



CIEE Prague, Czech Republic

Course Name:	Introduction to the Kabbalah and Jewish Mysticism
Course Number:	RELI 3003 PRAG
Programs offering course:	CES, CNMJ
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. Semester Credits:	3
Contact Hours:	45
Term:	Spring 2020

Course Description

The Kabbalah for many people in the U.S. may make them think of Madonna or Britney Spears. This, however, is a distorted image of the Kabbalah. Jewish Mysticism, or the Kabbalah, which means the literary tradition, is one of the oldest branches of Judaism. Prague is a special place to study the Kabbalah. Here, in the center of Europe, the Kabbalists from Germany, Italy, and Spain had an enormous influence on Czech Judaism. According to a Talmudic dictum, there are four levels of explaining the Scripture: peshat, the direct meaning; remez, the allegorical meaning; drash, the inquiry into Scripture; and finally, sod, the secret meaning. During this course the student will be led through the history of the Kabbalah and will gain knowledge about the major trends in Jewish mysticism.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course the student will:

- be able to define and categorize streams of Jewish Mysticism.
- analyze main topics pertaining to the Kabbalah and influences that shaped the Kabbalah, such as Gnosticism or Neoplatonism.
- critically discuss the influence of history upon the Kabbalah.

Course Prerequisites

There is no pre-condition for students. It is beneficial if a student has some formal education on Judaism, but this class is open to all students interested in the Kabbalah.

Methods of Instruction

The course will be based on weekly readings and responses. We will watch several films on the Kabbalah and other Judaic issues. In every class a student will have a presentation. A major stress is placed on debates and lectures with slides.

Assessment and Final Grade

- Writing assignment I	20%
- Writing assignment II	20%
- Midterm exam	20%
- Final exam	20%
- Presentations and Participation in class discussions	20%



Course Requirements

Preparation

The course is based on the usage of CIEE's Judaic section of the library and other materials pertaining to the Kabbalah. The students are required to study the weekly scheduled reading prior to each lesson.

Writing Assignment I (about 1,250 words)

The midterm essay should prove the students orientation in the Judaic field. It is vital to explore, in depth, the ethics of Jewish religious thought and demonstrate their own experience and understanding of these concepts. It is also possible to write an analysis about some Judaic item which is connected with the Kabbalah and/or to explore the Jewish interpretation of the philosophy and meaning of life in relation to other traditions.

Writing Assignment II (minimum 2,000 words)

In the final essay students connect their experience with their analysis of course materials and demonstrate their ability to confront these thoughts, especially those relevant to the student's life. No conformity is prescribed, but freedom of expression and originality of thought and concepts are welcomed. Essays could also involve a comparison of thought between two different Jewish streams of the Kabbalah, such as the Merkabah Mysticism and the Lurianic Kabbalah. The students have to demonstrate extensive use of literature connected with the Jewish Mysticism and the Kabbalah.

Midterm Examination

The midterm test will be an in-class definition and short-answer test over the lectures and reading materials covered in class.

Final Examination

The Final Examination test will be an in-class oral exam, a so-called "colloquium", where an academic debate of topics from the whole course will take place. Original ideas and concepts are welcomed. The depth of student's responses, knowledge put into the debate, and the ability to defend one's opinions will be evaluated.

CIEE Prague Class Participation Policy

Assessment of students' participation in class is an inherent component of the course grade. Participation is valued as **meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom**, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Students are required to actively, meaningfully and thoughtfully contribute to class discussions and all types of in-class activities throughout the duration of the class. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared, as directed, in advance of each class session. This includes valued or informed engagement in, for example, small group discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.



Students are responsible for following the course content and are expected to ask clarification questions if they cannot follow the instructor's or other students' line of thought or argumentation.

The use of electronic devices is only allowed for computer-based in-class tests, assignments and other tasks specifically assigned by the course instructor. Students are expected to take notes by hand unless the student is entitled to the use of computer due to his/her academic accommodations. In such cases the student is required to submit an official letter issued by his/her home institution specifying the extent of academic accommodations.

Class participation also includes students' active participation in Canvas discussions and other additional tasks related to the course content as specified by the instructor.

Students will receive a partial participation grade every three weeks.

CIEE Prague Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and **all absences are treated equally regardless of reason** for any affected CIEE course. Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursions or events, as well as Internship.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

Missing classes will lead to the following penalties:

90-minute semester classes:

<i>Number of 90-minute classes</i>	<i>Equivalent percentage of the total course hours missed</i>	<i>Minimum penalty</i>
one to two 90-minute classes	up to 10%	no penalty
three 90-minute classes	10.1–15%	reduction of the final grade by 3%
four 90-minute classes	15.1–17%	reduction of the final grade by 5%; written warning
five 90-minute classes	17.1–20%	reduction of the final grade by 7%; written warning
six and more 90-minute classes	more than 20%	automatic course failure and possible expulsion



180-minute semester classes:

<i>Number of 180-minute classes</i>	<i>Equivalent percentage of the total course hours missed</i>	<i>Minimum penalty</i>
one 180-minute class	up to 10%	no penalty
two 180-minute classes	10.1–20%	reduction of the final grade by 5%; written warning
three and more 180-minute classes	more than 20%	automatic course failure and possible expulsion

Persistent absenteeism (students approaching 20% of the total course hours missed, or violating the attendance policy in more than one class) will result in a written warning, a notification to the student’s home school, and possibly a dismissal from the program.

Missing more than 20% of the total class hours will lead to a **course failure**, and **potential program dismissal**. This is a CIEE rule that applies to all CIEE courses and is in line with the Participant Contract that each CIEE student signs before arriving on-site.

Late arrival to class will be considered a partial (up to 15 minutes late) or full (15 or more minutes late) absence. **Three partial absences due to late arrivals will be regarded as one full class absence.**

Students must notify their professor and Program Coordinators (PC) beforehand if they are going to miss class for any reason and are responsible for any material covered in class in their absence.

If missing a class during which a test, exam, the student’s presentation or other graded class assignments are administered, **make-up assignment will only be allowed in approved circumstances**, such as serious medical issues. In this case, the student must submit a local doctor’s note within 24 hours of his/her absence to the PC, who will decide whether the student qualifies for a make-up assignment. Doctor’s notes may be submitted via e-mail or phone (a scan or a photograph are acceptable), however **the student must ensure that the note is delivered to the PC.**

Should a truly **extraordinary situation** arise, the student must contact the PC immediately concerning permission for a make-up assignment. Make-up assignments are not granted automatically! The PC decides the course of action for all absence cases that are not straightforward. **Always contact the PC with any inquiry about potential absence(s) and the nature thereof.**

Personal travel (including flight delays and cancelled flights), handling passport and other document replacements, interviews, volunteering and other similar situations are not considered justifiable reasons for missing class or getting permission for make-up assignments.



For class conflicts (irregularities in the class schedule, including field trips, make-up classes and other instances), **always contact the Academic Assistant** to decide the appropriate course of action.

Course attendance is recorded on individual Canvas Course Sites. **Students are responsible for checking their attendance regularly to ensure the correctness of the records.** In case of discrepancies, students are required to contact the Academic Assistant **within one week of the discrepancy date** to have it corrected. Later claims **will not** be considered.

CIEE staff does not directly manage absences at FAMU and ECES, but they have similar attendance policies and attendance is monitored there. Grade penalties may result from excessive absences.

CIEE Academic Honesty Policy

CIEE subscribes to standard U.S. norms requiring that students exhibit the highest standards regarding academic honesty. Cheating and plagiarism in any course assignment or exam will not be tolerated and may result in a student failing the course or being expelled from the program. Standards of honesty and norms governing originality of work differ significantly from country to country. We expect students to adhere to both the American norms and the local norms, and in the case of conflict between the two, the more stringent of the two will preside. Three important principles are considered when defining and demanding academic honesty. These are related to the fundamental tenet that one should not present the work of another person as one's own.

The first principle is that final examinations, quizzes and other tests must be done without assistance from another person, without looking at or otherwise consulting the work of another person, and without access to notes, books, or other pertinent information (unless the professor has explicitly announced that a particular test is to be taken on an "open book" basis).

The second principle applies specifically to course work: the same written paper may not be submitted in two classes. Nor may a paper for which you have already received credit at your home institution be submitted to satisfy a paper requirement while studying overseas.

The third principle is that any use of the work of another person must be documented in any written papers, oral presentations, or other assignments carried out in connection with a course. This usually is done when quoting directly from another's work or including information told to you by another person. The general rule is that if you have to look something up, or if you learned it recently either by reading or hearing something, you have to document it.

The penalty ranges from an F grade on the assignment, failure in the course to dismissal from the program. The Academic Director is consulted and involved in decision making in every case of a possible violation of academic honesty.

Weekly Schedule

<p>Week 1</p>	<p>Introduction into Mysticism, Jewish Mysticism and the Kabbalah. <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gershom, 1995: 1 - 50. <p>Judaism and Gnosticism G. Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism and Chariot Mysticism. Gnosticism as an old, pre - Christian belief in the duality of the world. These beliefs most probably came from ancient Persia. Chariot Mysticism. <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gershom, 1960: 1- 36. • Dan, 1993: 42 - 63. • Himmelfarb, 1997. I. Vol.
<p>Week 2</p>	<p>Messianic Idea in Judaism. <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholem, 1971: 1-37 <p>Messianic Idea in Kabbalism. <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholem, 1971: 37-49 • Horsley, 1992: TBA • Werblowsky, 1992: 35 - 52.
<p>Week 3</p>	<p>The Book Bahir and the Kabbalistic Center in Gerona. <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bahir - The Book of Illumination, 1979: 59-83. • Wolfson, 1995: 63- 88. • Scholem, 1987: TBA
<p>Week 4</p>	<p>Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Kabbalah <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merlan, 11-33. • Phillips, 2007: 23-88. <p>Maimonides and Mysticism and the Idea of Nothingness in the Kabbalah <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kellner, 1990: 1-47. • Gillis, 2015: 80-154. • Blumenthal, 2006: 51 - 95. • Blaha, 2010: 76-85. • Matt, 1995: 67-109.

<p>Week 5</p>	<p>The idea of Emanations as Sefiroth in the Kabbalah and in the Book of Zohar <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idel, 181 - 212. • Matt, 1983: 3-14. <p>Introduction in the Zohar <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green, 1995: 27 -67
<p>Week 6 Midterm Exam Period</p>	<p>Midterm Examination</p> <p>Zohar, the book which kept many people being Jewish <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liebes, 1993: 1-85.
<p>Week 7 Midterm Exam Period</p>	<p>Zohar and Christianity <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liebes, 139 - 163. • Idel, 1993: I - XXX. • The Expulsion of the Jews of Spain as Cosmic Catastrophe -The End of the Golden Age of the Jews in Spain. • Blaha, 2010: 127 - 131 • Scholem, 243-253.
<p>Week 8</p>	<p>The Kabbalah in Safed <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ben Shlomo 1965: 87-91. • Dan, 1986: 76-104. <p>Introduction to the Kabbalah and Philosophy of Isaac Luria 1 <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robinson, 1981: 32-42. • Rosenberg, 1983: 399 - 431. <p>Writing Assignment I</p>
<p>Week 9</p>	<p>Introduction to the Kabbalah and Philosophy of Isaac Luria 2 Redemption in the Lurianic Kabbalah <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meroz, 1988: 1-23 (in English) <p>Introduction to the Kabbalah and Philosophy of Isaac Luria 3 <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholem, 251-286.

Week 10	<p>Introduction to the Kabbalah and Philosophy of Isaac Luria 4 <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Magid, 1997: 37-75. <p>Introduction to the Kabbalah and Philosophy of Isaac Luria 5 <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jacobs, 99 - 127.
Week 11	<p>Mystical Union in Judaism I <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afterman, 2013: 177-196. <p>Mystical Union in Judaism II <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idel, 1988: 59 - 73. <p>Writing Assignment II</p>
Week 12	<p>The Greatest Mystical Heresy in the Kabbalah: The Mystical Messiah Sabbatai Sevi <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholem, 1992: 289 -334. <p>The Concept of Kabbalah after the Holocaust <u>Required Reading:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jonas, 1997: 627 - 636.
Week 13 Final Exam Week	Final Exam End-of-course discussion

Course Materials

Course Readings

Listed in the order of classes:

Week 1:

- Gershom Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism. New York 1995: Schocken Books. pp. 1 - 50.
- Gershom Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition. New York 1960: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America. pp. 1- 36.
- Joseph Dan, "Gnosticism." In: Joseph Dan, The Ancient Jewish Mysticism. Tel Aviv 1993: MOD Books. pp. 42 - 63.
- Marttha Himmelfarb, From Prophecy to Apocalypse: The Book of the Watchers. pp. 145-165. In: Jewish Spirituality (edited by Arthur Green). New York 1997. I. Vol.

Week 2:

- Gershom Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism. New York 1971: Schocken Books. pp. 1-37
- Gershom Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Kabbalism. In: Scholem, The Messianic Idea in Judaism. pp. 37-49

- Richard A. Horsley, Popular Messianic Movements around the Time of Jesus. pp. 83 - 113. In: Marc Saperstein (The Editor), Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History. New York and London 1992: New York University Press.
- R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, Messianism in Jewish History. pp. 35 - 52. In: Marc Saperstein (The Editor), Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History. New York and London 1992.

Week 3:

- The Bahir - The Book of Illumination. Translation, Introduction, and Commentary by Aryeh Kaplan. Samuel Weiser, York Beach, Maine 1979. pp. 59-83.
- Elliot R. Wolfson, The Tree That is All: Jewish - Christian Roots of A Kabbalistic Symbol in Sefer ha - Bahir. .pp. 63- 88.In: Elliot R. Wolfson, Along the Path. New York 1995: State University of New York Press.
Nahmanides, Rabbi Azriel and Rabbi Ezra - The Kabbalistic Center in Gerona.
- G. Scholem, The Kabbalistic Centre in Gerona. pp. In: G. Scholem, Origins of the Kabbalah. The Jewish Publication Society and the Princeton University Press 1987.

Week 4:

- Philip Merlan, From Platonism to Neoplatonism. Martinus Nijhoff: The Hague. pp. 11-33.
- John Phillips, Order from Disorder. Proclus's Doctrine of Evil and its Roots in Ancient Platonism. Leiden - Boston 2007: Brill. pp. 23-88.
- Menachem Kellner, Maimonides on Human Perfection. Atlanta, Georgia, 1990: Brown Judaic Studies. pp. 1-47.
- David Gillis, Reading in Maimonides` Mishneh Torah. Oxford, Portland, Oregon 2015: 80-154.
- David R. Blumenthal, Philosophic Mysticism. Studies in Rational Religion.Ramat Gan, Israel 2006 pp. 51 - 95.
- Josef Blaha, Lessons from the Kabbalah and Jewish History. Brno 2010. pp. 76-85.
- Daniel C. Matt, Ayin: The Concept of Nothingness in Medieval Spain. In: Lawrence Fine (Editor), Essential Papers on Kabbalah. New York and London 1995: New York University Press. pp. 67-109.

Week 5

- Moshe Idel, The Image of Man Above the Sefirot. R. David ben Yehuda he Hasid's Theosophy of Ten Supernal Sefirot and its Reverberations. In: Kabbalah 2009/20 pp.181 - 212.
- Daniel C. Matt, Zohar, The Book of Enlightenment. New York 1983: Paulist Press. pp. 3-14.
- Arthur Green, The Zohar: Jewish Mysticism in Medieval Spain. pp. 27 -67. In: Lawrence Fine (Editor), Essential Papers on Kabbalah. New York and London 1995: New York University Press.

Week 6

- Yehuda Liebes, The Messiah of the Zohar: On R. Simeon bar Yohai as Messianic Figure. pp. 1- 85. In: Yehuda Liebes, Studies in the Zohar. State University of New York Press 1993.

Week 7

- Yehuda Liebes, Christian Influences on the Zohar. pp. 139 - 163. In: Yehuda Liebes, Studies in the Zohar.
- Moshe Idel, Introduction to the Book On the Art of the Kabbalah -De Arte Cabalastica by Johann Reuchlin. University of Nebraska Press 1993.pp. I - XXX.
- The Expulsion of the Jews of Spain as Cosmic Catastrophe -The End of the Golden Age of the Jews in Spain.
- Josef Blaha, Lessons from the Kabbalah and Jewish History. Brno 2010: 127 - 131
- Gershom Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism. pp. 243-253.

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Week 8

- Joseph ben Shlomo – The Mystical Theology of Moses Cordovero. (Hebrew). Bialik Institute, Jerusalem 1965. pp. 87-91. I translated this article into English for this class.
- Joseph Dan, Mystical Ethics in Sixteenth - Century Safed. pp. 76-104. In: J. Dan, Jewish Mysticism and Jewish Ethics. University of Washington Press. Seattle and London 1986.
- Ira Robinson, Messianic Prayer Vigils in Jerusalem in the Early Sixteenth Century. pp. 32-42. In: The Jewish Quarterly Review. 72/1981
- Shalom Rosenberg, Exile and Redemption in Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century: Contending Conceptions. pp. 399 - 431. In: (Bernard Dov Cooperman, Editor) Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century. Cambridge, Ma. and London 1983: Harvard University Press.

Week 9

- Ronit Meroz, Redemption in the Lurianic Teaching. Jerusalem 1988 [Hebrew] - The Hebrew University in Jerusalem. pp. 1-23 (in English)
- Gershom Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism. pp. 251-286.

Week 10

- Shaul Magid, From Theosophy to Midrash. Lurianic Exegesis and the Garden of Eden. AJS Review 22/1 1997 pp. 37 - 75.
- Louis Jacobs, The Uplifting of Sparks in Later Jewish Mysticism. pp. 99 - 127. In: Jewish Spirituality from the Sixteenth Century Revival to the Present. Edited by Arthur Green

Week 11

- Adam Afterman, From Philo to Plotinus: The Emergence of Mystical Union. In: The Journal of Religion, vol. 93. No. 2 (April 2013), pp. 177-196.
- Moshe Idel, Kabbalah, New Perspectives. New Haven and London 1988: Yale University Press. pp. 59 - 73.

Week 12

- Gershom Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah. pp. 289 -334. In: Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History. New York and London 1992: New York University Press. Edited by Marc Saperstein.
- Hans Jonas, The Concept of God After Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice. pp. 627 - 636. In Wrestling with God. Jewish Theological Responses during and after the Holocaust. New York and Oxford 1997. Oxford University Press. Edited by Steven T. Katz

Further Readings

Fine Lawrence. *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Universe*. Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship. Stanford 2003.

Kabbalah of Creation. The Mysticism of Isaac Luria, Founder of Modern Kabbalah. Translated and with Commentary by Eliahu Klein. North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, California 2000.

Moshe Idel, *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism*. London 2007.

Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*. Yale 2005.

Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah, New Perspectives*. Yale 1988.

Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics*. Yale 1998.

Scholem, Gershom. *Kabbalah*. Jerusalem 1970.

Scholem, Gershom. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. New York 1990.



Scholem, Gershom. *Origins of the Kabbalah*. Princeton 1990.

Scholem, Gershom. *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*. New York 1970.

Vital, Hayyim. *The Tree of Life. Chayyim Vital's Introduction to the Kabbalah of Isaac Luria. The Palace of Adam Kadmon*. Translated and with Introduction by Donald Wilder Menzi Zwe Padeh. Jason Aronson, New Jersey 2009.

The Zohar, Pritzker Edition - Translated by Daniel C. Matt. 5 volumes. Stanford 2004 - 2009.

Recommended Reading

Cooperman, Bernard (ed.). *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century*. Harvard 1983

Fine, Lawrence (ed.). *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*. New York 1993.

Green, Arthur (ed.). *Jewish Spirituality*. II Volumes. New York 1997.

Saperstein, Marc (ed.). *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History*. New York University Press 1988.

Scholem, Gershom and Sabbatai Sevi. *The Mystical Messiah*. Princeton 1973.

Twersky, Isadore and Bernard Septimus (eds.). *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*. Harvard 1987.