

STANDARD SYLLABUS

Introduction Judaism
THEO 272

This course provides an introduction to Classical Judaism.

Knowledge Area(s) satisfied: Theological and Religious Studies Knowledge
Skill(s) Developed: Critical Thinking Skills and Dispositions
Values Requirement(s) satisfied: Understanding Spirituality or Faith in Action in the World

Learning Objectives:

Knowledge Area (Theological and Religious Studies Knowledge):

By taking this course, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge, with attention to historical development, of the central texts, beliefs, ethical understandings, and practices of Classical Judaism. By way of example, students who take this course should be able to: (1) name and discuss some of the most important Jewish scriptures; (2) Articulate the general outline of the historical evolution of Classical Judaism; and (3) Define and discuss key concepts, terms, values, and religious practices foundational to Classical Judaism.

The course addresses other competencies as well. By taking this course, for example, students should be able to analyze and interpret Jewish religious texts, beliefs, and practices using standard scholarly methods and tools (competency a). Students taking this course will also be able to demonstrate knowledge of Jewish ethical teachings and perspectives (competency e). Finally, students taking this course will be able to evaluate the religious perspectives particular to classical Judaism (competency d).

Skills (Critical Thinking Skills and Dispositions):

Students will:

(1) "comprehend, paraphrase, summarize, and contextualize the meaning of varying forms of communication."

In class discussions, quizzes, and/or examinations, students will demonstrate the ability to comprehend, paraphrase, summarize, and/or contextualize a variety of religious texts, histories, and ideas, as well as scholarly arguments about those texts, histories and ideas.

(2) develop "strategies for seeking and synthesizing information to support an argument, make a decision, or resolve a problem."

In class discussions, quizzes, and/or examinations, students will be encouraged to articulate reasoned arguments about materials studied in the course or to critique arguments to which they are exposed in the class.

(3) monitor students' own "individual thinking or behavior" in relationship to Judaism "in order to question, confirm, validate, or correct" their presuppositions and prejudgements.

Class discussions will require students to reflect on their own presuppositions and correct erroneous opinions by appealing to data and reasoned argumentation.

Values Area (Understanding Spirituality or Faith in Action in the World):

By taking this course, students will be able to "demonstrate knowledge of and capacity to articulate the foundations of" Judaism, whether they are themselves Jewish ("one's own" belief or faith tradition") or not ("others' beliefs or faith traditions").

They will also be able to "demonstrate how faith traditions or belief systems"--in this case, Judaism--are related to Jewish intellectual and cultural life, including Jewish customs and philosophies.

Learning Activities:

Possible evaluation methods:

- Lecture
- Discussion
- Papers
- Examinations
- Field trips
- Presentations

Note: (Instructors may vary the evaluation categories.)

Sample Course Topic Schedule:

UNIT I: INTRODUCTION

What is Judaism? Methodological Considerations in the Study of Religion
Historical and Textual Problems in the Study of Biblical and Rabbinic Judaism

UNIT II: THE BIBLICAL PERIOD

Biblical Theology: The Story of Creation
The Character of Biblical Narrative: The Abraham Cycle
The Character of Biblical Narrative: The Jacob Cycle
Biblical Law and Ritual

UNIT III: THE RABBINIC PERIOD

Rabbinic Adaptation and the Survival of Judaism
Rabbinic Literature: The Oral Law
The Halakhah of the Sages
The Rabbinic Reading of Biblical Narrative

UNIT IV: THE SHAPE OF JEWISH RITUAL AND LITURGICAL LIFE

Dietary Laws

Note: (Instructors may vary the presentation of topics to some degree, but the material covered will remain the same.)