This course introduces students to the three major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The selection of topics and readings emphasize what these three “Abrahamic” religions share and explore the significance of their cultural, intellectual, and spiritual heritages. For each religion, we will study historical origins, central texts, beliefs and rituals, and philosophical and mystical ways of relating to the divine. We will also consider the history of interpreting scripture in each tradition with particular attention paid to the story of Abraham sacrificing his son. The time-frame of the course ranges from ancient, to medieval, to modern.

Required Texts:
3) A.J. Arberry, *The Quran Interpreted*
4) Course Packet (available from Professor)

Many readings are to be found on Latte.

**Primary sources marked with an asterisk [*] must be brought to class.** All primary sources are in the course packet; some are also available on the Web.

Requirements and Evaluation:

1. **Three In-class Quizzes** (each worth 10% of final grade): On the final day of each section (i.e., 2/13; 3/20; 4/21), we will set aside 15 minutes for an in-class quiz. Anyone who carefully completes the required reading and attends all lectures should have little problem with these quizzes; they will consist mainly of short-answer definitions of key terms and figures, which will test your mastery of basic knowledge from the readings and lectures.

2. **Two short papers** (each worth 15% of final grade): Students will be required to submit two short papers (3-4 pages), dedicated to analyzing primary sources. You are free to choose any primary source from among the syllabus assignments (primary sources are marked by asterisks [*]). The two papers, however, must treat sources from two different religious traditions (i.e. Judaism and Christianity; Judaism and Islam; or Christianity and Islam). Papers on texts from our Judaism section must be submitted by 2/24; papers on texts from our Christianity section, by 3/27; and papers on texts from our
Islam section, by 4/24. Further instructions will be distributed in the second week of class.

3. **Final Examination** (30% of final grade): The final exam will be cumulative. The exam will consist of a combination of [a] short-answer questions, which will test for familiarity with the basic concepts of each religious tradition (i.e., similar to the three quizzes in form and content), and [b] essay questions whose scope will be more synthetic and comparative (i.e., asking you to explore shared themes in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as important points of contrast among them).

4. **Class Participation** (10% of final grade): Regular participation (which presumes attendance) is essential. Participation means that the student shows clear evidence of having prepared the reading and an attempt to discuss broad ideas suggested by the text. Please be advised that the wide scope of this course makes the thorough preparation of assignments especially important – not only to gain familiarity with the beliefs, history, and practices of each religious tradition, but also to lay the foundation for further reflection about the wider issues raised by the study of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

**Other Policies**

**Academic Honesty** You must complete all assignments alone. In your writing, you must follow rules of attribution, meaning that you must cite all sources consulted in preparing your papers. As stated in the Student Handbook, “Every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. A student shall not receive credit for work that is not the product of the student’s own effort.” Examples of penalties for a student found responsible for an infringement of academic honesty are no credit for the work in question, failure in the course, and the traditional range of conduct sanctions from disciplinary warning through permanent dismissal from the University.

**Students with documented disabilities:** Students with disabilities certified by the Coordinator of Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in the Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs and First Year Services will be given reasonable accommodations to complete required assignments. Disabilities that are not documented and approved by the Office of Academic Affairs will not be given accommodations.

**Late Assignments:** Papers submitted late will suffer a 1/3 grade deduction per day late. For example, a paper that would have received a grade of A on the assigned date would receive an A minus if submitted one day late, a B plus if submitted two days late, and so on.
SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS (assignments are to be read for the date under which they appear)

1/13 Introduction

SECTION 1: JUDAISM

1/16 The Covenant, the Temple, and the Land of Israel
Oxtoby, 33-53
* Genesis 12-22
* Exodus 19-20
* I Kings 5-6

1/23 Exile, Return, Exile
Oxtoby, 53-71
* 2 Kings 24-25
* Jeremiah 5, 31, 39
* Psalm 137
* Ezekiel 36, 37:1-14
* Nehemiah 2:11-18; 8:1-9:37, 10:28-39; 13
* Rabbi Akiva Laughed (packet, 1)

1/27 Oral Law: Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash
Oxtoby 71-91
Goldenberg, “Talmud” from Back to the Sources (Latte)
* Pirke Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) 1 (packet, 1/2 –1/3)
* Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metzia 59a-b (packet, 1/4)
* Legends of the Jews, First Things Created and the Alphabet (packet, 1/5-1/7)
* Legends of the Jews, The Binding of Isaac (Aqedah) (packet, 1/7-1/11)

1/30 Medieval Judaism: Philosophy
Oxtoby 91-104
* Maimonides, Guide of the Perplexed, III: 19, 20, 24 (On God’s Knowledge and the Binding of Isaac, packet, 2-11)

2/3 Medieval Bible Commentary and Mysticism
Oxtoby 104-111
Greenstein, “Medieval Bible Commentaries” from Back to the Sources (Latte)
* Zohar: Introduction and selections by Daniel Matt (packet, 12-37)

2/6 Sanctifying Time and Space
Oxtoby 111-30
Genesis 1:1-2:3; Exodus 12; Leviticus 23
* Abraham Joshua Heschel, The Sabbath, selections (packet, 38-54)
2/10  Jews in Modernity  
Oxtoby, 130-50  
* The Jew in the Modern World, selections (packet, 60-70)  
* Baruch Spinoza, Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, selections (packet 71-75/9)  

Related Resources:  
•  Jewish Virtual Library: Haskalah

2/13  Jewish Belief in America  
Quiz #1

SECTION 2: CHRISTIANITY

2/24  In Search of the Historical Jesus  
Oxtoby 201-211  
* Mark 1; 8:27-38; 13; 14:1-25; 15:1-47  
* Luke 1-3  

Short Papers on Judaism Due

Related Resources:  
•  PBS Special: From Jesus to Christ  
•  NPR Coverage of Gibson's film The Passion

2/27  The Birth of Christology, the Birth of the Church  
Oxtoby 212-14  
Alan F. Segal, Rebecca’s Children, “Paul, the Convert and Apostle” (Latte)  
* John 1:1-18, 3:1-21, 8:31-59; 14:1-14  
* Acts 1-2; 15:1-29

3/3  Verus Israel: Scripture and Supercessionism  
* Romans 1-5  
* Galatians 1-4  
  Levenson, Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son, chapter 15 (Latte)  
  Siker, Disinheriting the Jews, chapters 7, 8 (Latte)  

Related Resources:  
•  PBS Frontline Special: From Hebrew Bible to Christian Bible
3/6   **From Persecution to Power to Division**  
Oxtoby, 216-41  
* St. Perpetua - *The Martyrdom of St. Perpetua* (packet, 76/1-76/26)  
* Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* (packet, 75/27-76/32)  

*Related Resources:*  
- PBS Special: The Martyrs  
- PBS Frontline: Legitimization under Constantine  
- What is the Greek Orthodox Church?

3/10   **The Medieval Latin World**  
Oxtoby 241-66  
* Augustine, *Confessions* (packet, 76/33-76/58)  

3/13   **Gender and the Body in Medieval Christianity**  
Oxtoby, 267-69  
* Julian of Norwich, Book of Showings 3, 5, 59* (76/64-76/66)

*Related Resources:*  
- Hildegard of Bingen's Music, Art, and Poetry  
- Internet Medieval Sourcebook: Sex and Gender and The Crusades

3/17   **The Protestant Reformation**  
Oxtoby 269-89  
* Martin Luther, 95 Theses* (packet, 76/67-76/75)  
* John Calvin, Commentaries* (packet, 76/76-76/86)

3/20   **Modern Developments**  
Oxtoby 305-31  
* Writings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from *A Testament of Hope* ed. James M. Washington (packet, 77-95)  
**Quiz #2**

3/24   **The Life of Muhammad and the Revelation of the Qur’an**  
Oxtoby 341-56  
* Qur’an, 96 (Arberry II:344); 53:1-25 (Arberry II:244-45); 17:1 (Arberry I:302); 87 (Arberry II:335); 89 (Arberry II:337-38); 6:74-110 (Arberry I:158-62)
* Texts on the Muhammad’s birth and night journey (packet, 96-99)
  Illustration of Muhammad on Buraq
* Texts on the Inimitability of the Qur’an (packet, 100-105)

Related Resources:
- Web Resource for Islamic Studies
- Topic Index of the Quran
- Qur'an and Hadith Collections
- Sunnah and Hadith, see esp. An Introduction to the Science of Hadith
- To hear different styles of Qur’an recitation, visit Reciting the Quran
- Music and Poetry for the Prophet's Birthday (try Ya Nabi Salam)
- Overview of the Arabic Language

3/27 Islam and the “Religions of the Book”
* Qur’an, 2:256 (Arberry I:65); 9:29 (Arberry I:210); 109 (Arberry II:352), 21:31-95 (Arberry II:19-23); 37:81-114 (Arberry II:153-54); 7:92-170 (Arberry I:183-192); 3:25-64 (Arberry I:76-83); 5:12-19 (Arberry I:129)
* Tabari on the Sacrifice of Abraham’s Son (packet, 106-108)
* Muhammad as the Seal of the Prophets (packet, 109-110)
  Short Paper on Christianity Due

3/31 Ritual and Mosque
Oxtoby, 359-68, 416-18
* Qur’an 2:183; 2:127; 5:6; 97; 98
* The Pillars of Islam, Prayer (packet, 111-114)
  PBS: Virtual Haji

Related Resources:
- What Is Islamic Architecture? (by Ernst J. Grube)
- Tourist Guide to Islamic Holy Sites (includes photographs)
- Gallery of Architecture in the Arab World

4/3 The Spread of Islam and the Sunni/Shi'i Divide
Oxtoby 368-83, 420-37
* Shi’ite texts (packet, 115-124)

Related Resources:
- The Rise of Islam in the World (by Patricia Crone)
- Religious narratives about Shi'ite shrines
- BBC Special - Pilgrimage to Karbala

4/7 Islamic Law and Jurisprudence
Oxtoby, 383-93
Other readings: TBA

4/17 Medieval Philosophy and Theology
Oxtoby, 393-404
Oliver Leaman, “Can God Know Particulars?” (Latte)
* Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy (read introduction and section on fate and predestination) (packet, 130/1-130/10)

4/21 The Sufi Path
Oxtoby, 404-16
Michael Sells, Early Islamic Mysticism (selections on Rabi‘a and Sarraj, in packet, p. 131-150)
* Poems by Rumi (packet 151-52)
Listen to Dhikr on the Web (follow the links for Dhikr and listen to the Short Khatm or the Long Khatm)
Quiz #3

Related Resources:
• The Sufi Way (by David Waines)
• On Dhikr

4/24 Islam and Modernity
Oxtoby, 337-54
Omid Safi, Progressive Muslims introduction (Latte)
Short Paper on Islam Due

4/28 Conclusion