

## IPC/TH 572 (3)

### Foundational Traditions in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

**Instructor:** Rabbi Dr. Laura Duhan Kaplan

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Office hours during term: by appointment

**Purpose:** In this introductory-level course, we will explore stories of the formation and early development of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. We will examine both traditional and historical accounts; compare and contrast common characteristics, e.g., founders, sacred sites, defining events, male and female figures, and embedded counter-narratives; explore ways in which the three religions' stories dialogue with one another; discuss the traditional and contemporary function of authoritative narratives; and learn about their spiritual significance to religious practitioners.

#### **Competence Objectives:**

Students will be expected to learn and demonstrate the ability to

- Define and use basic terminology needed to study the foundational traditions in the course
- Describe core components of the foundational traditions of each of the three religious traditions
- Explain and apply theoretical concepts used to compare and contrast the traditions
- Articulate some of the complications of comparative study of religious traditions
- Discuss inter-relationships between the three foundational traditions
- Integrate new information into one's evolving personal theology

**Format:** Spring term 2015, Thursdays 9:00 am-12:00 noon, January 22, 29; February 5, 12, 19, 26; March 12, 19, 26; April 2, 9. Course activities include lecture, discussion, student presentations and small group activities. Led partially by guest speakers (4 speakers for half a class each), we will explore each tradition in turn; then study together an account of their interweaving by a scholar of Islam.

**Identification of the levels at which the course can be taken:** Certificate and Basic Degree (CTS; Diplomas; M.Div; MA)

#### **Required reading:**

(1) Peters, F. E. 2003. *The Monotheists: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Conflict and Competition*. Vol. 1: The Peoples of God. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

(2) Primary source readings and one secondary source reading specific to each tradition, assigned by the professor and guest speakers, will be available on moodle.

**Assignments:** Attendance, reading, class participation, three short papers, final paper on a selected topic. Written papers will demonstrate fulfillment of the course competencies.

Attendance: Class attendance meeting VST policies.

Reading: Thoughtful preparation of the assigned readings before the class in which they are due.

Class participation: Includes careful listening and thoughtful responses to class lecture, discussion and reading; engagement in class activities, such as reflective writing or small group discussion.

Short papers: For each of the traditions, students will prepare a 3-page paper, recounting an aspect of a foundational tradition, connecting it with the students' personal theology, and reflecting critically on the process.

Final paper: Approximately 10 pages, on a topic of the student's choice, approved by the professor. The final paper should be based on a tradition studied in class; include appropriate outside reading; and demonstrate mastery of content and critical analysis, as described in the course competencies. Detailed guidelines will be found in the syllabus; ideas, examples will be discussed in class. The final paper is not required for Certificate in Theological Studies students.

**Prerequisites:** None

### **Selected bibliography:**

Armstrong, Karen. 2000. *Islam: A Short History*. New York: Random House.

Arnal, William E. 1997. Making and Re-Making the Jesus-Sign: Contemporary Markings on the Body of Christ. In *Whose Historical Jesus?*, ed. William E. Arnal and Michel Desjardins, 308 – 319. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press.

Boyarin, Daniel. 2004. A Tale of Two Synods: Nicaea, Yavneh, and Rabbinic Ecclesiology. In *“Turn it Again”: Jewish Medieval Studies and Literary Theory*, ed. Sheila Delany, 20 - 58. Asheville, North Carolina: Pegasus Press.

Goldenberg, Robert. 2007. *The Origins of Judaism: From Canaan to the Rise of Islam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gruen, Erich S. 1993. Cultural Fictions and Cultural Identity. *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974 - ) 123: 1 – 14.

Humphreys, R. Stephen. 1989. Qur'anic Myth and Narrative Structure in Early Islamic Historiography. In *Tradition and Innovation in Late Antiquity*, ed. F. M. Clover and R. S. Humphreys, 271 - 290. Madison : University of Wisconsin Press.

Khalidi, Tarif. 2009. *Images of Muhammad: Narratives of the Prophet in Islam Across the Centuries*. NY: Doubleday.

Kuschel, Karl-Josef. 2001. One in Abraham? The Significance of Abraham for Jews, Christians, and Muslims Today. In *Memory and History in Christianity and Judaism*. Ed. Michael A. Signer, 183 - 203. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.

Shanks, Hershel, ed. 1992. *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallel History of Their Origins and Early Development*. Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society.