

The Jewish Idea (2 credits)

COR 200

Course Description

This course presents an overview of Jewish theological and institutional structures and how these have influenced practices related to Jewish rituals, festivals, life cycle events, texts and denominations. Emphasis will be placed on approaches to Jewish theology, nationhood and community as well as on the different traditional customs and rationales related to Jewish ritual practice.

The core element of the course is an exploration of Jewish beliefs and how these beliefs manifest themselves in Jewish practice. Students will be encouraged at every stage of the course to engage with their own relationship with teachings and ideas presented, with the end goal for them to create their own “Jewish self-portrait”/series of belief statements.

The course will be divided into five distinct units:

1. Beliefs
2. Texts
3. Space
4. Time
5. Identity

Course Core Question: What does it mean to be a contemporary Jew?

Course Goals

- To explore the history and nature of the Jewish belief in God
- To identify a spectrum of Jewish texts and appreciate their significance in Jewish beliefs
- To understand core Jewish practices during the calendar year and how belief systems influence their application
- To illustrate what elements make Jewish space and how Jews from different backgrounds fill space differently
- To articulate a Jewish self-portrait and series of belief statements
- To enable students to self-define their Jewish identity

Grading

1. Attendance and participation in course lectures and readings (25%).
2. Midterm examination (25%)
3. Assignments (50%)