

Course Descriptions

Summer 2020

- **BIB 332 Disturbing Biblical Texts**

Dr. Ora Horn Prouser

When we engage seriously with the Bible, we find sections that are very meaningful and that speak to us personally, and we find others that disturb us for moral, ethical, or personal reasons. We will focus on those difficult texts and struggle together to find new meaning, or, to find alternative ways to negotiate those sections that are just too troubling. Prerequisite: In order to count this class as a biblical text class, students must have taken Introduction to Bible. Otherwise, students may count this class as an elective.

(1 credit)

- **BIB 421 Religion, Politics, and Leadership Failure in the Bible: Studies in the Book of Samuel**

Dr. Job Jindo

This course will be a critical reading of the book of Samuel, revolving around two axes: (1) religion and politics and (2) leadership and the human condition (or human fallibility). By the conclusion of this course, the student will be able to articulate: (1) the structure, purposes, and theological outlook of the book of Samuel; (2) biblical insight into the relationships among politics, religion, and leadership; and (3) three examples where the book of Samuel is a source for understanding the human condition in our own day. We will also explore existential issues embodied in the text that are relevant to contemporary concerns, such as “problems of power,” “leadership and accountability,” “family and loyalty,” “gender and sexuality,” “divine and human law,” “agency and responsibility,” “cultivation of mindfulness,” “transformation of self,” and “the Other.” This course fulfills the Leadership in the Bible rabbinical school requirement.

(2 credits)

- **BIB 350 The Book of Deuteronomy: Life in the Promised Land as a Mixed Blessing**

Dr. Job Jindo

This course is a close critical reading of the book of Deuteronomy, revolving around the themes of individuality, collectivity, and humanity. By the conclusion of this course, each student will also be able to articulate: (1) the structure, purposes, and theological outlook of Deuteronomy; (2) three examples where the book of Deuteronomy is a source for understanding the human condition in our own day; (3) how to teach the book of Deuteronomy to the contemporaries with AJR values (i.e., critical rigor, inclusivity, commitment to the pluralistic, contemporary Jewish and broader communities). Prerequisite: In order to count this class as a biblical text class, students must have taken Introduction to Bible. Otherwise, students may count this class as an elective.

(2 credits)

- **CAN 319 Cantillation**

Cantor Robin Joseph

This course is part two of the two-course cantillation program. It is an in-depth study of Eastern European cantillation for Festivals, Eikhah and Esther. In addition to reviewing the history, function, and art of cantillation, participants will work to demonstrate a proficiency in recognizing and chanting the various cantillation phrases for these three tropes. Please note that while this class

meets twice a week, it will provide only three credits based on its reduced classroom hours, class will not meet certain weeks. (The specific schedule will be clear on the course syllabus) This course is open to both rabbinical and cantorial students.

(3 credits)

- **CAN 390 Maqam, Liturgy, and Jewish Musical Identities**

Dr. Samuel Torjman Thomas

This course explores maqam for the purposes of better understanding maqam-based music making in the Near East. Particular foci for the course include theoretical foundations of maqam, practical application of maqam, and the use of maqam in synagogue practice from the region. This course fulfills the Sephardi/Mizrachi Maqamat requirement.

(2 credits)

- **HAL 484 Responsa Writing: Zoom Minyan**

Dr. Matthew Goldstone

Should we count both onsite and online participants to make a minyan within a pluralistic setting? In what ways have technology shifted our perception of community and togetherness, and what is the role of such new realities for shaping the path of Jewish law? In this course we will explore both halakhic and secular sources relevant for students to formulate their own responsa addressing these questions. This course can also fulfill the Intermediate or Advanced Codes requirement.

Prerequisite: HAL 480: Responsa, or permission of the instructor.

(2 credits)

- **HEB 320 Biblical Hebrew**

Rabbi Peg Kershenbaum

Introduction to Biblical Hebrew: examination of and exercise in the grammar, syntax and vocabulary of Biblical Hebrew, for the development of competence in understanding and translating the classical Biblical texts (with some attention to major differences between BH, Rabbinic and Modern Hebrew) Objectives: by the end of this course, you will be able to identify all parts of speech including all the major *binyanim* in all their forms as they occur in prose passages of the Tanakh. You will be able to use BDB efficiently and accurately to find unfamiliar vocabulary by applying information learned about the forms and structures of different parts of speech. You will learn to use a biblical concordance and Sefaria.com to produce a word study and study sheet. You will be able to translate connected biblical prose passages accurately with the help of BDB and give analyses of specified words and constructions. You will be able to use major conjunctive and disjunctive cantillation signs to aid in correct phrasing of syntactic units of the texts examined. And, if all goes according to plan, you'll even enjoy the process!

(2 credits)

- **HEB 350 Hebrew IIA**

Ms. Yifat Avner

Students will almost finish Hebrew from Scratch B. Students will learn new grammatical topics including passive binyanim and noun declension; develop strategies for reading comprehension and word recognition, and practice conveying ideas and opinions in both speech and writing.

Prerequisite: Hebrew IB or the equivalent.

(4 credits)

- **HEB 401 Hebrew IIIB**

Ms. Yifat Avner

This course is a continuation of Hebrew IIIA. The focus of this course will be on reading and listening comprehension of informative and narrative texts in Modern Hebrew. Written, oral, and aural assignments will enhance communication and comprehension skills while improving absorption and integration of vocabulary and grammar. Prerequisite: Hebrew IIIA or its equivalent. (4 credits)

- **HIS 355 Israeli History and Culture**

Ms. Donna Herzog

This course will survey Israeli culture and society, and consider how it has evolved over the course of Israel's history. We will begin by looking at the various contrasting visions of Zionism, the ideological roots of Israeli culture, and how Israel's founders interpreted these ideas in the nascent state. The founders had to grapple with the same questions that are still at the crux of understanding the complexity of Israeli identity today, such as: What does it mean for Israel to be a Jewish state? In what way does Israel define itself as a democratic state? What are the political and economic frameworks that the Israeli state should emulate? Using primary and secondary sources, the course will examine these questions and analyze how events in Israel's history over the past 70 years shaped contemporary Israeli society and identity.

(2 credits)

- **LIT 101 Introduction to Liturgy**

Rabbi Jeff Hoffman

Foundations in the academic study of Jewish liturgy including questions of history, textual sources, and literary meaning. Added to that will be inquiries into spiritual meaning for today's Jews. Portions of the weekday service will be used as the examples for developing an understanding of the basic liturgical units: *Birkhot HaShahar*, *Pesukei DeZimrah*, *Keri'at Shema U'Virkhoteha*, *Amidah*, and *Tahanun*. Approaches of the varied streams of contemporary Judaism will be taken into consideration. Prerequisite: Students in this course must be at the level of Hebrew IA or above.

(2 credits)

- **LIT 272 Developing Your Own Prayer Leadership Style**

Rabbi Lisa Sacks (Rabbinic Ordination – April 2020)

The Talmud teaches us that any prayer that is fixed is not true prayer, one interpretation of which is that our prayers should have a personal component to them. How does one develop a personal prayer style and how does that translate into serving as a *shaliach tzibur*? Using sacred texts, contemporary readings and workshop-style activities, we will examine how to think about and craft a prayer service in your own style, relying on your own skill sets and interests. This course will fulfill part of the Tefillah and Seminar course requirement.

(1 credit)

- **LIT 273 Developing Your Own Prayer Leadership Style**

TBA

This course will continue work on development of a personal prayer style from a more traditional perspective. Students may take one or both of these courses, as each will provide a different

approach to leading tefillah. This course will fulfill part of the Tefillah and Seminar course requirement.

(1 credit)

- **MEC 133 Mechina Hebrew**

Ms. Michal Nachmany

This class covers the basics of both modern and liturgical Hebrew, preparing the students to enter the required Hebrew classes of both the Rabbinical and the Cantorial Programs.

(No credit)

- **PHI 301 Bioethics**

Rabbi Jill Hackell, M.D.

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

(1 credit)

- **PHI 316 Modern Philosophy**

TBA

Issues of modern Jewish thought will be studied through familiarization with principal works of the major modern Jewish philosophers—including Spinoza, Mendelssohn, Buber, Rosenzweig, Kaplan, Heschel, and Soloveitchik—as well as representative thinkers of the 5 major modern and contemporary movements. The focus will be on how all of these thinkers and movements adapted Jewish tradition—each in their own way—to the intellectual, cultural and political challenges of modernity.

(2 credits)

- **PRO 215 Counseling I**

Cantor Michael Kasper

This course is an introduction to the practice of pastoral counseling, offering both 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 347 Gamliel Institute: *Hevrah Kadisha* and *Taharah***

Gamliel Institute Staff

In the last 100 years in North America, Western traditions have significantly altered Jewish ritual practices around dying, death, and mourning, and the modern funeral home has supplanted parts of the traditional role of the *Hevrah Kadisha*. Jewish ritual at the end of life embodies some of our most

dearly held values, and the *Hevrah Kadisha* has been the agent of these traditions throughout our history.

How do we function in our communities to build our capacity for reclaiming this sacred work? In this course students will learn the history, evolution and roles of the *Hevrah Kadisha*. The *Vidui*, *Tabarah* and *Shmirah* rituals and liturgy will be explored in depth from practical, spiritual, and community perspectives

As we explore how clergy support is integral in the formation and development of a *Hevrah Kadisha*, students will be taught skills on how to 'birth' one in a community or organizational setting, with techniques for educating, motivating, and organizing.

In examining the complex relationships among synagogues/ cemeteries/ organizations/*Hevrot Kadisha*/ funeral homes/family, students will learn to identify needs and challenges: how do we re-introduce our ancient practices and the richness of our tradition to our work settings, congregations, and communities? Are there systems to be developed, or commercial negotiations required to make a traditional Jewish funeral and burial affordable and accessible to more people? In the broader context, students will look at how we, as rabbis, chaplains, cantors and lay leaders, can take the best of the *Hevrah Kadisha* and create a more caring human approach to dying, death, and mourning in modern society. How do we apply the lessons and traditions of the past to help give new meaning for our work in the settings of today?

(2 credits)

- **PRO 355 Are the Citizen and Stranger Alike? A Practicum in Conversion to Judaism in 21st Century America**

Rabbi Bronwen Mullin

This course will survey the complex landscape of spirituality, ideology and practice with regard to conversion to Judaism across the movements. We will begin by examining the boundaries and ambiguities of "Jewish citizenship" according to the Torah and Talmud through the medieval codes and teshuvot. We will then reexamine those same materials in light of the critical late 19th -early 20th century Jewish thinkers who drew new boundaries of movement and affiliation, nationality and peoplehood, complicating the discourse on conversion to this very day. Infused throughout will be a study and deconstruction of traditional rituals and customs for conversion with contemporary reflection and creativity. At the heart of our work together will be the hardest question to explore—as a spiritual leader of the Jewish people, what are my deepest held convictions about Jewishness, and in what ways do I both open and close doors for others? This course fulfills the Conversion course requirement.

(1 credit)

- **PRO 470 Clergy and Bikkur Holim**

Rabbi Mollie Cantor

Throughout your clergy career, there will be many times when you are called to visit the sick and the dying; mourners and others who are suffering and living with loss and pain. This class will address the role of professional spiritual caregiver in comforting, offering solace and being present. Some topics we will cover include: supporting the family as well as the sufferer, visiting children in the hospital, community resources, family systems, and more. As part of this course, students are required to do 27 hours of work at a hospital, senior housing, or medical facility. To make that easier for students, this course will meet for a full period six out of the eleven weeks of the trimester. This course fulfills the Chaplaincy course requirement.

(1 credit)

- **PRO 490 Difficult Conversations**

Rabbi Scott Glass

This course will provide students with an understanding of what causes anxiety, strong emotional reactions, and avoidance of conversations which are often necessary. It will provide opportunities for developing the skills and confidence to handle these difficult situations more comfortably. Students will learn how to manage those issues that are problematic for them, and how to structure conversations that can promote greater understanding. Classes will include discussion of ideas as well as lots of practice and role-playing of real-life situations.

(1 credit)

- **PRO 700 FWSS**

Rabbi Jeffrey Segelman

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 semester by Cantor Michael Kasper. Tuition is charged but no academic course credit is given for this seminar.

(No credit)

- **RAB 231 Introduction to Talmud**

Rabbi Jeff Hoffman

Students will acquire the skills to identify the component parts of the talmudic *sugya* and the relationships between them. This includes the ability to recognize the elements and functions of the talmudic argument, especially the *keushia* (objection) and the *terutz* (resolution). This also includes the ability to distinguish between tannaitic, amoraic, and *stam* (anonymous) passages. Students will also learn the basics of talmudic terminology as well as basic Aramaic vocabulary and grammar. Students are expected to prepare texts with the help of dictionaries, Hebrew commentaries and vocabulary lists, with the limited use of English translations. The *Havruta* session is required of all students. Prerequisite: one trimester of Introduction to Talmud.

(2 credits)

- **RAB 430 Intermediate/Advanced Talmud**

Dr. Matthew Goldstone

In this course students will continue to hone their abilities to critically read, parse, and understand Talmudic material. This semester will focus on *sugyot* that address “Big Concepts” such as the problem of evil, the value of martyrdom, and the origins of rabbinic Judaism. We will explore the ways that these sources impact us on a personal and spiritual level, as well as possible pedagogical applications for teaching these sources to others. Prerequisite: At least three trimesters of Talmud.

(2 credits)