Europe. We will discuss the divergent cultural contemporary backgrounds in the context of the prevailing controversies, polemics, and mutual religious influences.</p> <p>We will pay much attention to the beauty and poetics of the texts, especially concerning the Zohar.</p> <p>Structure of this Course: Introduction: Kabbalah’s roots in the Bible, Rabbinic thought, and early Jewish Mysticism (until the 9th century of the First Millennium). The Book Bahir, its poetics and cultural context; Moslem Babylon in the 9th and 10th century and the contemporary inter-religious polemics. Theological developments in 11th century Fatimid Palestine. The migration of the Book Bahir to 12th century Provence and the development of Kabbalah within its new cultural context. The Book of Zohar in the Iberian Peninsula in the 13th century; its theology and poetics.</p>	
Final grade components	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four very short essays (summary or an analysis of a text to be read as preparation for class); all four – 10% of the final grade (2.5% for each essay). • Midterm paper; 15% of the final grade. • Final requirement: Seminar paper or Referat (75%). Dates are published on the Liberal Arts website. Students requiring an extension for a final paper must submit an Academic Committee Request Form to the Liberal Arts office in advance of the deadline. Late papers will be subject to a point deduction.* 	



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Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Students are permitted a maximum of three unauthorized absences without penalty. Any additional absences will affect the final grade and may result in failure of the course.*

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism is taken extremely seriously. Any instance of academic misconduct which includes: submitting someone else's work as your own; failure to accurately cite sources; taking words from another source without using quotation marks; submission of work for which you have previously received credit; working in a group for individual assignments; using unauthorized materials in an exam and sharing your work with other students, will result in failure of the assignment and will likely lead to further disciplinary measures.*

Final assignment

Papers (refarat or seminar paper).

Dates are published on the Liberal Arts website. Students requiring an extension for a final paper must submit an Academic Committee Request Form to the Liberal Arts office in advance of the deadline. Late papers will be subject to a point deduction.*

Additional requirements

Keep phones turned off while in class.

* See Liberal Arts academic handbook for further details