



ACADEMY
for JEWISH
RELIGION

Course Descriptions Summer 2022

BIB 250 Parshanut: Introduction to Medieval Biblical Exegesis

Dr. Job Jindo

This course introduces students to the treasure world of medieval Jewish biblical exegesis.

Selections, mostly from the Torah, will be examined to compare and contrast opinions of major commentators, such as Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Rashbam, and Ramban. By the conclusion of this course, each student will be able to demonstrate: (1) a mastery of the essential skills in reading medieval commentaries; (2) an informed understanding of the methodologies and exegetical goals of each exegete; and (3) a deeper appreciation of the commentators in their own historical and theological context. Students will also become familiar with other features and interpretive tools found on the pages of rabbinic Bibles (*Mikra'ot Gedolot*), as well as what they should be mindful of, when using such online sources as Sefaria.

Prerequisite: Introduction to Bible and Hebrew IB or the equivalent
(2 credits)

BIB 350 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 today 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 526 Sephardic Diverse Liturgical Traditions

Hazzan Dr. Ramon Tasat

During this summer course we will discuss liturgical and secular musical and poetic examples providing an opportunity for individuals to lead elements of synagogue services and to share their personal experiences during the learning process. For the purpose of this course we will broadly define *Sefaradim* as the Jews of the Western and Eastern Mediterranean World, but we will also consider research on Middle Eastern Jews and the Jewish communities of the Maghreb. This course will count as an elective.

(2 credits)

HAL 401 Introduction to Codes I

Rabbi David Almog

This course will introduce students to the literature of the *halakhic* codes, with a focus on Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*. We will explore several facets of the text: its internal dynamics and unique features; the way in which it sets the standard for Jewish legal codification, and the ways in which it is faithful to its earlier sources and how it reshapes them. Emphasis will be placed on

precise and accurate reading of the text, with commentaries consulted as necessary.

Prerequisite: Introduction to Mishnah and Hebrew IIA or the equivalent.

(2 credits)

HEB 251 Hebrew IB

Yifat Avner

This course reinforces and expands knowledge of the Hebrew language and grammatical structures, with emphasis on further developing writing, reading, and conversational skills. The course is intended to introduce students to Modern Hebrew literature, to increase their vocabulary, in particular with regard to the daily use of Hebrew, as well as the understanding of articles.

Prerequisite: Hebrew IA or the equivalent

(4 credits)

HEB 350 Hebrew IIA

Michal Nachmany

The course will focus on reading comprehension, and reading and writing on an intermediate level. The approach is a holistic approach. The focus will be on using the grammatical concepts and the vocabulary and making them usable. We will work on the integration of theory and practice. The course will bring the students to chapters 12-13 of ('עברית מן ההתחלה. ב'). We will follow the book's concepts and get deeper into the grammar.

Prerequisite: Hebrew IB or the equivalent

(4 credits)

HIS 400 Great Ideas and Debates of Jewish History I

Dr. Aryeh Amihay

This course will examine the new ideas and the great debates that affected Jewish belief, culture and society throughout the ages, from the Ancient period up through Modern Times. This first trimester will focus on the earliest periods of the Jews as a people and conclude with Late Antiquity, exploring internal arguments within Judean society, with and among Diaspora Jews, and the interactions with Pagan and early Christian society.

(2 credits)

INT 331 Circus Texts/Sacred Arts

Dr. Ora Horn Prouser and Ayal Prouser

How do we read texts with our bodies? How differently do we think with our bodies? In this class we will pursue this idea as readers, teachers, artists, and fun loving individuals. Using AJR's unique approach to text study called Sacred Arts, we will study text through the vehicle of circus arts, such as human pyramids, partner acrobatics, juggling, rolla bolla, tight-wire, and more. We will engage in the academic study of the new field of Circus Studies, a multifarious field with many discrete methodologies that all join in the pursuit of elevating

the study of circus to scholarly levels. We will understand the value of the arts in education, and the importance of opening up our sacred literature to those who often feel disenfranchised by the traditional form of Jewish text study. We will grow as educators, students, and as artists, while also enhancing our ability to bring even more people into the study of text.

This class will be co-taught by instructors in text study and in circus arts, with several visiting instructors joining us as well. Open to all ages, abilities, and fitness levels (we really mean it!!) This course can count as a Bible course or as a general elective.

This course is being held only on-site at AJR in Yonkers.

(2 credits)

LIT 307 Festival Liturgy

Rabbi Rob Scheinberg

This course focuses on the traditional liturgy for the holy days of the Jewish year (with the exception of Shabbat and the *Yamim Nora'im*) with an emphasis on portions of the liturgy that are most likely to be done in non-Orthodox communities. We will explore the history and development of the liturgy for each holiday, including the earlier Biblical and Rabbinic material that is incorporated into the liturgy, and we will spark creative thinking on ways to use the liturgy and its themes to help Jewish communities to experience the holiday cycle in a meaningful way.

Prerequisite: Introduction to Liturgy or permission of the instructor
(2 credits)

PHI 411 Positive Judaism: Jewish Tradition and Positive Psychology

Rabbi Debra Orenstein

One of the most influential and rapidly-growing fields in social science is the burgeoning discipline of Positive Psychology, the study of human flourishing. For a century, psychology focused mostly on reducing or minimizing negative experiences and influences (e.g., trauma, depression, anxiety). Positive Psychology seeks to discover methods for enhancing life satisfaction, engagement, and meaning. The topics addressed by Positive Psychologists include many subjects addressed in depth by Jewish sources. Among those we will cover in this course are perspective, awe, gratitude, hope, compassion, purpose, habit, and character strengths.

This class will bring together contemporary research and ancient wisdom. We will learn evidence-based interventions that increase happiness *and* integrate them with Jewish practices, texts, and role models. Students will not only study these topics for academic interest, but apply them in their own lives and in their work as Jewish leaders. We will plumb Positive Psychology, Jewish tradition, and the overlap between them as sources for personal and professional growth. This class will be a “lab” in creating a better life for yourself – and for all those you teach and serve. This course can count toward the Education requirement or as an elective. **The course will run for the second half of the term, beginning on June 15th.**

(1 credit)

PHI 475 Personal Theology

Dr. 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 015 Ritual Skills Workshop: Leading Shabbat Services

Rabbi Cantor Sam Levine

This class will focus on one major block of ritual skills: leading all services for Shabbat. We will learn simplified versions of the (Ashkenazi) modes and motifs of *Kabbalat Shabbat*, *Ma'ariv*, *Birkhot HaShahar* and *Psukei d'Zimrah*, *Shaharit*, *Musaf*, *Minha*, and *Havdalab*. No singing background is required; the purpose of the class is to get students comfortable and fluent with basic *davening* skills for Shabbat. This is a great introductory class because certain musical modes and certain liturgical texts are transferable to other services (weekdays, holidays, etc), providing students with multiple reference points as they continue building their skills in leading public worship.

Prerequisite: facility with decoding Hebrew
(No credit)

PRO 217 Scientific Literacy

Rabbi Geoff Mitelman

From COVID-19 to climate change, genetic engineering to artificial intelligence, and exoplanets to human flourishing, we're living through unprecedented changes in science and technology. But these questions also touch on deep theological, philosophical and existential issues. So how do we understand these questions through a Jewish perspective, Jewish tradition, and Jewish law? How can we better understand and communicate scientific findings, especially if we ourselves are not experts in the field? And how do we talk about science and technology when questions surrounding religion and science are often viewed as hot-button political issues? This course will give you an opportunity to better understand science not as a collection of facts, but as a process of discovery, and how you can share these findings with your community. With guest lecturers from across the scientific world, you'll gain a firmer grasp on how you can integrate science and scientific knowledge into your Jewish life. This course will count toward the Science and Judaism requirement.

(2 credits)

PRO 312 The Art of Developing a Sermon

Rabbi Dianne Cohler-Esses / Rabbi Scott Glass / Rabbi Jeff Hoffman

Writing a sermon is a distinct art form made of primary and secondary materials. The primary material is Torah. Secondary materials include one's own heart and mind, pressing questions of our times, justice concerns and the needs of our communities at any given moment. We learn to create a sermon by weaving together Torah with these other threads, spinning words to open the hearts and minds of our listeners, sometimes offering comfort and sometimes inspiration. At other times our sermons will mobilize communities towards right action. Together we will practice this art, sharing with one another our creations, and with feedback and support from participants, deepening our powers of authentic and effective communication in the realm of the sacred. This course fulfills the Homiletics requirement.

3 sessions (1 credit)

PRO 317 Teaching Jewish Peace and Conflict Resolution: Education: Goals, Methodology and Content.

Dr. Marc Gopin

This course will be an Introduction to Jewish peace and conflict resolution studies for the purposes of Jewish education at all levels. This will also be an intensive training seminar. It will include group and peer collaboration, scenario building and role play, engaging the content of Jewish ethics, spirituality, ritual, and symbol as they relate to Peace and Conflict Resolution, theory and practice. This course will count toward the Education requirement. This course will be taught on line only.

(2 credits)

PRO 341 Life Cycle I

Rabbi Scott Glass

The Life Cycle I class will familiarize students with the traditional Jewish life cycle events from birth through marriage and outline the skills necessary to officiate as clergy and to guide members of their communities in creating meaningful ritual experiences. In addition to studying traditional rituals related to birth, Bar/Bat Mitzvah and weddings, students will be encouraged to develop innovative rituals and create new ceremonies that will add Jewish meaning to secular milestones in life.

(2 credits)

PRO 344 Cantors to Rabbis – Widening our Perspectives About Life Cycle Experiences

Rabbi Jeffrey Segelman

In this class, students in the Cantors to Rabbis program will engage in a very particular type of exploration into life cycle rituals and experiences. As AJR is dedicated to pluralism, the goal of the course is to broaden students' knowledge base and perspective beyond their denominational

training. The presentations and conversations with regard to birth, marriage/divorce, and death will not only expand their "clergy toolbox" but may also deepen the meaning of their current denominational practice. This course is **only open to students in the Cantors to Rabbis program**, and fulfills a requirement for that program.
(1 credit)

PRO 700 Field Work Support Seminar

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 trimester by Rabbi Jeffrey Segelman. Tuition is charged but no academic course credit is given for this seminar.

(No credit)

RAB 210 'He Used to Say' (Avot): Reading Exemplary Figures in the Midrash

Dr. Yakir Englander

This course examines the ways in which *Midrashic* texts shape the Exemplary Figures of the *Midrash* and the Talmud. The course proceeds from the premise that the stories weave various traits to promote the ideal figures of Jewish culture.

Course participants: A. will familiarize themselves with the key *Midrashic* texts that depict images of ideal Jewish figures. B. will acquire tools from Cultural Study research for critical analysis of *Midrashim* C. will learn how commentators over the generations have employed *Midrashim* about exemplary figures to shape Jewish ideology throughout history. This course fulfills the Midrash II requirement.

Prerequisite: Introduction to Midrash and Hebrew IIA or the equivalent.

(2 credits)

RAB 231 Introduction to Talmud II

Rabbi Jeff Hoffman

In this second half of the two-trimester Introduction to Talmud course, students will continue to develop their skills in decoding the dialectic of the talmudic discourse. Study of basic Aramaic terms, Talmudic organic logic, the structure of *sugyot*, and modern critical methodologies of Talmud study will resume. The content will be the various *halakhic* and theological approaches to the *Amidah* found in Tractate *Berakhot*, chapter 4. **The supervised *Havruta* session (which will be scheduled together with the class members) is required of all students.**

Prerequisite: One trimester of Talmud or the equivalent.

(2 credits)

RAB 430 Intermediate/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 Shabbat practices and prohibitions, which will provide students with a historical and literary understanding of the underpinnings of contemporary Shabbat observances.

Prerequisite: Three trimesters of Talmud or the equivalent.

(2 credits)