

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?

Reading the New Testament without Presupposing Supersessionism (Jesper Svartvik)

Supersessionism teaches that Christianity has commonalities with Judaism while simultaneously replacing it. Finding expression throughout church history, it has shaped Christian traditions of reading the New Testament. Today, many biblical scholars argue that because the New Testament predates this idea, we need to read the New Testament without supersessionist presuppositions. Second Temple Judaism is not in theological contrast with the New Testament, but is its historical context. This course will explore these re-readings of the New Testament, focusing on texts like Jesus’ parables, the passion narratives, and the Pauline proclamation that the gospel is “good news” for Jews and gentiles.

From Foes to Friends: Jewish-Christian Relations (Jesper Svartvik)

Christianity began as an inner-Jewish movement: Jesus and his disciples were Jews, in his teaching Jesus constantly referred to the Scriptures that are sacred to Jews and Christians alike (known as *Tanakh* or the Old Testament), and in his writings the apostle Paul also quoted from or alluded to these writings. This means that the texts in the New Testament have shaped not only Christians’ self-understanding, but also their view of Jews and the Jewish tradition. This course will study the reception history of the New Testament texts, and their impact on Jewish-Christian relations throughout history, with emphases both on the first two centuries (when the texts were written down) and the 20th century (when the Holocaust took place). How do Christians read the New Testament texts today? And how do Jews and Christians view each other today?

Shared Scripture – Divided Faiths: The Medieval Jewish-Christian Encounter over the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament (Frans van Liere)

This course will explore the history of medieval Christian Hebraism and its consequences for the perception of the Jewish other. Starting with Jerome, Christian scholars have seen the Hebrew Bible, rather than the Septuagint, as the authoritative version of the Old Testament. In the course of medieval history, this led Christian scholars to seek contact with Jews and Jewish sources, to better understand this text. In various ways, these encounters shaped Christians perceptions of Jews, both in negative and positive ways. The course will survey the work of patristic and medieval authors such as Jerome, Bede, Andrew of Saint Victor, Nicholas of Lyra, Paul of Burgos, and Matthias Doering.

Debating Religion: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Dialogue and Dispute (Jonathan Decter)

This course is a history of interreligious polemic, disputation, and dialogue among Jews, Christians, and Muslims from antiquity to modernity. The course not only highlights points of difference among the traditions—from abstruse theological doctrines, to competing interpretations of scriptural passages, to ad hominem attacks on religious founding figures—but also the ways in which the practice of disputation played a formative role in the development of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The course focuses specifically on interreligious debates and dialogues, both real and fictional, although we also consider broader polemical themes as expressed in treatises. Finally, the course considers epistemic shifts that allowed for the transition from interreligious disputation to “interfaith dialogue” in recent decades even as it highlights the lines of continuity between the two.