



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Introduction to Modern Religions: Judaism Christianity and Islam - 24231

Last update 20-02-2025

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)

Responsible Department: Comparative Religion

Academic year: 0

Semester: 2nd Semester

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Karma Ben Johanan

Coordinator Email: karma.ben@johanan@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: will be scheduled via email

Teaching Staff:

Dr. Karma Ben-Johanan

Course/Module description:

The transition to the modern era dramatically transformed the Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. It can even be argued that these traditions cannot be accurately referred to as “religions” prior to modernity, which redefined them and established their place in a fundamentally changed cosmos. However, the relationship between religion and modernity has always been reciprocal: not only did modernity redefine religions, but the religions themselves, along with the relationships among their believers, also shaped modernity. Since then, the mutual establishment of religion and modernity has been and continues to be a tumultuous process, involving, on one hand, the dismantling of old frameworks, loss and disorientation, radicalization processes, and violence, and on the other hand, creativity, diversity, and tremendous human initiative. In this course, we will explore the establishment of modernity as a series of religious crises, and we will learn about the profound dilemmas that constitute and divide the religious world and the relationships among religions and between religion and secularism from the early modern period to the present day. We will discuss, among other topics, secularization, the relationship between religion and state, fundamentalism, religious enlightenment, pluralism, tensions between religious groups, modern messianism, religious violence, and more.

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Course/Module aims:

Familiarization with key concepts and significant historical events in the history of modern religions.

Providing tools for theoretical thinking and research on modern religion.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

Analyzing contemporary issues related to religion and applying theoretical tools to challenge conventional assumptions. Conducting research using the concepts and categories that will be taught in the course.

Attendance requirements(%):

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Lectures and discussions

Course/Module Content:

Lesson 1 (03/25/25): Religion and the Crisis of Modernity
Lesson 2 (04/01/25): Secularization
Lesson 3 (04/08/25): Science
Lesson 4 (04/22/25): Politics
Lesson 5 (04/28/25): Minorities, Migration, and Displacement
Lesson 6 (05/05/25): Imperialism
Lesson 7 (05/13/25): Reform and Enlightenment
Lesson 8 (05/20/25): Fundamentalism and Anti-Modernism
Lesson 9 (05/27/25): American Religion
Lesson 10 (06/17/25): Utopia and Messianism
Lesson 11 (06/24/25): The Return of Religion
Lesson 12 (06/31/25): Diversity and Identity

Required Reading:

Syllabus will be uploaded to Moodle close to the beginning of the semester

Additional Reading Material:

Grading Scheme:

Written / Oral / Practical Exam 100 %

Additional information: