

JUDA T280/PHIL T280
Judaism and Christianity: Two Religions or One?

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Meeting hours: Tuesdays 4:00-5:00, and by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The relation between Christianity and Judaism is one of the most misunderstood in the history of thought. Christianity is often considered to be diametrically opposed to Judaism, to be a rejection of the Judaic worldview. Indeed, prominent thinkers in the history of Christianity, such as Martin Luther, have reinforced this position. Yet Christianity was originally a development within Judaism, a sect, so to speak, of Judaism. The earliest Christians were Jewish followers of a Jewish leader and conceived of themselves as faithful Jews. So how did the two religions come to be viewed as opposed? Do elements of Judaism remain as part of the foundation of the new faith of Christianity? Where do the two faiths converge and where do they diverge? This course endeavors to answer these important questions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

If you complete this course successfully, you will be able to:

- Distinguish between accidental and essential characteristics of various religions.
- Distinguish between religion and religious fundamentalism.
- Distinguish between religion and superstition.
- Analyze existing religions, including, but not limited to Judaism and Christianity in ways that expose the above distinctions.
- Delineate the close philosophical and spiritual relationship between Judaism and Christianity.
- Produce clear and persuasive written defenses of your views on the issues addressed in the course.
- Understand the meanings of technical philosophical and theological terms.

REQUIRED READINGS

The Jewish Annotated New Testament, Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. (Oxford University Press, 2011). This book is available in hardcover book and as an ebook.

A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Karen Armstrong (Ballantine Books, 2011). This book is available in hardcover, softcover, and ebook versions. The ebook version has been put on reserve for this course. We will read only chapters 2 and 3 of this book.

We will also read Book VII of Plato's *Republic* (<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.8.vii.html>) and the following essays:

"The Will to Believe," William James. This essay is available for free online at the following URLs: http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/26659?msg=welcome_stranger and <http://philosophyonline.co.uk/oldsite/pages/will.htm>

"Nonoverlapping Magisteria," Stephen Jay Gould. This essay is available for free online from: http://www.stephenjaygould.org/library/gould_noma.html

REQUIRED VIEWINGS

Students will be required to watch 1-2 short (15-20 minute) video lectures by the professor each week.

They will also be required to watch several video lectures from The Great Courses *How Jesus Became God*, by Bart D. Ehrman (The Teaching Company, 2014), as well as from *Philosophy and Religion in the West*, by Philip Carey (The Teaching Company, 1999).

Finally, they will be required to watch "From Jesus to Christ: The First Christians," *Frontline*, WGBH Educational Foundation, 1998.

RECOMMENDED READING

The Authentic Gospel of Jesus, Geza Vermes (Penguin, 2003). This book is available in hardcover, softcover, and ebook versions.

Is There a Universal Grammar of Religion?, Henry Rosemont, Jr. and Huston Smith (Open Court, 2008). This book is available in softcover and ebook versions.

Jesus and the Riddle of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Barbara Thiering (Harper Collins, 1992). This book is available in hardcover and paperback versions.

Jewish-Christian Dialog: A Jewish Justification, David Novak (Oxford University Press, 1989).

The Jewish Study Bible, Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). This book is available in hardcover, softcover, and ebook versions.

Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why, Bart D. Ehrman. This book is available in hardcover, softcover, and ebook versions.

Partings: How Judaism and Christianity Became Two, ed. Hershel Shanks (Biblical Archeological Society, 2013).

The Reform Judaism Reader: North American Documents, eds. Michael A. Meyer, W. Gunther Plaut (UAHC Press, 2001).

Two Types of Faith, Martin Buber (Syracuse University Press, 2003). This book is available only in paperback.

There is a growing body of literature referred to collectively as “Jesus scholarship,” that examines the life and teachings of Jesus from the perspective of the fact that he was a practicing Jew who, while a reformer, never repudiated his commitment to Judaism. All these books are rich resources for understanding the relation of Judaism to Christianity. An easy way to find such books is to go to the Amazon page for, for example, *Jesus and the Riddle of the Dead Sea Scrolls* by Barbara Thiering and scroll down to see what other books are recommended, or have been purchased by people who purchased Thiering’s book.

Amazon is, in my experience, the best source for recent ebooks. Books that are not available in ebook versions, however, can usually be found in cheaper used editions on abebooks.com than through Amazon.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

How Jesus Became God, Bart D. Ehrman, The Teaching Company, 2014. We will watch three of the 23 lectures that comprise this course. Students will benefit greatly, however, from viewing other lectures from the course. The entire course will be on reserve in the library.

Introduction to Judaism, Shai Cherry, The Teaching Company, 2004. This is video course comprised of 24 half-hour lectures on the basics of Judaism that covers both the history of Judaism and its basic doctrines and rituals. The entire course will be on reserve in the library.

Philosophy and Religion in the West, Phillip Carey, The Teaching Company, 1999. We will watch only one of the 32 lectures that comprise this course. Students will benefit greatly, however, from viewing other lectures such as “The Jewish Scriptures—Life With the God of Israel,” and “Rabbinic Judaism—Israel and the Torah.” The entire course will be on reserve in the library.

The Hebrew Scriptures in Judaism and Christianity, Shaye J.D. Cohen. Cohen is the author of several articles in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*. This is a course he teaches at Harvard University. This course is available for free through iTunes University.

COURSE EVALUATION

Essays: There will be three short essays required for the course. A complete description of the essays may be found below.

Participation: Participation includes the maintenance of a personal journal, contributions to the weekly online discussions, and the completion of occasional brief assignments designed to establish your progress toward the “learning outcomes” listed on the first page of this syllabus. Participation points will also be given to students who rewrite the first paper, as well as to students who come discuss their work with the professor during her office hours. More information concerning the various elements of course participation is provided below.

Final-exam essay: Philosophy courses do not normally have exams, so instead of a final exam, students will be required to write a short essay on an assigned topic during finals week.

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|---------------------------------|------|
| Essays..... (10%, 15%, and 20%) | 45% |
| Participation..... | 30% |
| Final-exam essay | 25% |
| Total | 100% |

Grading scale:

| | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| 90-100 = A | 75-79 = B | 60-64 = C | 45-49 = D |
| 85-89 = A- | 70-74 = B- | 55-59 = C- | 0-45 = F |
| 80-84 = B+ | 65-69 = C+ | 50-54 = D+ | |

Point breakdown for essay grades:

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|-------------------|-----------|
| Introduction..... | 20 |
| Background..... | 20 |
| Argument..... | 30 |
| Conclusion..... | 10 |
| <u>Style.....</u> | <u>20</u> |
| Total..... | 100 |

ASSIGNMENTS

Journals

This course, dealing as it does with religion, addresses issues about which many people have very definite views to which they are deeply attached. Some of the material in the course will hence tend to evoke passionate responses. Students will be required to keep a journal where they record their reactions to and reflections on the course material. These journals will be private. That is, only the instructor will be able to see them. Students are *not* required to record all their reactions to the material. Some reactions they may want to keep to themselves. Please do not share anything in your journal that you do not feel comfortable sharing with the instructor.

Essays

There will be three essay papers. Each paper should be approximately 500 words (10 points will be deducted from the point total of essays shorter than 400 words or longer than 600). **The most important criteria used in the evaluation of the papers will be clarity and coherence.** A clear, well-written essay will receive a better grade than a confusing, incoherent, but highly original paper. The highest marks, however, will go to papers that are clear, coherent and original. Some of the comments on the graded essays will appear only as numbers. Students should refer to the "Key to Comments" at the end of the syllabus for information about what these numbers mean.

Students may rewrite the first essay (but only the first essay) to improve their grade. Students are encouraged to do this because skills gained as a result of rewriting this essay will help to ensure better grades on later essays. Also, students who rewrite this essay will receive 10 participation points in addition to any points they receive as a result of improvements in the essay. Rewrites must be submitted, however, no later than one week after the original was returned. Rewrites must incorporate substantial, rather than merely stylistic, improvements on the original version if they are to result in an elevated grade. Students should also be aware that if their rewrites do not incorporate such improvements they will receive no participation credit for the rewrite.

Students must retain the graded copies of their essays until after they have received their final grades for the course. Students are also responsible for establishing, by the ninth week of the term, whether they have failed to submit any of the required assignments. No credit will be given for work submitted after the tenth week of the term.

Discussions and Short Assignments

Several questions will be posted each week to the discussion board for that week's class. Students receive one point for each "thoughtful" post they make to these discussions. The

qualification “thoughtful” refers not to the length, but to the substance of a post. That is, it refers not to the quantity of writing in a post, but to the quality of the thought. Is the comment, observation, or question original? Does it draw inferences from the primary issue to secondary, related issues? Does it show the relevance of the issue to contemporary concerns?

Students will receive no points whatever for posts that merely repeat points made in earlier posts, or that simply agree with other students’ posts without expanding upon the issues raised in the post with which they agree.

There will also occasionally be short assignments to test your progress toward the “learning outcomes” listed on the first page of the syllabus, quizzes over the readings or “do-it-yourself field trips” where students are asked to visit a local museum other site related to the content of the course and report on that visit. Each such assignment will be worth 10 points.

Final Exam Essay

There will be a final exam in the form of an essay on a topic the student selects from a list provided by the professor at the beginning of exam week.

COURSE POLICIES

PARTICIPATION

Readings: Students will be expected to have completed the reading assigned for each week by Wednesday of each week.

Discussions: Discussion questions relating to the reading assigned for a given week will be posted beginning on Tuesday, and discussions will close at the end of two weeks. This means that after Week 1, there will, on any given week, but two active discussion boards: one for the current week and another for the preceding week.

Short Assignments: Short assignments will occasionally be posted toward the end of each week. These assignments will have specific due dates and must be completed by those dates. Assignments may be submitted up to a week later, but they will receive a late deduction of one point for every day they are late.

Videos: Each week will begin with a short video presentation done by the professor. These presentations will summarize the issues brought up in the readings and longer videos and explain their relevance to the subject of the course. Students are encouraged to watch these videos both before and after they do the reading, or watch the longer video assigned for the week in question.

PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC HONESTY

Philosophical essays do not normally require “research” beyond the readings, etc., required for the course. You are the “author” of your own essays. You may occasionally wish, however, to borrow the wording of another author. In particular, you may want to quote directly from the readings assigned for the course. Whenever you appropriate the wording of *another author*, whether from a book, article, website, or even another student’s post to a discussion, you must put the material in question within quotation marks and provide a reference indicating where the material comes from. The failure to do this constitutes plagiarism. There are a variety of citation styles and philosophy tends to tolerate this variety, so choose whichever style (e.g., MLA or Chicago) you are most comfortable with. The crucial thing is that there is enough information in your citation about where the material comes from that your reader will be able to find the source you cite and verify for him or herself that you have quoted the material correctly.

If I can determine that you have appropriated someone else’s wording, but you have not indicated this by putting the material in question within quotation marks and providing a reference to the source, then you will technically have committed plagiarism and you will receive no credit whatever for the assignment in question. The only exception to this rule is the first paper, and the exception holds only if you rewrite the first version and include proper attribution for the quoted material in the revision. Two instances of plagiarism (excepting the first paper but including the final-exam essay) will result in a failing course grade.

For further information, please consult

http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic_dishonesty.asp

and

[http://drexel.edu/studentaffairs/community_standards/studentHandbook/
general_information/code_of_conduct/](http://drexel.edu/studentaffairs/community_standards/studentHandbook/general_information/code_of_conduct/)

and

http://drexel.edu/studentaffairs/community_standards/facultystaff/integrity/

ADD, DROP AND WITHDRAWAL POLICIES

- You can **add** this course until the end of week 2: see http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/course_add.asp

If you add this course after the start of the term, you are responsible for completing ALL work that you may have missed.

- You can **drop** this course until the end of week 2; the course will then be removed from your transcript: see http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/course_drop.asp
- The course **withdrawal** deadline is Feb. 19. You will have received some graded work prior to this deadline. If you have any questions about your progress at any time of the term, please contact me. If you choose to Withdraw, a “W” will be recorded in your transcript
See http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/pdf/course_withdrawal.pdf.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

It is the University's policy to provide a learning environment that provides all students with the opportunity to realize their full potential. To this end, the goal of the Office of Disability Resources ("ODR") is to assist students with disabilities in becoming self-sufficient, independent, and successful members of the University's community and to provide students with disabilities with equal opportunity of access to University courses, programs, facilities, services, and activities. Students seeking reasonable accommodations for their disabilities must first register with ODR. The staff of ODR will work closely with students to review medical documentation, assess their individual needs, and link them with the services necessary to ensure them the opportunity to participate fully in college life. The Office of Disability Resources website can be found at <http://www.drexel.edu/oed/disabilityResources/Overview/>

COURSE SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to change. Important due dates are indicated in **BOLD**. In addition to the readings and videos listed under “Assignments,” students should begin each week by watching the short introductory video by the instructor.”

| Date | Topics | Readings/Assignments |
|--------|--|--|
| Unit 1 | Introduction to the course/What is religion?/Is religious belief rational? | Read William James’ essay “The Will To Believe,” or Stephen J. Gould’s essay “Nonoverlapping Magisteria.” Optional reading: “Dawkins’ Delusions.” Post to Week 1’s discussion in Blackboard. |

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| Unit 2 | A Brief History of Monotheism in the West. Is a Tendency to Religious Belief Inherent in Human nature? Early Judaism. | Read chapter 2 of Karen Armstrong’s <i>A History of God</i> . Record your reactions to the material from the first unit in your journal. Post to Unit 2’s discussion in Blackboard. Topics will be posted for the first paper. This paper will be due on 1/20/16. |
| Unit 3 | The Spirit of Judaism. | Watch Bart Ehrman’s lectures: “Gods Who Were Human in Ancient Judaism,” and “Ancient Jews Who Were God.” Read, “Bearing False Witness: Common Errors Made About Early Judaism,” and “Judaism and Jewishness,” from <i>The Jewish Annotated New Testament</i> . Record your reactions to the material from Unit 2 in your journal. Post to Week 3’s discussion board. The first paper is due on Wednesday of this week (i.e., on 1/20/16). |
| Unit 4 | The Influence of Ancient Philosophy on Judaism and Christianity | Read Book VII of Plato’s <i>Republic</i> (the allegory of the cave). Watch Phillip Cary’s lecture “Platonist Philosophy and Scriptural Religion.” Record your reactions to Unit 3 in your journal. Post to Week 4’s discussion in Blackboard. The first paper will be returned. Rewrites of the first paper will be due on 2/3/16. |
| Unit 5 | The Birth of Christianity from the Spirit of Judaism. | Read chapter 3 of Karen Armstrong’s <i>A History of God</i> . Watch the first part of <i>Frontline: From Jesus to Christ</i> . Record your reactions to Unit 4 in your journal. Post to Unit 5’s discussion board. Rewrites of the first paper will be due on Wed. of this week (on 2/3/16). Topics will be posted for the second paper. The second paper will be due on 2/10/16. |
| Unit 6 | What was Judaism like in the Period of the New Testament? | Read “Jewish Movements of the New Testament Period,” “Messianic Movements,” and “Jewish Miracle Workers in the Late Second Temple Period,” in <i>The Jewish Annotated New Testament</i> . Watch Bart Ehrman’s lecture “Did Jesus Think He Was God?” Record your reactions to Unit 5 in your journal. Post to Unit 6’s discussion board. The second paper is due on Wed. of this week (i.e., 2/10/16). |
| Unit 7 | The Philosophical Questions. | Read “Divine Beings,” and “Logos, a Jewish Word: John’s Prologue as Midrash,” in <i>The Jewish Annotated New Testament</i> . Watch “Rabbinic Judaism—Israel and the Torah,” Lecture Nine from the Great Courses course <i>Philosophy and Religion in the West</i> . Record your reactions to Unit 6 in your journal. Post to Unit 7’s discussion board. The second paper will be returned. Topics will be handed out for the third paper. The third paper will be due on 2/24/16. |

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| Unit 8 | Similarities and Differences between Judaism and Christianity in the New Testament Period. | Read “Afterlife and Resurrection,” in <i>The Jewish Annotated New Testament</i> . Watch the second part of <i>Frontline: From Jesus to Christ</i> . Record your reactions to Unit 7 in your journal. Post to Unit 8’s discussion board. The third paper will be due on Wed. of this week (i.e., 2/24/16). |
| Unit 9 | Jewish Influences in the New Testament. | Read “Translation of the Bible,” and “Midrash and Parables in the New Testament,” from <i>The Jewish Annotated New Testament</i> . Watch lecture 13, “Jesus’s Exaltation,” from Bart Ehrman’s Great Courses course <i>How Jesus Became God</i> . Record your reactions to Unit 8 in your journal. Post to Unit 9’s discussion board. The third paper will be returned. |
| Unit 10 | Similarities and Differences between Judaism and Christianity | Read “Paul and Judaism,” Watch lecture 14, “The Backward Movement of Christology,” from Bart Ehrman’s Great Courses course <i>How Jesus Became God</i> . Record your reactions to Unit 9 in your journal. Post to Unit 10’s discussion board. |

Key to Comments on Papers for M.G. Piety's Courses:

1. Add a sentence explaining what you are going to do in the rest of the paper.
2. Define term(s), explain who this person/what this thing, is.
3. Develop this point in more detail.
4. I don't understand this.
5. You are repeating yourself.
6. Awkwardly worded. Try rewording this to make it clearer.
7. This is not a complete reference/you need a reference here.
8. This is too vague. You need to be more specific.
9. It is not clear how this is supposed to be relevant.
10. Don't forget to proofread your paper.
11. This reads like a direct quotation. If it is, you need to put it in quotation marks and include a reference for it.
12. Can you give an example to illustrate this point?
13. You are begging the question.
14. You need to produce some evidence to support this.