

History/Religious Studies 230; Jewish Studies 231
Fall, 2014
MW 9:55-10:45, Humanities 2251
Sections: 301 - W 1:20-2:10, Humanities 2131
302 - Th 1:00-1:50, 4011 Vilas
303 - W 11:00-11:50, Humanities 2131
304 - Th 11:00-11:50, Humanities 2231
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BRAIDED HISTORIES: JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, ISLAM

One Abraham, three faiths. This course offers a braided history of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, whose relationships have been both close and vexed, and whose practitioners have simultaneously acknowledged their kinship as “Children of Abraham” while to magnifying their differences.

The following readings are required and are available at the University Bookstore:

Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*
F. E. Peters, *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Vol. 1: From Covenant to Community*
Vol. 2: The Word and the Law and the People of God

Additional readings are available in E-Reserves at the College Library. You can find E-Reserves in your MyUW account. For information, see <http://college.library.wisc.edu/services/reserves/find.shtml>.

Course Webpage on Learn@UW

The syllabus, lecture outlines, and other materials are available at Learn@UW (<https://learnuw.wisc.edu/>). You will need your NetID and password to enter. Please check the site routinely for materials and news.

Writing-Intensive Course

History/Religious Studies 230/Jewish Studies 231 is a writing-intensive course aiming to promote your compositional skill as well as enhance your knowledge of the Abrahamic religions. You will pen something most weeks, although the majority of the assignments will be quite brief.

Assignments

You should begin the week’s reading assignment by the beginning of each week’s lectures and complete it before your discussion section. You are expected to attend and participate in all section discussions. The major written assignments consist of two 3-4-page papers and a final 5-6-page paper. Papers must be typed and doubled-spaced; they are due in lecture at the beginning of class on the **Mondays** indicated. Please note that you have *four* optional paper dates and may choose any *two* of the four assignments. Minor assignments are due on the **Wednesdays** indicated; they too must be typed, doubled-spaced. Page 5 *infra* list the paper topics, minor assignments, and due dates. Please include your section number along with your name at the top of the first page of all assignments. The TA will assess the papers and final exam, and I will assess the minor assignments.

Paper Presentation and Writing Aids

Papers should follow the guidelines for presentation set out in the Style Sheet on my webpage (http://faculty.history.wisc.edu/cohen/style_sheet.pdf) as well as the Course Materials section of the

course page in Learn@UW. The Writing Aids section of my webpage provides examples of A papers and exemplary fifty-word sentences (<http://history.wisc.edu/cohen/writing.html>).

Rewrite Policy

You may rewrite either or both of the major paper assignments. To initiate the process, you must inform your TA of your decision to rewrite by the end of the next class session after he and I return the original version. Schedule a meeting with him to discuss the changes to be made. Rewriting cannot lower your grade (nor can changing your mind about handing in a revised paper), but it does not by itself guarantee a higher one; to raise the grade, you must *substantially rework the essay*, following my comments *and* initiating your own improvements too. You will ordinarily receive one week after the meeting in which to rewrite. When you submit the new essay, the old draft (plus any separate sheet of comments) *must* accompany the new version. If a rewrite does receive a higher grade, you will be credited with that grade, not an average of the two marks. For an example of an original paper and its rewritten version, see <http://history.wisc.edu/cohen/writing.html>.

Grading

Simplicity itself. The two major papers and class participation each count for 20% of the final grade. The final paper counts for 40%. Class participation will be evaluated on a combination of attendance and quality of discussion (which is not identical to quantity). The minor assignments will be ungraded, but failure to turn them in will lower your class participation grade.

Disability Statement

This course is set up to include persons with disabilities. Please let me know if you need accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments to enable your full participation. I will attempt to maintain confidentiality of the information you share with me.

Academic Conduct Statement

I expect you to conform to the highest standards of academic integrity and conduct; for the University's policy on such matters, see <http://students.wisc.edu/doso/acadintegrity.html>. For help in understanding what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it, see the Writing Center's site, <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>. The TA and I will also discuss these issues. If you have any questions at all about what constitutes proper conduct, I would be happy to speak with you.

Date

Lectures and Assignments

Sept. 3 Thinking About the Abrahamic Traditions

8 Ancient Israel: Politics and God

10 Tanakh

Reading: Armstrong, *History of God*, 3-78; Peters, *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, 1.3-61

Minor Assignment: #1

15 Jews in the Greco-Roman World

Date**Lectures and Assignments**

Sept. 17	Second Temple Judaism Reading: Peters, <i>Judaism, Christianity, and Islam</i> , 1.62-114 Minor Assignment: #2
22	The Greek Background to Christianity
24	Jesus Reading: Armstrong, <i>History of God</i> , 79-106; Peters, <i>Judaism, Christianity, and Islam</i> , 1.115-81
29	The New Testament
Oct. 1	Rabbinic Judaism Reading: Peters, <i>Judaism, Christianity, and Islam</i> , 2.157-200, 267-91
6	Constructing Christianity First Paper Option Due
8	Early Jewish-Christian Relations Reading: Armstrong, <i>History of God</i> , 107-31; Peters, <i>Judaism, Christianity, and Islam</i> , 1.249-99
13	Church and Empire
15	Constantinople and Rome Reading: Peters, <i>Judaism, Christianity, and Islam</i> , 1.300-364
20	Muhammad Second Paper Option Due
22	The Qur'an Reading: Armstrong, <i>History of God</i> , 132-69; Peters, <i>Judaism, Christianity, and Islam</i> 1.182-248 Minor Assignment: #3
27	Abraham in the Three Traditions
29	Religion, Politics, and the Early Islamic State Reading: Peters, <i>Judaism, Christianity, and Islam</i> , 2.72-156; Gen. 21-22; Gal. 4.21-5.1; Qur'an 37.99-122 Minor Assignment: #4

Paper Topics

In writing these essays, you should draw on the lectures, discussions and class readings (*particularly the primary sources*), making specific statements firmly rooted in the evidence, using quotations whenever applicable, and evaluating the arguments of all “authorities” (including me). You may of course draw on materials from outside the course but are not required to do so. You may choose another topic if the suggested ones bore, fatigue or disorient you, but you must consult with your TA *before* so proceeding.

OPTION 1 - **Due October 6.** Assess and explain the degree (if any) to which the early Christian understanding of Jesus reflected understandings of the “Messiah” prevalent in Second Temple Judaism.

OPTION 2 - **Due October 20.** Taking account of the political, philosophical, theological, and cultural forces at play in the early Church, explain how and why Christians developed the concept of the Trinity from the Jewish concept that God is One.

OPTION 3 - **Due November 3.** Compare the structure of the Qur’an and its functions as Islamic scripture with the structure and functions of either the Tanakh within Judaism or the Bible within Christianity.

OPTION 4 - **Due November 17.** Compare how Christian and Muslim polities over the span 700-1500 treated their religious minorities, and explain the reasons for any differences in treatment that you might identify.

Final Examination

The course does not have a final examination. The final paper is **due December 12:**

Explicate the primary ways in which Jews, Christians and Muslims understand themselves to be “communities,” and, using one or more examples from the course, explain how those understandings have influenced interactions among these groups.

Minor Assignments

#1 *Summarizing an Argument* - **due September 10:** In one sentence NOT EXCEEDING 50 words (the 51st word and its successors face a terrible fate), summarize Armstrong’s explanation of how the ancient Israelites developed the concept of One God.

#2 *Illuminating a Comparison* - **due September 17:** In one sentence NOT EXCEEDING 50 words (see above for implied but real threat), explain the difference between Jewish and Christian understandings of the “New Covenant.”

#3 *Evaluating the Historicity of Sources* - **due October 22:** In one sentence NOT EXCEEDING 50 words (you should know how to be brief by now), assess the degree to which the sources allow treating Jesus and Muhammad as historical figures.

#4 *Analyzing Documentary Evidence* - **due October 29:** Using the material in Peters 2.72-156, identify one problem of scriptural interpretation that confronted Jewish, Christian and Muslim exegetes, and, in one sentence NOT EXCEEDING 50 words (or else...), determine how similar (or dissimilar) their solutions have been.

#5 *Constructing a Comparison* - **due November 5:** Compare the Christian concept of the Apostolic Succession with the Shi`ite concept of the Imamate in one sentence NOT EXCEEDING 50 words (yadda, yadda, yadda).

#6 *Interpreting a Meta-argument* - **due November 26:** In one sentence NOT EXCEEDING 51 words (but do not let the liberalized word limit lure you into verbosity), critique Armstrong’s critique of contemporary spirituality.

A PROCLAMATION

Regarding Late Papers

Whereas it may come to pass that one or more individuals, whether through dilatoriness, dereliction, irresponsibility, or chutzpah, may seek respite and surcease from escorial demands through procrastination, delay, and downright evasion;

And whereas this unhappy happenstance contributes mightily to malfeasance on the part of parties of the second part (i.e., students, the instructed, you) and irascibility on the part of us (i.e., me);

Be it therefore known, understood, apprehended, and comprehended:

That all assignments must reach us on or by the exact hour announced in class, and that failure to comply with this wholesome and most generous regulation shall result in the assignment forfeiting one half of a letter grade each day for which it is tardy (i.e., an "A" shall become an "AB"), "one day" being defined as a 24-hour period commencing at the announced hour on which the assignment is due; and that the aforementioned reduction in grade shall continue for each succeeding day of delay until either the assignment shall be remitted or its value shrunk unto nothingness. And let all acknowledge that the responsibility for our receiving papers deposited *surreptitio* (i.e., in the TA's mailbox or under his/her door), whether timely or belated, resides with the aforementioned second-part parties (i.e., you again), hence onus for the miscarriage of such items falls upon the writer's head (i.e., until the TAs clutch your scribbles to their breasts, we must assume you have not turned them in, all protestations to the contrary notwithstanding).

Be it nevertheless affirmed:

That the greater part of justice residing in mercy, it may behoove us, acting entirely through our gracious prerogative, to award an extension in meritorious cases, such sufferance being granted only upon consultation with us, in which case a negotiated due date shall be proclaimed; it being perfectly well understood that failure to observe this new deadline shall result in the immediate and irreversible failure of the assignment (i.e., an "F"), its value being accounted as a null set and less than that of a vile mote. And be it further noted that routine disruptions to routine (i.e., lack of sleep occasioned by pink badgers dancing on the ceiling) do not conduce to mercy, but that severe dislocations brought on by Acts of God (exceedingly traumatic events to the body and/or soul, such as having the earth swallow one up on the way to delivering the assignment) perpetrated either on oneself or on one's loving kindred, do.

And we wish to trumpet forth:

That our purpose in declaiming said proclamation, is not foremost to terminate the wanton flouting of our didactic intentions but to encourage our beloved students to consult with us, and apprehend us of their difficulties aforehand (i.e., talk to me or the TA, baby), so that the cruel axe of the executioner fall not upon their Grade Point Average and smite it with a vengeance.

To which proclamation, we do affix our seal:

