



Short Syllabus



Course Title	Credits
Kabbalah in its Middle Eastern Context	4
Lecturer	
Prof. Ronit Meroz	
Contact details	
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Semester	
Spring	
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.</p> <p>Kabbalah also represents a major trend in Jewish thought and has had a significant impact on Jewish history over the centuries. Kabbalah even plays an important, though 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 “Holy Book of Zohar” and explore the evidence for an alternate history of Kabbalah.</p> <p>The course will present the Book Bahir as first emerging in Moslem Mesopotamia in the 9th or 10th century. We will review the book's vibrant and divergent cultural contemporary background in the context of that time and place with the prevailing controversies, polemics, and mutual religious influences. In the 12th or 13th century, it migrated to Provence and underwent some critical changes; later, it became an authoritative text in the Iberian Peninsula.</p> <p>The career of the Zohar started in the 11th century Fatimid Palestine. In the 13th century, it flourished in the Iberian Peninsula, but while being imbibed by Christian ideas, it kept on also being nourished by Middle Eastern influence, especially in its literary formats.</p>	



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Course structure:

Introduction: Kabbalah's roots in the Bible, Rabbinic thought, and early Jewish Mysticism (until the 9th century of the First Millennium).

1. The Book Bahir within its cultural context – Mesopotamia in the 9th and 10th century and the contemporary inter-religious polemics.
2. The Book of Zohar and its emergence in 11th century Fatimid Palestine.
3. The migration of the Book Bahir to 12th century Provence and the development of Kabbalah within its new cultural context.
4. The migration of Kabbalah to the Iberian Peninsula in the 13th century; the theology of the Zohar and the Middle Eastern roots of its poetics.

Final grade components

Minor assignments:

Mandatory – 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:

Mandatory - an in-class exam; 15% of the final grade.

Final requirement:

Mandatory – Seminar paper or Referat (75%).

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Students are permitted a maximum of three 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.

Additional requirements

Keep phones turned-off while in class