



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Intro. to Zoroastrianism - 38272

Last update 09-10-2022

HU Credits: 4

Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)

Responsible Department: Islamic & Middle East Stud.

Academic year: 0

Semester: Yearly

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Prof. Michael Shenkar

Coordinator Email: michael.shenkar@gmail.com

Coordinator Office Hours: By appointment

Teaching Staff:

Prof Shenkar Michael

Course/Module description:

The course is an introduction to the history of Zoroastrianism – one of the most significant religious traditions in Antiquity, from its origins until its decline as the principal religion in Sasanian Iran following the Arab conquest. On the basis of the Zoroastrian literature, the historical sources and the material culture, we shall discuss the central concepts in Zoroastrianism and its place in the context of other ancient Iranian religions.

Course/Module aims:

To introduce the principal events in the history of Zoroastrianism and the basic notions of Iranian religious tradition from its origin until the Islamic conquest.

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

The students will acquire basic understanding of the development of Zoroastrianism, the problematic of the Iranian written sources and of the fundamental notions of Iranian cult in the pre-Islamic period.

Attendance requirements(%):

80

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Lecturer's exposition of the subject followed by a discussion.

Course/Module Content:

- 1) Zoroastrianism and the "Iranian Religions".
- 2) In the Beginning: Indo-Iranians and their gods.
- 3) When and where spoke Zarathustra?
- 4) Zoroastrian written sources: The Avesta and the Middle Persian Literature.
- 5) Basic concepts of Zoroastrianism.
- 6) Gods and demons: the Zoroastrian pantheon.
- 7) Poets-Princes and dragon-slaying heroes: the Zoroastrian mythology.

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- 8) *The "Religion of the Achaemenians"*.
 - 9) *The Zoroastrian calendar*.
 - 10) *The Zoroastrian rituals*.
 - 11) *Fire-worship*.
 - 12) *"Alexander the accursed": continuity and rupture in the Hellenistic period*.
 - 13) *Iranian religions under the Arsacids*.
 - 14) *Zoroastrianism in the Sasanian period*.
 - 15) *The Zoroastrian cosmogony and eschatology*.
 - 16) *Contacts with the Abrahamic religions*.
 - 17) *"Zurvanism"*.
 - 18) *Mazdak movement and the religious unrest in the 5th-6th centuries*.
 - 19) *The Sasanian "iconoclasm"*.
 - 20) *The religion of the Kushans and their successors in Bactria*.
 - 21) *The "Zoroastrianism" of the Sogdians*.
 - 22) *"The Eternal Flame": the survival of Zoroastrianism after the Islamic conquest of Iran*.

Required Reading:

The basic course books are:

Boyce, M. (1979), Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices, London.

Rose, J. (2011), Zoroastrianism: An Introduction, London.

Skjærvø, P.O. (2012), The Spirit of Zoroastrianism, New Heaven and London.

Stausberg, M. and Vevaina, Y.D-S. (2015), The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism, Chichester.

For additional reading, see Moodle site.

Additional Reading Material:

Course/Module evaluation:

End of year written/oral examination 0 %

Presentation 0 %

Participation in Tutorials 10 %

Project work 70 %

Assignments 0 %

Reports 0 %

Research project 0 %

Quizzes 20 %

Other 0 %

Additional information: