



## Course Descriptions

Summer 2017

**BIB 511 The Problem of Evil in the Bible: The Book of Job** *Dr. Job Jindo*

How should we approach when bad things happen to good people? How shouldn't we? And why? Where do we find resources to cope with evil? This course will explore these and other related issues of human suffering through a critical reading of the book of Job. By the conclusion of this course, each student will demonstrate competence in information literacy relevant to the topics covered. By then, the student will also be able to articulate: (1) the structure, purposes, and theological outlook of Job; (2) biblical theologies of evil and tragedy; and (3) three examples where the book of Job is a source for understanding the human condition in our own day. Special attention will be paid to literary and religious rather than historical and editorial issues. Prerequisite: Introduction to Bible or the equivalent. (2 credits)

**HEB 351 Hebrew IIB** *Ilana Davidov*

Students will complete the last few lessons of *Ivrit min HaHatchla Bet* supplementing the textbook with advance materials from level *Gimel* books. Students will learn new grammatical topics and practice writing ideas and opinions about independent readings. (*Gesher* books). Students will work on improving their aural comprehension by listening to short stories on Youtube. Prerequisite: Hebrew IIA or the equivalent. (4 credits)

**HEB 414 Advanced Hebrew** *Ilana Davidov*

Building upon what has been learned from עברית מן ההתחלה א' + ב', this elective course will provide further practice in reading advanced material and writing about independent readings. Students will work on improving their oral and aural skills by watching Israeli videos and making oral presentations in class. Prerequisite: Hebrew IIB or the equivalent. (2 credits)

**HIS 317 Modern History** *Helene Krupnick*

This course will explore the Jewish encounter with modernity. Covering a period from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we will study both primary and secondary sources that shed light on the major political, religious, social and cultural developments of European and American Jewry. Emphasis will be placed on the major events, movements and controversies which laid the foundation for contemporary Jewish society. (2 credits)

**LIT 271 Tefillah and Seminar** *Cantor Michael Kasper*

A time for the AJR community to gather for prayer, study and shared reflection. Each week, students will be responsible for preparing *tefillah*; A seminar to discuss the experience will follow. (1 credit)

**LIT 307 Festival Liturgy** *Rabbi Jeff Hoffman*

A study of the liturgy throughout the Three Festival cycle of the Jewish year, from biblical origins to the present era. The form, function and texts of principal *piyyutim*; variations in practice among various rites and contemporary communities along with the theological implications. Discussion of creative and innovative rituals that can be introduced into the fixed liturgy. Prerequisite: Introduction to Liturgy (2 credits)

**MEC 133 Mechina Hebrew** *Ilana Davidov*

This course is a continuation of Mechina using the first volume of Hebrew from Scratch ( **עברית מן א' ההתחלה**). Students will read short texts and conversations. 350 additional words will be presented and practiced. The major grammatical topic will be the past tense of all active *binyanim* and also the declensions of various prepositions. (No credit)

**PHI 301 Bioethics** *Rabbi Jill Hackell, MD*

Technological advancements in medicine have brought with them bioethical issues of increasing complexity. This course will examine issues pertinent to today's bioethical dialogue from a Jewish point of view, including issues such as organ donation, end-of-life, reproduction, genetic screening and gene therapy, illness prevention, and physician-assisted death. How does the Jewish way of looking at these issues compare and contrast with the general societal discussion? What are the governing principles of bioethical argument in each of these? How are ancient Jewish sources reconciled with modern technology in guiding thinking about these issues? (2 credits)

**PHI 475 Personal Theology** *Rabbi Len Levin*

Through taking this course students will be able to: clarify their own theological agenda—the questions and core-concepts that are most central to their own Jewish theological vision; develop a statement of their personal theological visions, through a combination of drawing on previous paradigms and creating their own; and specifically be able to address the issues of revelation/authority/practice, God, Israel/Jewish peoplehood, suffering/evil, and eschatology in a way that will be meaningful to themselves and to their future audiences. (2 credits)

**PRO 005 Core Concepts V** *Dr. Ora Horn Prouser*

This is a multi-year sequence of seminars. The seminars cover some of the fundamental values, concepts and vocabulary of Jewish tradition. The student is expected first to gain a basic acquaintance with these terms and then to delve more deeply into them so as to appreciate their range of significance. The goal of the seminars is not simply to gather information, but to develop an integrated way of thinking about and expressing these value-concepts, so that the student may grow from an appreciation of the tradition to active and creative participation in the discourse of Torah. Every student is required to take two years of the seminars given in the sequence, but they

need not be taken in order. Core Concepts V begins with the term *'ot*. (No credit)

**PRO 310 Homiletics** *TBA*

An exploration into the structure and content of a sermon or *d'var Torah*. Particular attention will be paid to various nontraditional varieties of pulpit discourse as well as to available resource materials in the sermonic field. Primary methodology: the creation, presentation and critique of sermons assigned to course participants. (1 credit)

**PRO 311 Ethics of Communication** *Shira Dicker*

The 21st Century has ushered in an exciting new era of communications; two-dimensional public relations campaigns or promotional outreach based solely on newspapers and magazines is now a thing of the past. With the advent of the Internet, a brave new world has come into being. The proliferation of websites and blogs and the powerful tool of social media – chiefly Facebook, Twitter and YouTube -- enables your ability to communicate important new ideas and effect social change in a newly democratic way. In this course, you will learn how to use old media and new media alike to agitate, motivate and communicate for maximum effectiveness. You will also get learn the how-to's of successful promotional event planning – think FlashMobs for a cause. Bring your passions and your platforms and be prepared to be empowered by The Ten Commandments of 21st Century Communications for Clergy. (2 credits)

**PRO 326 Education** *Dr. Renee Holtz*

Who will you be as a *rav*, a *hazzan*, as a teacher? Will you be in the classroom as the only/best teacher, as the supervisor of the teachers, the creator of curriculum, the setter of standards, the implementer of policy, the disciplinarian, registrar, and/or even the school nurse? What are some basic (and not so basic) skills, vocabulary, and understandings that you need in order to be able to comfortably fill these roles? Learn about current “hot” topics in education that are happening in the world and impacting Jewish education, about the needs of teachers and learners, about writing and evaluating lesson plans, and about what it takes to help adequate educators become great. As with all good educational structures, the prior knowledge and needs of students in this course will determine adjustments to the syllabus. (2 credits)

**PRO 346 Psalms in the Key of Healing** *Rabbi Rafael Goldstein*

This seminar is intended to help students identify their own spiritual, psycho-social, theological concerns as well as those of patients/clients/congregants using close analysis of specific Psalms and other prayer materials. Students will become familiar with both the simple reading of the text and the much deeper meanings of the text as they examine their own theological reactions and understandings of the texts focusing on Psalms 23, 27, 103, 121, and 150 and themes of grief, shame, forgiveness, hope and gratitude. Students will have opportunities to look at other Psalms or spiritual texts of their own choice and present their understanding of the theological and spiritual implications of their texts. Students will have opportunities to consider the use of texts in their care practices. (2 credits)

**PRO 350 Conversion** *Rabbi Geoffrey Mitelman*

What prompts someone to convert to Judaism? How do they go about doing it? How do the different movements approach conversion? How has conversion changed throughout history? Who gets to decide “Who is Jewish?” and what are the implications? How are Judaism and the Jewish community changing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? And what is the role of the rabbi in preparing someone for conversion? These are some of the questions we will explore in our course on conversion, exploring the historical, theological, sociological and practical elements of conversion to Judaism. This course will be taught as a distance course through Zoom. (2 credits)

**RAB 231 Introduction to Talmud B** *Rabbi Jeff Hoffman*

Students will acquire the skills to identify the component parts of the talmudic *sugya* and the relationships between them. This ability to recognize the elements and functions of the talmudic argument and the ability to distinguish between tannaitic, amoraic, and anonymous passages. Students will also learn the basics of talmudic terminology, vocabulary and grammar. Prerequisite: one semester of Talmud. Havruta section required of all students. (2 credits)

**RAB 355 Ruah Ha-Qodesh in Rabbinic Literature** *Rabbi Julie Danan*

It may come as a surprise that *Ruah Ha-Kodesh*, the Holy Spirit, plays an active role in classical Rabbinic Literature. Throughout the Talmud and Midrash, she is portrayed as both the divine gift of prophecy that is said to have ended, and the divine voice in scripture that has never stopped speaking. In this theme-based course, Aggadic traditions about *Ruah Ha-Qodesh* will serve as windows into important topics like the nature of prophecy, the canonization of scripture, and feminine representations of the divine. We will study primary texts with both traditional and academic methods, and explore the importance of *Ruah Ha-Qodesh* traditions to our own understanding of Jewish spirituality today. Prerequisite: a prior course in Rabbinic literature and the ability to translate Hebrew texts is recommended for this course. (2 credits)