



Course Descriptions Fall 2021

- **BIB 347 Leviticus Reconsidered: The Reality of the Holy and the Choreography of the Sacred**
Dr. Job Jindo
Many find the book of Leviticus too difficult to understand. Its cultic concerns seem obsolete and boring, and its rules of sacrifices and ritual purity appear to have no relevance to the social, existential, and normative issues of our time. And yet, we live in the “Golden Age of Parashat Hashavua (Weekly Torah portion),” and Jewish clergies are expected to know how to draw insight from this seemingly outmoded and arcane book. This course is a close critical reading of Leviticus, revolving around the contemporary relevance of this text. By the conclusion of this course, the student will learn: (1) the structure, purposes, and theological outlook of Leviticus; (2) the theology of holiness and the idea of biblical ecology as reflected in Leviticus; and (3) how to teach the book of Leviticus to the contemporaries with AJR values (i.e., critical rigor, inclusivity, commitment to the pluralistic, contemporary Jewish and broader communities).
Prerequisite: Introduction to Bible. This course will count as a Bible elective or as fulfilling the Parashat Hashavua requirement.
(2 credits)
- **BIB 520 The Psalms that Clergy Use - Their Meaning and Their Power**
Rabbi Jeffrey Segelman
Psalms are important element in the toolbox of the clergy. They are part of our liturgy, our life cycle rituals, and they often set the tone for moments of commemoration and introspection. In this class, we will take an in-depth look at many of the psalms that regularly find their way into our work and our prayers. Our goal will be not only to learn how to use them more effectively, but also how we may use them to further our professional and personal spiritual growth. Prerequisite: Introduction to Bible. This course will count as a Bible elective.
(2 credits)
- **CAN 230 Musical Skills III**
Stanley Dorn
At AJR, Music Skills III is the culminating course in an intensive three semester program designed to establish in Cantors the rudiments they will need to teach to and perform

with their congregations. In this semester we will concentrate on sight singing modal and tonal melodies, writing melodies for use in the service, harmonizing these and other melodies for accompaniment by instrumental ensemble and/or choir, and conducting such an ensemble.

(2 credits)

- **CAN 355 Creating Neginah (Song) for Liturgical Texts**

Cantor Sol Zim

Public Prayer is challenging when it comes to creating a presence of spirituality in Congregations. Neginah can create a spiritual elevation and a spark, making the worshiper feel uplifted and exhilarated. Students will learn how to create their own melodies to liturgical prayers. They will also learn how antiphonal refrains can invite participation and togetherness and ultimately create a sense of oneness and unity in the worship service. Students will learn how to blend the richness of Jewish liturgy together with contemporary folk & Chassidic sounds..... the result is..... a blessing.

(1 credit)

- **CAN 387 Peace Studies and the Clergy's Voice**

Rabbi/Cantor Neil Blumofe

This course brings another dimension to the Peace Studies curriculum at AJR. This course focuses on the active use of the speaking, chanting, and singing voice each member of the clergy has to offer. The place of music in conflict resolution, for which a rich body of material exists, will be examined along with experiences and techniques for enriching the task of making peace in the many varied situations all clergy members find themselves working in. This course is part of the Peace Studies requirement for cantorial students and an elective for rabbinical students.

(2 credits)

- **CAN 395 Performing Piyyutim: Sephardi-Mizrahi Poetry and Song**

Dr. Samuel Torjman-Thomas

Piyyutim form a corpus of poetry that has become a hallmark of Sephardi-Mizrahi literary expression. Most *piyyutim* are set to music, performed in communal settings like the *Baqqashot* tradition of Moroccan Jewry, the *pizmon* tradition in the Syrian community, and now as a neutral territory for Jewish cultural expression the world over. In this course, we explore the basis of various *piyyutim* traditions, poets and poetic trends, common literary themes, musical settings, and *piyyut* pedagogy.

(2 credits)

- **CAN 430 Nusah: Shalosh Regalim**

Cantors Sol Zim and Lisa Klinger-Kantor

This course provides an in depth extensive study of the vast components of Unique *Regalim* motifs, Various *Nushaot* & Prayer Modes. Students will develop a deep understanding of the different *Misnai* Motifs that make up the *Shalosh Regalim* Services. Special emphasis will be placed on the *S'firat Ha'omer*, *Hakafot*, *Hallel*, *Na'anunim* (shaking

of Lulav & Etrog), *Tal, Geshem, Shabharit Amidah, Hoshanot, Ata Horeita Lada'at* and *Musaf Amidah for Regalim*. Students will learn to master and lead the entire Shalosh Regalim Service and Participatory melodies together with the Traditional Nusah.
(4 credits)

- **HAL Critical Issues in Halakhah and Science**

Dr. Matt Goldstone and Rabbi Jill Hackell, M.D.

In Fall 2021 this course will focus on the intersection of halakha and genetics. We will explore the nature of, and halakhic attitudes towards, GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms), cloned and cultured meat, gene therapy, and the relationship between genes and Jewish identity. Grounded in a close reading of Hebrew primary sources together with English language responsa, this course will provide basic scientific and halakhic knowledge about key issues in the 21st century intersection of science and Jewish law.

Prerequisite: Hebrew 1B (HEB 251)

(2 credits)

- **HAL 460 Intermediate Codes**

Rabbi David Almog

This course will focus on Joseph Karo's Shulhan Arukh, *the* canonical early modern code of Jewish law, which continues to inform contemporary practice for many Jews.

Together, we will study classic laws related to the observances of Shabbat and Holidays.

Additionally, our exploration will be enriched by readings and discussions reflecting upon the ways these traditional forms of observance might continue to inspire our diverse Jewish communities as sources or normative practice, spiritual nourishment and ethical reflection. Prerequisite: two trimesters of Introduction to Codes.

(2 credits)

- **HEB 250 Hebrew IA**

Ilana Davidov

Using the second volume of *Hebrew from Scratch* (עברית מן ההתחלה ב'), students will read and listen to texts of different genres – informative, literary and narrative – and different historical registers. A vocabulary of about 500 additional words will be presented and practiced; special attention will be given to dictionary look-up skills. Grammatical topics include nominal and possessive sentences in the future, relative and conditional clauses, the future tense of *Pa'al*, and declensions of various prepositions. Prerequisite: Completion of the Mechina program or by examination.

(4 credits)

- **HEB 351 Hebrew IIB**

Ilana Davidov

In the beginning of this course students will complete the last four lessons of the second volume of *Hebrew from Scratch* (עברית מן ההתחלה ב'). It will include an intensive review of the verb system in the active בניינים and their gerunds, and a brief introduction to the passive (הופעל, פועל) בניינים, real and unreal condition, comparative and superlative sentences. Depending on the class progress, student

may work towards the end of the trimester with a more advanced material.

Prerequisite: Hebrew IIA or the equivalent.

(4 credits)

- **HIS 355 Between Kodesh and Hol – Religion and Secularism in Israeli Life**

Dr. Yakir Englander

This course will examine the relationship between religion and secularism in Israeli everyday life and art, while emphasizing the dialogue between them and the classical sources on which they are based. In the first part of the course, we will examine the pairs of concepts Secularism-Religion; Holy-Profane through the works of Israeli immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East. Among others, we will listen to the liturgical poets - Rabbi David Buzaglo, Dudu Tessa, and the Kuwait brothers and will read from Sami Michael, Ronit Matalon, and Almog Behar.

In the second part of the course, we will examine the struggle between the sacred and the profane and the “killing” of the Exiled Jewish God in the Zionist-European worldview. From the struggle between Ahad Ha'am and Brenner on the essence of Judaism to Bialik's enterprise of the Talmud and Hebrew poetry. In addition, we will study the concepts of the Zionist body and power in the writings of A.D. Gordon, Rabbi Kook and Jabotinsky and in the political-theological doctrine of Ben-Gurion.

In the third part of the course, we will move through different themes of life in Israel. We will examine the rulings of the Rabbinical Court regarding divorce and its cinematic expression of Ronit and Shlomi Alkabetz; The place of prayer and the Divine in daily life in the poetry of Rachel, Leah Goldberg, Zelda and Yona Wallach. We will discuss changes in the sanctity of the army in the Israeli concept of bereavement and the struggle of military post-trauma through Yehuda Amichai, the singing of Ahuva Ozeri and the cinema of Amos Gitai. We will discuss the sacredness of the land in the debate between Naomi Shemer and Amos Oz and we will end the course with the place of Israeli spirituality in the singing of Amir Benyon, the Banai family, Shlomo Bar, Eliaz Cohen, Ofer Levy, and in the choreography of Ohad Naharin.

The course does not require prior knowledge of Israeli art or the Hebrew language.

However, students will be required to watch Israeli cinema, intensely listen to music and read Israeli poets and authors throughout the course. This course covers the Israeli History and Culture requirement.

(2 credits)

- **LIT 101 Introduction to Liturgy**

Rabbi Rob Scheinberg

What are the words associated with Jewish prayer, and how and why have they changed over time? In this course we will closely examine the Jewish liturgy for weekdays, addressing the structure, history, and theological implications of texts of the Siddur including the Shema, Amidah, Torah service, Kaddish, Berakhot associated with food, and more. We will also explore questions of prayer's personal meaning and spiritual

significance in contemporary Jewish life, as well as the role of a religious leader in thoughtfully designing worship experiences. Prerequisite: Students in this course must be at the level of Hebrew IA or above.

(2 credits)

- **MEC 133 Mechina**

Michal Nachmany

This course is a continuation of Mechina Hebrew (MEC 120) taught in the summer. It will cover the early parts of *Hebrew From Scratch* Part I.

(No credit)

- **MEC 135 Mechina**

Yafit Avner

This course is a continuation of Mechina Hebrew (MEC 133) taught in the summer. It will cover lessons 19-28 of *Hebrew From Scratch* Part I, finishing the book. Students will continue to learn more advanced grammatical patterns, past tense verbs, new vocabulary and will improve their writing, reading, and conversational skills.

(No credit)

- **PHI 311 Medieval Philosophy**

Dr. Len Levin

The classics of medieval Jewish philosophy will be considered as efforts in the ongoing project to articulate a coherent Jewish world-outlook. How did they seek to integrate the value-orientation of the Bible with the best (Greek) “science” of their age? How might their attempts at integration serve as models for us? Texts to be studied will include: Bible, Plato, Aristotle, Philo, Saadia, Halevi, and Maimonides (with intensive attention devoted to the Guide for the Perplexed).

(2 credits)

- **PHI 340 Bioethics**

Rabbi Jill Hackell, M.D.

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, assisted reproduction, genetic screening and gene therapy, disease prevention, physician-assisted death, and the many issues raised by COVID. 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, across the spectrum of Jewish thought? How are ancient Jewish sources reconciled with modern technology in guiding thinking about these issues? This course will meet November 9 – December 21.

(1 credit)

- **PHI 370 Judaism and the Earth**

Rabbi Jill Hammer

This course is a survey of Jewish texts, practices, rituals, and concepts related to environmentalism and the ecology. We will encounter the wide variety of ways Jews have thought and are thinking about their responsibility for the earth, and consider the implications for our own life choices, leadership choices, and community values. There will be an opportunity to design practical projects for addressing the environment within Jewish contexts. This course will count as a spirituality course or as an elective.
(2 credits)

- **PRO 015 Ritual Skills Workshop**

TBA

This workshop will provide an opportunity for students to work on individual ritual skills requirements. The topics covered will be determined when there is clarity as to the participants of the class and their needs.

(No credit)

- **PRO 215 Counseling I**

Cantor Michael Kasper

This course is an introduction to the practice of pastoral counseling, offering the philosophical / religious /psychological underpinnings as well as developing actual practical skills. Emphasis is on acquiring the ability to actively listen and assess situations, and then respond appropriately, knowing when to offer various kinds of help, and when to recommend appropriate referrals. Specific issues in this course involve counseling for life cycle events, pre-marital meetings, helping people cope with illness, losses and grief/bereavement, as well as crisis situations and the stresses of life. We explore ways to use Jewish texts, song, prayer and ritual for healing. Classes often have an experiential component.

(2 credits)

- **PRO 355 Conversion**

Rabbi Heidi Hoover

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 21st 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 meet October 4 – November 8.

(1 credit)

- **PRO 374 Antisemitism**

Dr. Miriam Mora

Antisemitism: Then and Now is a one-semester course covering a broad history of antisemitism, including the development of theological anti-Judaism in the Christian

world, its transformations in the European Middle Ages, and the development and mutation of racialized “antisemitism” in modernity. Students will consider the cultural, social, and political contexts that create and allow for anti-Jewish discourse and action. We will also explore the modern-day implications of antisemitism in American Jewish communities, and the role of Jewish leadership when antisemitism enters their congregations.

(2 credits)

- **PRO 490 Difficult Conversations**

Dr. Hariette Wimms

This course will provide students with a neurobiological and social-emotional understanding of how to negotiate difficult conversations. Students will explore what can make social interactions uncomfortable and how to approach communication in effective and compassionate ways. The course includes opportunities for developing the skills and confidence to handle these difficult situations more comfortably. Students will learn how to manage anxiety about and avoidance of difficult dialogue, how to explore what makes these conversations personally problematic for them, and how to structure conversations that can promote shared understanding. Classes will include discussion of ideas as well as experiential practice and role-playing of real-life situations. This course will meet November 10 – December 22.

(1 credit)

- **PRO 700 FWSS**

Rabbi/Cantor Sam Levine

This seminar group focuses upon issues that arise in the course of rabbinical and cantorial work. Students will explore the challenges that they face in their work and in their developing rabbinate/cantorate through the presentation of a case study. Participation is required of all students whose work is counting as a required internship experience. All Fieldwork must be approved prior to the beginning of the trimester by Cantor Michael Kasper. Tuition is charged but no academic course credit is given for this seminar.

(No credit)

- **RAB 101 Introduction to Mishnah**

Dr. Rachel Rosenthal

This course will introduce students to the study of *mishnah* as a traditional and academic discipline. Texts assigned will illustrate the variety of literary styles and subject matter within the *mishnah*. The course will also include a brief introduction to relevant scholarly issues in *mishnah* study, and *mishnah* study's place in rabbinic work and theology. Students in this course must be at the level of Hebrew IA or above.

(2 credits)

- **RAB 330 Intermediate Talmud**

Rabbi Jeff Hoffman

Students will continue to work on the skills necessary in decoding the talmudic *sugya*. These include extensive work on the logic and the literary layers. Students will also continue to learn increase their knowledge of talmudic terminology, vocabulary and grammar. The text will be Tractate *Megillah*. Prerequisite: Two terms of Introduction to Talmud or the equivalent.

The *Havruta* session is required of all students.

(2 credits)

- **RAB 530 Advanced Talmud**

Dr. Matt Goldstone

This course will hone students' abilities to critically read, parse, and understand Talmudic material that is relevant for understanding contemporary Judaism. This semester will focus on *sugyot* related to kashrut, which will provide students with a historical and literary understanding of the underpinnings of contemporary kashrut

observances. Prerequisites: Three trimesters of Talmud and Hebrew 350 (HEB 2A).

(2 credits)

- **SPI 356 Meditation, Awakening, and Self-Transformation in Judaism and the Far East**

Dr. Job Jindo

This course offers a comparative study of meditation in Judaism and Buddhism from theoretical and practical perspectives. Although historically unrelated, the two religious traditions share features and concerns that prove fruitful for a cross-cultural dialogue. The scope of the course encompasses: Yogic meditation in ancient India, the cultivation of mindfulness in classic and contemporary Buddhism, the art of soulcraft and awakening to the holy in biblical literature, and techniques of meditation in esoteric Judaism (e.g., the use of visualization, Mantra, conversing with God). The questions we will explore include: What are some of the essential meditative qualities that constitute, according to each tradition, an optimal mode of being human? How does each tradition understand some of the major pitfalls in achieving such quality of consciousness? What relevance does this inquiry have to contemporary people, religious and non-religious alike? How vital is such attunement for bearing clerical responsibility in a pluralistic setting and/or for engaging in cross-religious dialogue? No prior knowledge of Jewish Studies, Hebrew, or Buddhism is required. This course will count as a spirituality course or as an elective.

(2 credits)

- **SPI 370 Architecture of Ritual**

Rabbi Jill Hammer

The Architecture of Ritual is a course that allows Jewish leaders to consciously explore what ritual is, what ritual does within the life of individuals and communities, what their role is in creating and performing ritual, and how ritual can be effective in the lives of modern Jews. The course will cover ritual as a phenomenon (what it is, why it exists, how it is structured) as well as explore individual ritual topics with an eye toward

determining how ritual works, clarifying ritual structures, and considering the function of clergy as ritual leaders.
(2 credits)