

HI-539 Interrogating Abraham: Examining Intersections between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

Fall semester 2024
Tuesdays, 5:00-6.50 (plus asynchronous activities)

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Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have often been called the Abrahamic Religions, as they all claim the Patriarch Abraham. To what extent do these three faiths identify with him, define him, and share him? This course will use an interdisciplinary approach to problematize the Abrahamic identities of early Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities, their views of the Patriarch, and how such identities have guided and affected past and contemporary inter-communal relations. Attention will be given to how sacred scripture, contemporary literature and film shapes, and provides meaning for relations today.

Course Objectives: At the end of the course, students will

1. Understand the scriptural and traditional sources of Abraham as a locus of identity for Jews, Christians, and Muslims.
2. Describe examples of past Jewish, Christian, and Muslim intercommunal relationships.
3. Evaluate resources on interreligious relationships through literature, film, and intercommunal dialogue documents.
4. Articulate one's own scriptural/theological position within contemporary interreligious relationships.

These course objectives meet the following Program Outcomes:

Master of Arts in Interreligious Studies Learning Outcomes:

2. Provide evidence of engagement in critical investigation of relations between people who orient around religion differently that has fostered deep understanding of a worldview different from their own.

For the **Interreligious and Islamic Studies Specialization**, this course meets the requirements as an *elective*.

For the **Ministerial Studies Specialization**, this course meets the requirements for *Beliefs and Practices*.

For the **Master of Arts in Chaplaincy**, this course meets the requirements as an *elective*.

Doctor of Ministry Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the larger social and cultural dynamics affecting religious life and organizations in the 21st century and their implications for ministry settings.
- Demonstrate the knowledge, capacities, and willingness to respectfully engage the religious pluralism of contemporary American society through exposure to the teachings of other faiths and those who practice those faiths.

Boston Theological Interreligious Consortium:

- This course is an approved BTI course for the Certificate in Interreligious Leadership.

HIU values for Collaborative Teaching and Learning:

- Showing mutual appreciation and respect for others—modeling the privilege to learn from and partner with each other.
- Engaging in cross-disciplinary content and teaching
- Paying attention to the whole personhood of another – history, race, religion, knowledge, gender, and rank
- Demonstrating how to disagree respectfully and well
- Embodying mutuality – Learning to construct ideas and skills and experiences together

Learning Strategies:

This course will be hybrid Synchronous. The instructor will be located at HIU with students present in the classroom, and distance students joining remotely. In addition to the required weekly reading and preparation for the class session, there will be additional asynchronous activity with instructor interaction, including online discussions, reviews of response papers, or instructional videos. These asynchronous activities should be done **AFTER** the synchronous sessions for the Monday class and **BEFORE** the next Monday class session. In other words, they are follow up activities based on the delivered content for the week. **Please note: there are 2 Mondays when there is no class or assignments for Yom Kippur (Sept. 21), and due to the American Academy of Religion Conference (Nov. 23).**

Required Texts:

Bakhos, Carol. *The Family of Abraham : Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Interpretations*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

Silverstein, Adam J. and Guy G. Stroumsa eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Abrahamic Religions*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Trible, Phyllis, ed. *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2006

PLUS, one fiction or non-fiction book or film on pages 8-9 below.

Students should also have access to a Tanakh, Christian Bible, and Qur'an: the Jewish Publication Society's *Tanakh*, the New Revised Standard Version of *The New Testament* (with Apocrypha), and an English interpretation of the Qur'an (preferably the *The Qur'an* by MAS Haleem or *The Study Qur'an* by S.H. Nasr) or the Arabic *muṣḥaf*. Online versions are acceptable.

Recommended Texts: (for papers) – Students should also use the “References” located with Silverstein.

Boys, Marcy C. *Blessing of a new Dawn: reorienting Christianity’s Relation to Judaism*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2025.

Cohen, Mark R. *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Feiler, Bruce. *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of the Three Faiths*. New York: Harper, 2005.

Freidenreich, David M. *Jewish Muslims: How Christians Imagined Islam as the Enemy*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2023.

Glick, Leonard B. *Abraham’s Heirs: Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999.

Goodman, Martin, et al. *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham*. Brill, 2010.

Levenson, Jon D. *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christian and Islam*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014.

Looney, Chris. *A Vanished World: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Peters, F.E. *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, Islam*. 2nd ed. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2018.

_____. *The Voice, the Word, the Books: The Sacred Scripture of the Jews, Christians, and Muslims*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Course Assignments and assessment:

Assignment	Due Date(s)	Course Outcomes fulfilled by assignment	% of course grade
1. Take the ungraded syllabus quiz	By Monday, September 14, 5 pm.		NA
2. Weekly Class preparation (required reading and video material on Canvas) and contributions to discussions	Participation will be assessed at the mid-point and end-point of the course	Course Outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 4	15%/15%
3. Critical book or film review DMin students should submit both a book and film review, in	Proposals are due by Monday, September 14 by 5:00 pm; Reviews should	Course Outcome 4	20%

consultation with the instructor.	be posted by 5:00 pm on the assigned Monday due date.		
4. Check-in with instructor	TBD	Course Outcomes 1 and 2	10%
5. Final Paper or Project	Proposals and working bibliography are due Nov. 16; paper due Dec. 14	Course Outcomes 1 and 3	40%

1. Students should read the syllabus carefully and take the ungraded syllabus quiz on the Canvas site. **Completion of the quiz is necessary to unlock access to the Canvas modules.**
2. Attend all of the synchronous sessions, and **actively participate** in class discussions, and asynchronous post-class session activities, which may include responding to a discussion prompt, writing a short reaction paper, and/or engaging with a video. Participation will be assessed at the first half of the course and again at the second half of the course. If you know you will be unable to attend a class session, please inform the professor in advance. (This assignment is 30% of the grade, to be graded at the mid-point and final week of the semester.)
 - Asynchronous activities must be completed before the next class session.
 - *In the case of an absence for a class session the professor will reserve the right to ask the student for a written assignment of 500 words on the required reading for that session.*
 - *The instructor reserves the right to ask for a 20-minute consultation for any written assignment submitted for an oral examination to elucidate what the student learned from the material.*
3. **Critical Book or Film Review:** Students should write a 600-800-word critical Book or Film Review, or post a 4-5 minute audio or video blog, on of one of the books or films listed below on pp. 8-9, in consultation with the instructor. Students should also by the end of the class have provided a substantial comment on at least 2 reviews by classmates.

Students will be assigned a due date to submit their review during the asynchronous weekly sessions. The written or video reviews should be posted to the course Canvas site by 5:00 pm, before the class in which they are due. A student who would like to propose a book or film not on this list below should consult with the instructor. **Proposals are due to the instructor by Monday, 14 September by 5:00 pm.**

Reviews should provide a synopsis of the important themes, what can be learned from book or film, and how it might be used for teaching/learning. Follow the guidelines of the links above.

DMin students are required to submit both 1 book and 1 film review, in consultation with the instructor.

4. **Check-in with instructor:** Students will schedule at least one 20-min check-in with the instructor at some point in the semester to respond to questions, expectations, concerns, or for further discussion on the course.
5. **Final paper or project** on one topic or theme covered in the course, that includes historical or contemporary inter-communal identities, including at least two religious communities. The focus should not be on elucidating one's religious perspective, but seeking to understand others. The paper should be 3000-4000 words MA students, and a project relating to one's ministry setting for DMin students of approx. 4,000-6,000 words. Proposals for the paper or project and a working bibliography should be selected in consultation with the instructor and emailed to the instructor by **Monday, November 16, 5:00 pm**. The final paper is due by **Monday, December 14** at 5:00 pm, at the latest.

Course outline:

Written and Oral Sources of Identity

August 31: Introduction to the Course: Which Abraham?

Required Reading: Bakhos 1-14; Silverstein, 3-70

Asynchronous activity due before 7 Sept. class session: Ungraded quiz on the syllabus

September 7: Scripture and the “interpretive traditions”

Labor Day – No in person class but asynchronous activity – watch video

Required Reading: Bakhos 15-79; Silverstein 226-251

Asynchronous activity due before 14 Sept. session: Watch Dr. Grafton's short video; answer the prompt in the Canvas module, and respond to at least one other student. Email the instructor your selection of book or film review before the next class session.

September 14: The Call of Abram/Avram/Ibrahim

Required Reading: Genesis 12:1-9; Romans 4:1-25; *al-Anbiyā'* 21:51-73; Bakhos 15-79

Asynchronous activity due before 28. Sept. class session: Answer the prompt in the Canvas module and respond to at least one other student.

September 21: Yom Kippur – No class – no asynchronous activity

September 28: The Inheritance of Abraham: Chosenness

Required Reading: Genesis 22:1-9; John 8: 30-59; *al-Şāffāt* 37:100-113; Bakhos 154-213

Asynchronous activity due before 5 Oct. class session: Answer the prompt in the Canvas module and respond to at least one other student.

October 5: Sarah and Hagar in the Scriptures

Required Reading: Genesis 21:1-21; Galatians 4:21-31; *al-Baqarah* 2:122-141; Tribble (chapters 7), pages 171-184.

Asynchronous activity due before 19 Oct. class session: Answer the prompt in the Canvas module and respond to at least one other student

Inter-twined Social Relationships

October 12: Indigenous Peoples' Day – No in person class but asynchronous activity

Asynchronous activity due before 19 Oct. class session: watch Simon Schama, “Among the Believers,” Episode 2 of *The Story of the Jews*. [Available on the DTL](#) and on [Amazon Prime](#). Answer the prompt in the Canvas module and respond to at least one other student.

October 19: Parting of the Ways? – Christian Supersessionism

Required Reading: Silverstein, 166-188

Asynchronous activity due before 26 Oct. class session: Answer the prompt in the Canvas module and respond to at least one other student

October 26: “People of the Book” – the ideal and real in the Qur’an

Required Reading: Mun'im Sirry, “Reinterpreting the Qur’anic Criticism of Other Religions,” in *Qur’ānic Studies Today*. Eds A. Neuwirth & M. Sells, M. (New York: Routledge, 2016): 294-309. (On Canvas)

Asynchronous activity due before 2 Nov. class session: Answer the prompt in the Canvas module and respond to at least one other student.

November 2: The Cross fertilization of Greek Thought and Arabic culture

Required Reading: Silverstein, 332-372

Asynchronous activity due before 9 Nov. class session: Answer the prompt in the Canvas module and respond to at least one other student.

20th Century Challenges

November 9: The Shoah & the Church

Required Reading: *Matthew 27:15-26; John 8:39-47*; Bea, “The Church and the Jewish People” (on Canvas)

Asynchronous activity due before 16 Nov. class session: Answer the prompt in the Canvas module and respond to at least one other student. Proposal for final papers (including topic and working bibliography) are due November 16.

November 16: Israel/Palestine and the Effects of 1967

Required Reading: Silverstein, 272-294, 536-566

Asynchronous activity due before 30 Nov. class session: watch [John Haggee: The Eye of God is on Israel](#) (2022).

November 23: NO Class – Thanksgiving Week

November 30: Christian Zionism post 1967

Required Reading: Bishop Munib A. Younan & Robert O. Smith, “Critical approaches to Christian Zionism,” *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 22:4 (2022), 324-332. Available on the DTL. David D. Grafton, “The use of scripture in the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” *Word & World*, 24:1 (2004), 29–39. Available on the ATLA databases on the HIU library page.

Asynchronous activity due before 7 Dec. class session: Answer the prompt in the Canvas module and respond to at least one other student.

Contemporary Dialogue

December 7: Vatican II and The World Council of Churches

Required Reading: *Nostra Aetate* (1965);
Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies (1979)

Asynchronous activity due before next class session: students should select one of the dialogue documents listed on pg. 10 below, in consultation with the instructor, for class discussion. Provide an overview of the context in which the document was written, what it states, what are the implications for intercommunal relations, and final questions for the class.

December 14: Intercommunal Dialogue documents

Required Reading: Selected Dialogue documents

Asynchronous activity: individual consultation with instructor on final paper.

Submission of final papers or projects by 5pm.

List of Books and Films for Reviews:

Fiction:

Aboulela, Leila. *The Translator*. 2006
Abulhawa, Susan. *Mornings in Jenin: A Novel*. 2010
Ashour, Radwa. *Granada*. 2003
_____. *The Woman from Tantoura: A novel from Palestine*. 2014
Bakr, Salwa. *The Man From Bashmour*. 2007
Brooks, Geraldine. *People of the Book*. 2008
Falcones, Ildefonso, *The Hand of Fátima*. 2011
Graver, Elizabeth. *Kantika: A Novel* 2023
Hassab, Rajia. *A Pure Heart*. 2019
Kahf, Mohja. *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*. 2006
Kurban, Said. *Ali and Nino: A Love Story*. 2000
Lalami, Leila. *The Moor's Account*. 2015
Maalouf, Amin. *Leo Africanus*. 1988
_____. *Ports of Call*. 2001
Memmi, Albert. *The Pillar of Salt*. 1992
Yehoshua, A. B. *A Journey to the End of the Millennium - A Novel of the Middle Ages*. 2000

Non-Fiction (Memoirs and Biographies):

- Chacour, Elias. *Blood Brothers*. 2003
David, Anthony. *An Improbable Friendship: The Remarkable Lives of Israeli Ruth Dayan and Palestinian Raymonda Tawil and Their Forty-Year Peace Mission*. 2015
Davis, Natalie Zemon. *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds*. 2006
Lagnado, Lucette. *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit: A Jewish Family's Exodus from Old Cairo to the New World*. 2008
Halaby, Mona Hajjar. *In My Mother's Footsteps: A Palestinian Refugee Returns Home* 2023
Power, Carla. *If the Oceans Were Ink: An Unlikely Friendship and a Journey to the Heart of the Quran*. 2015
Raheb, Mitri. *I am a Palestinian Christian*. 1995
Roden, Claudia. *The Book of Jewish Food: An Odyssey from Samarkand to New York*. 1997
Sabar, Ariel. *My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for his Jewish Past in Kurdish Iraq*. 2008
Shadid, Anthony. *House of Stone: a memoir of home, family, and a lost Middle East*. 2012
Shlaim, Avi. *Three Worlds: Memoirs of an Arab-Jew*. 2023
Shamash, Violette. *Memories of Eden: A Journey Through Jewish Baghdad*. 2008
Tolan, Sandy. *The Lemon Tree*. 2006

Films: (Some films are available through [Kanopy](#))

- [Arranged](#) (2007)
[Ave Maria](#) (2015) (with subtitles)
[Fordson: Faith, Fasting, Football](#) (2011)
[Hamtramck](#) (2020) (available through the DTL)
[Hasan and Marcos](#) (2008) (in Arabic with subtitles)
[The Imam & the Pastor](#) (2007) (available through the DTL)
[The Kingdom of Heaven](#) (2005)
[The Lemon Tree](#) (2008)
[Leaps of Faith](#) (2020)
[Little Mosque on the Prairie](#) (Season One 2007)
[Malcolm X](#) (1992)
[New Muslim Cool](#) (2009)
[Of Gods and Men](#) (2010)
[The Old Oak](#) (2023)
[The Present](#) (2020)
[The Syrian Bride](#) (2004)
[The Sultan and the Saint](#) (2016)
[Where Do We Go Now?](#) (2011)

Dialogue Documents for discussion:

(Contact the instructor if you have another document you would like to present)

Contemporary Jewish-Christian Dialogue

WCC: [Ecumenical Considerations on Jewish-Christian Dialogue](#) (1982)
ELCA: [Guidelines for Jewish-Lutheran Relations](#) (1998)
[Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christianity and Jewish Christians Relations](#) (2000)
US Conference of Catholic Bishops: [Dialogue with Muslims](#) (2014)
International Group of Orthodox Rabbis: [To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven: Toward a Partnership between Jews and Christians](#) (2017)

Contemporary Muslim-Christian Dialogue

[Building Bridges Seminar](#) (2002-2025)
US Conference of Catholic Bishops: ["Christian-Muslim Relations in the United States"](#) (2003)
["Amman Declaration"](#) (2005)
["A Common Word"](#) (2007)
PC-USA: [Toward an Understanding of Christian-Muslim Relations](#) (2010)
ELCA: ["Declaration to the Muslim Community"](#) (2019)
Vatican: [Human Fraternity: For World Peace and Living Together](#) (2019)

Contemporary Jewish-Christian-Muslim Dialogue

Anglican: [Jews, Christians, Muslims: The Way of Dialogue](#) (1988)
Anglican: [The First Alexandria Declaration](#) (2002)
[National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East](#) (2003)
ELCA: [Windows for Understanding: Jewish-Muslim-Lutheran Relations](#) (2007)
ELCA: [Declaration of Inter-Religious Commitment](#) (2018)
Shaykh Abdullah Bin Bayyah: [The New Mardin Declaration](#) (2010)
Christian Academic Forum for Citizenship in the Arab World: [From the Nile to the Euphrates: The Call of Faith and Citizenship](#) (2014)
[The Marrakesh Declaration](#) (2017)
The Muslim World League: [The Charter of Mecca](#) (2019)
Palestinian Heads of Churches: [Kairos: Palestine Document](#) (2009) and [Kairos II: A Moment of Truth after Genocide](#) (2025)

Policies and Miscellany:

AI tools for learning: Artificial Intelligence programs, including Chatbots, if used properly, can help you become a better researcher learner. AI programs can also assist in your writing and clarity. But AI is a source. Its use needs to be documented. Please know that HIU has a plagiarism and AI detector program within Canvas. So, all of your submitted material will be examined by this software. If you use some form of AI program in your submitted work, you must:

1. Indicate what AI platform you have used as a source.
2. Provide an overview of how you have used AI – What were your prompts? Did you ask AI for an initial bibliography on your topic? Did you ask AI to help you with an outline?
3. Proofread and check the AI generated material. You are solely responsible for its content. (AI software can hallucinate and provide incorrect information.)
4. I reserve the right to ask for an oral exam along with submitted written material to assist you in learning and retaining content.

Attendance: Active attendance in all classes is expected. However, if you must miss a class due to illness, family conflict or other emergency, please contact the instructor right away. *In the case of an absence the professor will reserve the right to ask the student for a written assignment on the required reading for that session.*

All written assignments should follow the normal conventions as in *Turabian: A Manual for Writers* 9th ed. (or later). Please include a title page on all papers more than one page, and number all pages. *The instructor reserves the right to have students re-submit an assignment for reasons of poor grammar, mistakes, or poorly written work.* For those who would like writing assistance, there are a number of good guides at: [Student Writing Resources](#).

Email Policy: The instructor will use the official HIU student email addresses for all communications. Please check your HIU email account regularly.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity: Academic honesty and integrity are expected of all students. Plagiarism exists when: a) the work submitted was done, in whole or in part, by anyone other than the one submitting the work, b) parts of the work, whether direct quotations, ideas, or data, are taken from another source without acknowledgement, c) the whole work is copied from another source [especially a web based source], or d) significant portions of one's own previous work used in another course. See "Plagiarism" at <https://www.hartfordinternational.edu/student-affairs/academics/academic-policies>.

Wikipedia and other non-documented websites: Please do not cite *Wikipedia* or other non-documented websites. While these sites might direct one to documented sources (in the **Bibliography**) their authorship is unknown and cannot be considered authoritative as academic sources. Students will be marked down for referencing these public sites if they are used as primary sources.

Extensions: Extensions for papers will be given for illnesses or family emergencies only in consultation with the instructor.

Late Assignments/Papers: As per the Student Handbook, late assignments or papers will be marked down 1/3 of a grade for every two days.

Grading: Each assignment will have clear rubrics on the Canvas site with associated grades.

Students in the **Doctor of Ministry** degree program are graded as follows:

High Pass(95-100), Pass (83-94), Low Pass(70-82), and Fail (below 70).

Inclusive Language: HIU is committed to a policy of inclusion in its academic life and mission. All members of the community are expected to communicate in language that reflects the equality of genders, openness to diverse cultural and theological perspectives, and sensitivity to one another's images of God. If you insist to use a particular gender in reference to God, please consult with the instructor.

Accommodations: The Americans with Disabilities Act ensures equal access to qualified individuals and prevents discrimination on the basis of a documented disability. It is HIU's policy to provide reasonable accommodations. Students who wish to receive accommodations must contact the Student Services Coordinator. Students are eligible for support services when they are enrolled in courses *and* they have requested and been cleared to receive for the course. All students seeking accommodation must fill out the [Request for Accessibility Accommodations](#) form.

Student Handbook: For all other questions you might have regarding policies or procedures, please see HIU [Academic Policies](#), or the [Student Handbook](#).