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IF-501, INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM

Instructor:

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Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to the study of Judaism. Students will examine the beliefs and practices of Judaism as they have developed over the centuries and will be introduced to the foundational texts of Judaism. Attention will be given to how Judaism is practiced today, the range of religious practices and beliefs among Jews, and the different religious movements in contemporary Judaism. As part of the course, students will be introduced to the local Jewish community through visits to a synagogue, mikvah and kosher market, as well as first-hand observation of a Torah scroll and other Jewish ritual objects.

Course Goals:

- To help students understand and appreciate the dynamics of Jewish faith and practice, in order that they will:
 - *better understand the religious practices and beliefs of their Jewish neighbors
 - *be able to explain the tenets of Judaism to their communities, and
 - *be equipped to engage in interfaith conversation and dialogue with rabbis and members of the Jewish community.
- * To interact and engage with a longtime rabbi/scholar/educator in the Jewish community
- * To cultivate the respect for other faiths needed in our variegated society and global community.

Course Texts:

The Hebrew Bible

De Lange, Nicholas. *An Introduction to Judaism*. Cambridge University Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-521-73504-9. List price: \$29. Available Amazon.

Steinberg, Milton. *Basic Judaism*. Mariner Books, 1965. ISBN:978-0156106986. List price: \$13.95. Available Amazon.

Schauss, Hayyim. *The Jewish Festivals: A Guide to their History and Observance*. Schocken, 1996. ISBN: 978-0805209372. List price: \$18. Available Amazon.

Pogrebin, Abigail. *My Jewish Year: 18 Festivals, One Wondering Jew*. Fig Tree Books, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-941493-20-5. List price: \$22.95. Available Amazon.

Geffen, Rela M. *Celebration and Renewal: Rites of Passage in Judaism*. Jewish Publication Society, 1993. ISBN: 978-0827605107. List price: \$22.91. Available Amazon.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *The Sabbath*. Farrar Strauss Giroux, 2005. ISBN: 978-0374529758. List price: \$14. Available Amazon.

Note: *Additional articles will be assigned to accompany several of the course units.*

Assignments:

- A research paper, 2500 to 3000 words, that involves an in-depth study of a topic covered in the syllabus. Topic to be approved by the instructor.
- Required visits to at least two synagogues representing different movements in Judaism with a written report and reflection on these visits
- Completion of all assigned readings and attendance at all class sessions and field trips.

Course Topics:

Week 1 (February 4) Introduction:

What is Judaism? Who is a Jew? Basic Jewish concepts and beliefs. Sacred literature. Glossary of key terms.

Readings: De Lange, pp. 1-23, 43-64; Steinberg, pp. 3-11

Week 2 (February 11) God, Torah and Israel:

Jewish understandings of covenant, revelation, the election of Israel—traditional beliefs and their reinterpretation in modern Jewish thought; Practice and belief in Judaism; the mitzvot

Readings: Exodus 19-20, Deut. 5:1-18, 29:9-14; De Lange, pp. 150-181; Steinberg, pp. 18-58; Statement on Jewish Theology

Week 3 (February 18) The Jewish Way of Life, Part I:

The Jewish calendar. The Sabbath: biblical and Talmudic sources; traditional observances and modern interpretations; Sabbath liturgy

Readings: De Lange, pp. 91-94, 96-97; Heschel, pp. 3-101, Schauss, pp. 3-37

Week 4 (February 25) The Holy Day Cycle:

The High Holydays through Sukkot and Simchat Torah: Themes, observances, their significance in contemporary Judaism

Readings: De Lange, pp. 136-142; Schauss, pp. 112-207; Pogrebin, pp. 21-102

Week 5 (March 3) The Holy Day Cycle, continued:

Passover, the Seder, the Haggadah

Readings: De Lange, pp. 94-100; Schauss, pp. 38-85; Pogrebin, 175-206

March 10-No Class (Purim)

Week 6 (March 17) The Holy Day Cycle, continued:

Shavuot, Hanukkah, Purim, Tisha B'Av; Modern additions to the Jewish calendar: Yom Hashoah and Yom Ha'Atzmaut as response to the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel

Readings: De Lange, p. 100, pp. 103-104; Schauss, pp. 88-105; 208-271; Pogrebin 251-260, 105-121, 159-174, 267-275, 207-227

Week 7 (March 31) The Jewish Way of Life, Part II:

The Dietary Laws: Biblical sources and Talmudic exposition; contemporary practice

Readings: Leviticus 11, Deut: 14:3-21; De Lange, pp. 86-88

Week 8 (April 7) The Jewish Way of Life, Part III:

Daily observances—daily worship, tallit and tefillin (phylacteries); the place of the synagogue in Jewish life

Readings: Deut. 6:4-9; Numbers 15:37-40; De Lange, pp. 127-136

Week 9 (April 14) The Life Cycle of the Jew:

Jewish rituals surrounding birth and bar/bat mitzvah; the significance and development of the bar/bat Smitzvah celebration

Readings: Gen. 17:1-14; De Lange, pp. 142-145; Geffen, pp. 27-31; 61-65

Week 10 (April 21) The Life Cycle of the Jew, continued:

Marriage, Divorce, Death and Mourning Practices

Readings: De Lange, pp. 104-106, 111-114; Geffen, pp. 90-122. 226-249

Week 11 (April 28) Women in Judaism:

Differentiation of gender roles in traditional Judaism; the rise of “egalitarianism” in liberal Judaism

Readings: Kensky, Allan, “The Family in Rabbinic Judaism,” in Anne Carr and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, eds., *Religion, Feminism and The Family*, Louisville, 1996.

Weeks 12-13 (May 5 & ?) The Shades of Contemporary Judaism:

Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, Renewal, Humanistic; Israel and Zionism in Jewish life; voices of dissent

Readings: De Lange, pp. 69-85

STATEMENT ON ACCOMMODATIONS:

Garrett-Evangelical is committed to providing a quality theological education and will provide reasonable accommodations for documented conditions. Students requiring specific assistance such as classroom changes, alternative ways of note-taking, different classroom procedures, or alternative testing formats are urged to request the appropriate accommodations from the director of academic studies/registrar. The director of academic studies/registrar can advise students on other support services and resources, for example, diagnostic testing. Students must complete a request for accommodations using the form available from the director of academic studies/registrar or through MYGETS documenting their condition(s) through appropriate verification methods.