

Jews and Christians in the Medieval World (Daniel J. Lasker)

The purpose of this course is the examination of the contents and contexts of the arguments used by Medieval Jews and Christians to defend their own religion and to attack the other religion. This debate began at the origins of Christianity and has continued in one way or another to the present. Thus, an examination of the debate can lead to a greater understanding of the Jewish-Christian encounter. Emphasis is on the historical and theological implications of the Jewish-Christian debate and what can be learned from polemical literature regarding the relations between Jews and Christians and Judaism and Christianity. Readings are from primary texts in English translation and major scholarly treatments of these texts.

Levinas and Biblical Wisdom (Theodore Perry)

This course examines the writings of Levinas through three different and interrelated lenses: philosophy, religion, and literature. The focus is how Levinas' theories offer new perspectives for reading and interpreting the Wisdom Books of the Hebrew Bible: Job, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs.

The Book of Psalms in Jewish and Christian Tradition. (Theodore Perry)

This course focuses on the Book of Psalms. Hebrew and/or Latin is recommended but not required.

Religion, Art, and Politics (Marc Epstein)

Nowadays, we accept the idea that religion, like so much else, is political. It makes sense, then, that visual culture, which can be used, situated, manipulated, and exploited in the service of religion can serve to affirm and in some cases to subvert the political messages of religion. This class explores examples of the collusions of religion, art, and politics, as well as their collisions in the productions of majority and minority culture in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the West, from antiquity to postmodernity.

Writing about Religion (Mark Oppenheimer)

This is a course in the history and practice of journalism and other popular nonfiction about religion. The class reads articles and books that translate religious ideas for a nonspecialized, often secular audience, and consider how they succeed or fail. Sources include *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, documentary films, and books about topics including Scientology, Orthodox Judaism, Roman Catholicism, etc. The course aims to give students a perspective on how the popular press has created the secular encounter with religion; to prepare students to think critically about their own faiths' presentations in the written media; and to prepare them to write well for an irreligious audience. That is, to explain religion to people who may be curious but ignorant, or who may be skeptics.

Gospel of John and Parting of the Ways (Adele Reinhartz)

How, when, and why Christianity moved out of the "big tent" of first-century Judaism to become a major religious, political, and social movement of its own is one of the most important--and most elusive--issues in the study of ancient Judaism and Christianity. A text that is central to this issue is the Gospel of John. In this course we will examine this gospel in its social and historical context, as well as in the history of interpretation, in order to understand its contribution to our understanding of the development of early Christianity out of its Jewish matrix.

Martin Luther and His Interpreters (Christine Helmer)

The aim of this course is to query the construction of Luther as modern Protestant by returning to the sources, his most important theological works. In this course we will read Luther himself and analyze his writings in order to figure out in what respects he was indeed a Catholic theologian and a reformer of the Church. We will analyze the structure of his thought, his rhetoric and polemic, and his theological ideas and commitments. During this process we will gain some familiarity with Luther's medieval theological sources in addition to the twentieth-century Protestant theologians who took him for granted as their own.

Coming to Terms with Guilt: Jewish-Christian Relations (Katharina von Kellenbach)

In preparation for the millennium celebration, Pope John Paul II issued a series of apologies for Christian complicity in historical evils, including the Holocaust, in order to facilitate a “purification of memory.” We will explore this concept in its theological, ethical, and political dimensions. What role did the Holocaust play in shifting Christian teachings of Jewish guilt (for the death of Christ) to a recognition of Christian guilt for anti-Judaism? How do religious rituals of teshuvah and penance help individuals and communities confront guilt in the aftermath of political atrocity? Can we speak of the “purification of memory” in the context of Jewish-Christian relations after the Holocaust? Is Holocaust memory relevant and applicable to other instances of historical injustice, such as slavery, genocide, or sexual violence?