

Abrahamic Traditions: Issues in Social Justice
Thursdays 1-4:30 p.m.

Syllabus: Winter Term 2013
4 Credits

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Course Description

Abrahamic traditions have yielded complex religious responses to oppression and social injustice. This course examines some of those responses in relationship to governance, economics, war, health, and sexuality through the lenses of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Course Procedures and Evaluation

You are required to attend all class sessions unless there is a medical reason or a family emergency.

All course readings should be completed before the class on which they are due. Please bring relevant texts or articles to class.

No electronic devices should be out during class unless you are referring to a class reading posted on Canvas or taking notes. Please refrain from Facebook, Twitter, and texting during class time.

Attendance counts for 10% of your grade.

You get 1 point deducted for every class you miss.

Participation counts for 20% of your grade.

Posing questions, contributing to discussions, and demonstrating you have read the assigned texts will help you earn these 20 points.

Your leading of a discussion is worth 20% of your grade.
Each student will lead a discussion on a reading between weeks 3 and 9 on an issue/problem situated in the class readings. Parameters will be outlined in an assignment sheet.

The final project is worth 50% of your grade.
Each student will write a paper of 8-10 pages in length on a particular ethical problem from a comparative perspective. For example, perhaps you are interested in ecology and will focus on the care of the earth from the viewpoint of at least two traditions. This assignment will be due in three stages. The first part requires you to turn in a topic analysis, in which you describe your topic, provide a working thesis, list of readings that you are likely to use (this should include at a minimum required course readings related to your topic), and preliminary outline of your essay. The topic analysis is due no later than the 5th week of the quarter. The second part of the assignment will be a presentation on your findings on the 10th week of class. The third part of the final project is the full essay, due one week after the last class session.

**** Doctoral Students:** The final paper shall be 12-15 pages in length and should be appropriate in content and style for a peer-reviewed journal.

Required Texts

Ahearn, David Oki and Peter R. Gathje, editors. *Doing Right and Being Good: Catholic and Protestant Readings in Christian Ethics*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005.

Dorff, Elliot N. *Love Your Neighbor and Yourself: A Jewish Approach to Modern Personal Ethics*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2006.

Foltz, Richard C., Frederick M. Denny and Baharuddin Azizan, editors. *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Lakhani, Ali, editor. *The Sacred Foundations of Justice in Islam: The Teachings of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib*. Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2006.

Levenson, Jon D. *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Rieger, Joerg. *No Rising Tide: Theology, Economics, and the Future*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009.

Course Schedule

Week One: Defining “Abrahamic”
Abraham/Ibrahim in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Reading

- Jon D. Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), entire text.

Week Two: Foundations of Comparative Ethics

Defining Ethics/Understanding the Comparative Framework

Readings

- Elliot N. Dorff, *Love Your Neighbor and Yourself: A Jewish Approach to Modern Personal Ethics* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2006), 1-32.
- “Ethics,” in *Jews, Christians, Muslims: A Comparative Introduction to Monotheistic Religions*, eds. John Corrigan, Frederick M. Denny, Carlos M.N. Eire, and Martin S. Jaffre (Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, 1998), 277-340.
- R.J. Hernández-Díaz, “Religious Ethics in America,” in *Religion and American Cultures: An Encyclopedia of Traditions, Diversity, and Popular Expressions*, edited by Gary Laderman and Luis León (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO Press).
- Mohammed Hashim Kabbani, “*Al-Maqasid Al Shari’ah*: The Objectives of Islamic Law.”

Week Three: Life and Death

From Pregnancy to End of Life Decision-Making

Readings

- Neil Gillman, “Theological Reflections on the End of Life: A Theologian’s Address to Physicians,” *Conservative Judaism* 52, no. 3 (2001): 17-26.
- Sandra Lubarsky, “Judaism and the Justifications of Abortion for Non-Medical Reasons,” *Journal of Reform Judaism* 31, no. 4 (1984): 1-13.
- “The Moral Person,” in *Doing Right and Being Good: Catholic and Protestant Readings in Christian Ethics*, edited by David Oki Ahearn and Peter R. Gathje (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 4-32.
- Christine E. Gudorf, “Christianity and Opposition to the Death Penalty: Late Modern Shifts” *Dialog*, 52, 2 (2013): 99-109.
- Donna Lee Bowen, “Contemporary Muslim Ethics of Abortion,” in *Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War, and Euthanasia*, edited by Jonathon Brockopp (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 51-80.
- Birgit Krawietz, “Brain Death and Islamic Traditions: Shifting Borders of Life” in *Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War, and Euthanasia*, edited by Jonathon Brockopp (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 194-213.

Week Four: Life and Death

War and Peacemaking

Readings

- Daniel H. Weiss, “Direct Divine Sanction, the Prohibition of Bloodshed, and the Individual as Image of God in Classical Rabbinic Literature,” *JSCE*, 32, 2 (2012): 23-38.
- “Christian Love at the Margins of Life,” in *Doing Right and Being Good: Catholic and Protestant Readings in Christian Ethics*, edited by David Oki Ahearn and Peter R. Gathje (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 241-84.

- Susan Thistlethwaite and Glen Stassen, “Abrahamic Alternatives to War: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives on Just Peacemaking,” *Special Report*, 214 (2008): 1-19.
- “Peace in Islam: An Ecology of the Spirit,” in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, edited by Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny, and Azizan Baharuddin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 155-84.

Week Five: Gender and Sexuality

Formations of Masculinity, Femininity, and Heteronormativity

Readings

- Elliot N. Dorff, *Love Your Neighbor and Yourself: A Jewish Approach to Modern Personal Ethics* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2006), 73-154.
- Erin Dufault-Hunter, “The Downside of Getting It Up: How Viagra Reveals the Persistence of Patriarchy and the Need for Sexual Character,” *JSCE*, 32, 1 (2012): 57-74.
- Marcella Althaus-Reid, “Indecent Proposal for Women Who Would Like To Do Theology Without Using Underwear,” in *Indecent Theology* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 11-46.
- Nawal Ammar, “Ecological Justice and Human Rights for Women in Islam,” in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, eds. Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny, and Azizan Baharuddin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 377-89.
- “Letter to Amina from Sadiyya Shaikh.”

Week Six: Love, Sex, and Relationships

Just and Ethical Love

Readings

- Elliot N. Dorff, *Love Your Neighbor and Yourself: A Jewish Approach to Modern Personal Ethics* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2006), 155-206.
- “Marriage, Family, and Sexuality,” in *Doing Right and Being Good: Catholic and Protestant Readings in Christian Ethics*, edited by David Oki Ahearn and Peter R. Gathje (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 101-49.
- Omid Safi, “On the ‘Path of Love’ Towards the Divine: A Journey with Muslim Mystics,” *Sufi* 78: 22-38.

Week Seven: Economics

Money, Wealth, Poverty, and Class

Readings

- Aryeh Cohen, *Justice in the City: An Argument from the Sources of Rabbinic Judaism* (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press), 88-132.
- Joerg Rieger, *No Rising Tide: Theology, Economics, and the Future* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), selections.
- Nancy W. Jabbra and Joseph C. Jabbra, “Islam, the Environment, and Family Planning: The Cases of Egypt and Iran,” *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, eds. Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny, and Azizan Baharuddin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 423-50.

Week Eight: Governance

Oppression, Revolution, and the Just Ruler

Readings

- Esther D. Reed, "Refugee Rights and State Sovereignty: Theological Perspectives on the Ethics of Territorial Borders," *JSCE*, 30, 2 (2010): 59-78.
- "Political Life and the Problem of Violence," *Doing Right and Being Good: Catholic and Protestant Readings in Christian Ethics*, edited by David Oki Ahearn and Peter R. Gathje (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 150-94.
- Fazlur Rahman, "Islam and Social Justice," *Pakistan Forum* 1, no. 1 (1970): 4-5, & 9.
- *The Sacred Foundations of Justice in Islam: The Teachings of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib*, edited by Ali Lakhani (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2006), entire text.

Week Nine: The Earth

Creation Care, Ecology, and the Environment

Readings

- Jeremy Benstein, "'One, Walking and Studying...': Nature vs. Torah," in *Judaism and Environmental Ethics: A Reader*, ed. Martin D. Yaffe (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001), 206-229.
- Eilon Schwartz, "*Bal Tashchit*: A Jewish Environmental Precept," in *Judaism and Environmental Ethics: A Reader*, ed. Martin D. Yaffe (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001), 230-49.
- "Stewardship: Work, Property, and the Environment," in *Doing Right and Being Good: Catholic and Protestant Readings in Christian Ethics*, edited by David Oki Ahearn and Peter R. Gathje (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 195-240.
- Kevin J. O'Brien, "*La Causa* and Environmental Justice: Cesar Chavez as a Resource for Christian Ecological Ethics," *JSCE*, 32, 1 (2012): 151-168.
- Ibrahim Ozdemir, "Toward an Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a Qur'anic Perspective," *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, edited by Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny, and Azizah Baharuddin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 3-38.
- Video Resource: <http://vimeo.com/hijau>

Week Ten: Mock Conference

Presentation of Final Papers