

Project: The Star, Cross and Crescent: Jews, Christians and Muslims in the Middle Ages

Syllabus

Sometimes referred to as the “People of the Book,” Jews, Christians and Muslims shared fundamental notions of faith from their very foundations. Despite--or rather because of—these common elements, they repeatedly engaged in dramatic ideological and physical conflicts, as members of each group defined themselves against the others. During the Middle Ages, this dynamic tension deeply influenced the cultural, religious, economic and political development of Europe and the Middle East, especially in the cross cultural matrix of the Mediterranean. In this course, we will investigate not only the ways in which Jews, Christians and Muslims conceived of themselves and each other, but also how real Jews, Christians and Muslims lived together, fought each other and argued about belief.

Learning Objectives

- Gain an understanding the important events and trends affecting Jews, Christians and Muslims during the Middle Ages
- Engage in respectful and informed debate.
- Critically examine primary-source texts, using methods of historical analysis.
- Craft original interpretations using evidence from multiple perspectives.
- Engage with modern scholarship about inter-religious relations.
- Learn how to write a thoughtful, well-expressed history essay.
- Conduct and complete an independent research project.

Book List

- Erich Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans*
- Adam J. Silverstein, *Islamic History: A Very Short Introduction*
- Olivia R. Constable, *Medieval Iberia*
- Mark Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*
- Thomas F. Madden, *The New Concise History of the Crusades*
- Jonathan Riley Smith, *The Crusades, Christianity and Islam*

- R. I Moore, *Formation of a Persecuting Society*
- David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*
- E-Reserves
- *The Internet Medieval Sourcebook* (Halsall)

Assessment

10% Participation 30% Historiographical Essays (2 x 15%)

10% Discussion Leader 30% Final Research Paper

20% Weekly Responses

Participation: Because this class is a seminar, in-class participation is required. Please see the following rubric for class expectations for participation.

- **A range**: The student is fully engaged and highly motivated. This student is well prepared, having read the assigned texts and thought carefully about the texts' relation to issues raised in class. This student's ideas and questions are substantive (either constructive or critical); they stimulate class discussions. This student listens and responds to the contributions of other students.
- **B range**: The student attends and participates consistently in discussion. This student comes to class well-prepared and contributes quite regularly by sharing thoughts and questions that show insight and a familiarity with the material. This student refers to the materials discussed in lecture and shows interest in other students' contributions.
- **C range**: The student meets the basic requirements of participation. This student is usually prepared and participates once in a while but not regularly. This student's contributions relate to the texts and offer a few insightful ideas but do not help to build a coherent and productive discussion. This student may hijack the conversation or interrupt other students.
- Failure to fulfill satisfactorily any of the criteria for C-range participation will result in a grade of "D" or below.

Discussion Leader: Thrice during the semester, you will be responsible for leading class discussion. Please present at least two questions or quotes that you think are worth 10 minutes of argument or debate. These should draw on the reading, and may elaborate on

the questions posed by the instructor. Email them to the instructor at least 30 minutes before the class meets.

Weekly Responses: Students will turn in a one-page weekly response to the topic of the week. The weekly response should be typewritten and double-spaced. A specific question or assignment will be posed in class on the week before each response is due and then posted online. Among other things, you may be asked to compare and contrast two primary texts, to pick an arresting quote and explain your interest, or to pose a question for class discussion. Expect to use your responses in class discussion. Because they are meant to spur discussion in class, late responses will not be accepted.

Each response will be given a $\ddot{O}+$, \ddot{O} or $\ddot{O}-$, depending on the quality of its thought, curiosity and understanding. However, these do not automatically correlate to a percentage grade. Instead, student performance on weekly responses will be assessed holistically according to the following rubric:

- **A range:** A majority (>50%) of responses received a mark of $\ddot{O}+$. Responses maintain a steady level of excellence, or show marked improvement over the course of the semester. Responses submitted for 10 out of 14 weeks, at minimum.
- **B range:** A majority (>50%) of responses received a mark of \ddot{O} . Responses may vary significantly in quality over the course of the semester. Responses submitted for 10 out of 14 weeks, at minimum.
- **C range:** At least one-third of responses received a mark of \ddot{O} or $\ddot{O}+$. Responses may vary significantly in quality over the course of the semester. Responses submitted for 8 out of 14 weeks, at minimum.
- Failure to fulfill satisfactorily any of the criteria for C-range responses will result in a grade of "D" or below.

Essays: You will write two short (5-6 page) essays on important historiographical issues in the relationship between Jews, Christians and Muslims. The first essay, due in week 5, should compare and contrast the approaches used by Gruen, Brown and Fowden to understand religious community and conversion during Late Antiquity. The second essay, due in week 11, should assess Jonathan Riley Smith's treatment of the impact of the Crusades on modern society. See Blackboard for more detailed instructions.

Final Project: As a capstone for this class, you will conduct original research into a topic of your choice (within the parameters of medieval and Renaissance Italian history). In the course of the project, you will gather a pertinent and appropriate set of primary and

secondary sources, formulate your own interpretation of this event or phenomenon, and position your argument within the proper historiographical context. The research project will be assessed through three components: a research proposal (~2 pages), a rough draft and a final paper (12-15 pages).

Research Proposal: The proposal should include the line of research you expect to pursue as well as a tentative thesis. It should also introduce the sources to be used—not necessarily a final bibliography, but at least one primary source and two secondary sources. **Due week 7; hardcopy only.**

Rough Draft: Optional. In week 13, student may turn in a rough draft or detailed outline to be assessed by the instructor. Hard copy only.

Research Paper: The final research paper is **due Finals week, both in hardcopy (in my department mailbox) and electronically (through SafeAssign/Blackboard)**. Detailed instructions posted on Blackboard.

Class Policies

Changes to the Syllabus: This syllabus is subject to change at any time. Adjustments to the syllabus will be announced in class and posted in a revised version on Blackboard.

Late Work: For every day that a paper is late without an extension, it will receive a 1/3 grade reduction (e. g. a B+ paper will drop to a B- if it is two days late). Extensions will be given only for unavoidable emergencies and must be cleared with the instructor. Note that this policy does NOT apply to weekly responses, which will not be accepted as late work.

Laptops: Because this is a discussion-based class that depends on the full attention and participation of every student, the use of laptops is not allowed.

Texting/Cell Phones: Cell phones must be silenced for the duration of the class. No texting or checking of messages on personal devices is allowed at any time during class. Failure to follow this policy will negatively impact your participation grade.

Absences: Attendance is mandatory for this class. More than three unexcused absences from class will incur a penalty in your overall grade for the course: one-third of a grade for each day beyond the initial three missed. Thus, a total of five absences (two more than permitted) would drop a grade of B+ to B-. Approval for absences will be granted only given unavoidable circumstances. Appropriate make-up work will be assigned as needed.

Students with Special Circumstances: Many students find themselves in circumstances that affect their ability to fully participate in class. Examples include disabilities, family emergencies and participation in sports. Students in these situations should contact the instructor as soon as possible with the proper documentation so that appropriate accommodations can be made. In general, make-work will be assigned to cover emergency absence(s).

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism is not tolerated in any form. Students are expected to conduct themselves according to George Washington University's code of academic integrity (<http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>).

Schedule

Week 1 Introduction

Reading: None

Week 2 Judaism and Diaspora in Antiquity and Late Antiquity

Reading: I Maccabees <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/text/1maccabees.html>

Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Preface, II.17-22, V-VI, VII.1-3, 8-11

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/josephus/works/files/works.html>

Philo of Alexandria <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/ancient/philo-creation.asp>

Erich Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans*, Ch. 4, 8 (pp. 105-133, 232-253)

Week 3 Early Christianity

Reading: Paul, Internet Sourcebook, Missionary Activity and Theology

<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/ancient/asbook11.asp#Early%20Church:%20First%20Century>

Neronian Persecution, <http://www.csun.edu/~hcfl1004/xtians.html>

Martyrdom of Polycarp, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/martyrdompolyarp-roberts.html>

Ambrose vs. Symmachus, <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/ambrose-sym.asp>

Roman Laws for Jews, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/jews-romanlaw.asp>

Peter Brown, The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity <http://www.jstor.org/stable/300008>

Week 4 Foundations of Islam

Reading: Qu'ran, Sura 17 The Children of Israel , 60 The Test

<http://www.godsmosque.org/html/quran/sura17.html>

<http://www.godsmosque.org/html/quran/sura60.html>

Muhammad, Sunnah, excerpts, <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/sunnah-horne.asp>

Ibn Ishaq, Excerpts from the Life of Muhammad <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/muhammadi-sira.asp>

Pact of Umar, <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/pact-umar.asp>

Adam J. Silverstein, *Islamic History: A Very Short Introduction*, all.

Week 5 Religion and Empire

Reading: Garth Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth: Consequences of Monotheism in*

Late Antiquity, pp. (E-Reserve)

Essay 1 Due

Week 6 Conquest and Conversion

Reading: Olivia R. Constable, *Medieval Iberia*, pp. 27-74

Elena Lourie, “A Society Organized for War: Medieval Spain” (JSTOR)

Week 7 Minority Survival

Reading: Mark Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, pp. xv-76.

Maimonides, Letter to Yemen [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Epistle to Yemen](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Epistle_to_Yemen)

Research Proposal Due

Week 8 Commercial Exchange

Reading: Mark Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, pp. 77-106.

Avner Greif, “Cultural Beliefs and the Organization of Society: A Historical and Theoretical Reflection on Collectivist and Individualist Societies” (JSTOR)

Olivia R. Constable, *Trade and Traders in Muslim Spain*, Ch. 3 (E-Reserve)

Robert S. Lopez, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World*, pp. 51-74, 87-107 (E-Reserve).

Week 9 Intellectual/Cultural Exchange

Reading: Translation Translations (Burnett)

Muslim Christian Debate
(Halsall) <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/christ-muslim-debate.asp>

Judah Ha-Levi, *The Kuzari*
(Halsall), <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/kuzari.asp>

Alex Novikoff, "Toward a Cultural History of Scholastic Disputation,"
American Historical Review April 2012.

Week 10 The Crusades I

Reading: Usamah ibn Munqidh (Halsall)

<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/Usamah2.asp>

Urban II Speeches
(Halsall) <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/urban2-5vers.asp>

Slaughter of Jews
(Halsall) <http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/1096jews.asp>

Thomas F. Madden, *The New Concise History of the Crusades*, pp. 1-96
(skim).

Week 11 The Crusades II

Reading: The Third Crusade (Halsall),

<http://www.fordham.edu/Halsall/sbook1k.asp#The%20Third%20Crusade>

Jonathan Riley Smith, *The Crusades, Christianity and Islam*, all.

Essay 2 Due

Week 12 Constructing the Other

Reading: R. I Moore, *Formation of a Persecuting Society*, pp. 6-62, 144-171.

William of Norwich,
(Halsall) <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1173williamnorwich.asp>

Week 13 Confrontation and Convivencia

Reading: David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, pp. 127-250.

Jonathan Ray, "Beyond Tolerance and Persecution: Reassessing Our Approach to Medieval Convivencia" *Jewish Social Studies* 11.2 (JSTOR)

Maya Soifer, "Beyond *Convivencia*: Critical Reflections on the Historiography of Interfaith Relations in Christian Spain." *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies*, January 2009. (E-Reserve)

Rough Draft Due

Week 14 Ghettoization, Conversion and Expulsion: Into the Early Modern Era

Reading: Robert Finlay, "The Foundation of the Ghetto: Venice, the Jews, and the

War of the League of Cambrai" (JSTOR)

Constable, pp. 330-364

Finals Week Final Paper Due