

Syllabus
Jewish-Christian Dialogue

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Wednesday 2-5:15 p.m.

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Office: Rm 209
Hours: Tu: 12:30-2; 5:15-6:15;
Wed: 12:30-2:00; 5:15-6:15
(I am always available by
telephone evenings and
weekends)

A. **Prerequisites:** None

B. **Description:** Since the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire, Jews have historically lived as a minority population in (for the most part) predominantly Christian and Muslim countries. Today only in Israel do Jews comprise the preponderance of citizens. For that reason, Jews (like most minority cultures) remain opaque and mysterious to the majority populations. This course will therefore attempt to structure a positive model for Jewish-Christian relations by introducing students to the rich variety of Jewish life from the Bible through the rabbis to modernity. In particular, we will examine Judaism as a distinctive way of life, combining religion, ethnicity/peoplehood/ nationhood, culture, and values. While Christians generally view religious belief as central to their identity, religion comprises only one portion of Jewish self-definition. This makes Jewish-Christian comparisons more challenging and liable to misinterpretation. We will examine a broad panoply of Jewish topics such as: Torah; biblical interpretation; Mishnah, Talmud, and Midrash; notions of covenant and chosenness; storytelling; difference, otherness, separateness, and minority status; religious observance and practice; theology, prayer, and belief; holidays; mysticism and *tikkun olam*; individual, family, and community; education, learning, and the mind; money and work; the body and sexuality; food; comedy; Israel; anti-Semitism, persecution, and the holocaust.

With this knowledge, we can begin to explore relations between Jews and Christians not solely in religious terms or as a series of painful encounters that have led to discrimination and pogroms, but as an ongoing historical, human relationship that involves deep-seated beliefs and stories. Some of these are in need of rethinking and revision, and we can begin to look at how we might do that. We will consider Christian treatment of Jews including prejudice, persecution, envy, and resentment, as well as Christians who rescued Jews during the holocaust. At the same time, we will explore Jewish fear of Christians and Jewish dislike of Christian rituals and theology. Finally, we will examine Jesus as a Jewish figure and teacher, the fullness of whose Jewishness neither Jews nor Christians have fully recognized.

C. **Class Procedures:** Class sessions will consist of lectures by the professor, musical and video presentations, and class discussion. The format will be that of a graduate seminar, with extensive give-and-take between the professor and students. The professor expects students to engage in theological questioning and thinking. Active participation is crucial and presumed. Students should understand that the professor will call on them, pose problems, and ask them difficult questions. Reading materials prior to class and the willingness to think on one's feet are both important. Informed debate is part of the process, especially given the difficult and painful emotions that many of the course subjects elicit. Disagreeing with one another and the professor is perfectly acceptable, as long as we all maintain civility and mutual respect and engage in thoughtful discourse.

D. **Course Goals and Learning Outcomes:** At the end of the course, students will:

1. Learn to apply theological thought to Jewish-Christian relations.
2. Begin to understand the difficulties in comparing Judaism and Christianity.
3. Have studied one Jewish or Jewish-Christian topic in depth and applied it in a pastoral context
4. Have studied Judaism not solely as a religion, but as a civilization, by analyzing and evaluating a song lyric, comedy routine, or set of jokes
5. Learn to converse about difficult topics in a fruitful, civilized, and critically reflective manner.
6. Possess a rudimentary knowledge of Judaism.
7. Begin to grasp Jewish life not as a description in a textbook, but as a lived phenomenon.

E. **Required Texts and Readings:**

1. Yossi Klein Halevi, *At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden: A Jew's Search for God with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land* [**Halevi**]
2. Nicholas de Lange, *An Introduction to Judaism* [**de Lange**]
3. Daniel Pearl, *I Am Jewish: Personal Reflections Inspired by the Last Words of Daniel Pearl* [**I Am Jewish**]
4. Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People, and Its History* [**Jewish Literacy**]
5. Elie Wiesel, *Night* [**Night**]
6. Steve Zeitlin, *Because God Loves Stories: An Anthology of Jewish Storytelling* [**Stories**]

Required Films for Viewing:

1. "Annie Hall" (1977)
2. "Chariots of Fire" (1981)
3. "The Chosen" (1981)
4. "Fiddler on the Roof" (1971)
5. "The Fifty Years War" (1999) (tentative)
6. "The Last Days" (1998)
7. "A Night at the Opera" (1935)
8. "The Producers" (1968 version only)
9. "Sunshine" (1999)
10. "Walk on Water" (2004)

Except where indicated, films will be viewed outside of class. Films may be added at the discretion of the professor. All films will be viewed outside of class. Films will be available at Bosworth Memorial Library (LTS) reserve shelf or at Premier Video. Of course, a subscription to one of the film rental services (e.g. Netflix or Blockbuster) would make life easier for everyone. **Students will need to organize film viewing so that everyone has access to the film. Students are encouraged to view films in groups.** Perhaps one or two persons could be responsible for the organization of this arrangement

E. **Recommended Texts and Readings:**

TBA at the discretion of the professor.

Recommended Music and Comedy from Many Sources (among others, some of which the professor will provide). Jewish music and comedy have had a disproportionately large influence on world culture, especially American culture. Students should try to familiarize themselves as much as possible with such artists (see the list below under "G3").

G. **Assessments/Assignments:**

1. **Informed Class Participation and Engagement:** This refers primarily to categories of contribution: 1) the effort that students make in reading texts and seeing films, thinking about it before class, and communicating that knowledge in the classroom; 2) participation in class discussion by asking good questions, making intelligent and insightful comments, offering thoughtful arguments and presentations, providing useful information, and listening to others attentively and respectfully. Quality of oral communication, not quantity, equates with excellence. This is worth **fifteen percent** of the final grade.

2. **Annotated Bibliography:** Students will complete an annotated bibliography in which students develop bibliographic resources (in the Bosworth Memorial Library and on the World Wide Web) and offer brief summaries and analysis of the various texts under consideration. Students will complete this project on a topic related to their final paper. This paper should be approximately five pages. Entries should be detailed enough for a relatively full description of

the entry (probably six to eight sentences in one paragraph). They should include a brief summary of the subject and argument, its connection to Jewish-Christian relations, and a critical evaluation of the merits of the piece. The choice and selection of entries comprises a key component of the professor's evaluation. Please consult with members of the library staff if you are not familiar with how to do this. This is due by **March 11**. This is worth **15 percent** of the final grade.

3. **Oral Presentation I:** Students will make an oral presentation on a song lyric (or lyrics), or comedy routine with Jewish themes, or two or three or four jokes. These will take place on April 15, 22, and 29. Students will present the text(s) and analyze it (them) for the class. They will summarize the content, comment on Jewish themes or themes connected to Jewish-Christian relations, and provide a theological analysis and evaluation. This is worth **10 percent** of the grade.

Here are some examples of Jewish musicians and comedians:

MUSIC (composers and vocalists): Chava Alberstein, Andrews Sisters, Burt Bacharach, Elmer Bernstein, Leonard Bernstein, Barry Sisters, Irving Berlin (Israel Isidore Baline), Herschel Bernardi, Theodore Bikel, Ernest Bloch, Sammy Cahn (Samuel Cohen), Nell Carter, Leonard Cohen, Aaron Copeland, Hal David, Sammy Davis Jr., Neil Diamond, Bob Dylan (Bob Zimmerman), Alan Eder, Fortuna, Art Garfunkel, George and Ira Gershwin (Jacob and Israel Gershowitz), Philip Glass, Arlo Guthrie, Marvin Hamlisch, Oscar Hammerstein, Lorenz Hart, Moss Hart, Ofra Haza, Billy Joel, Al Jolson (Asa Yoelson), Jerome Kern, Carole King, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Lenny Kravitz, Fritz Kreisler, Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, Gustav Mahler, Barry Manilow (Barry Alan Pincus), Melissa Manchester, Felix Mendelssohn, Robert Merrill (Moishe Millstein), Bette Midler, Hankus Netzky, Randy Newman, Phil Ochs, Mandy Patinkin, Jan Peerce (Jacob Pincus Perelmuth), Andre Previn (Andreas Ludwig Prewin), Steve Reich, Richard Rodgers, Arnold Schoenberg, Neil Sedaka, Carly Simon, Paul Simon, Steven Sondheim, Barbara Streisand, Mel Torme, Richard Tucker (Rubin Ticker), Weavers, Kurt Weill, Peter Yarrow

COMEDY: Bud Abbot, Gracie and Steve Allen, Woody Allen (Allen Koenigsberg), Morey Amsterdam, Roseanne Barr, Jack Benny (Jack Kubelsky), Milton Berle (Mendel Berlinger), Victor Borge (Borge Rosenbaum), Fanny Brice (Fanny Borach), Mel Brooks (Melvin Kaminsky), Lenny Bruce (Leonard Alfred Schneider), George Burns (George Birnbaum), Red Buttons (Aaron Chwatt), Sid Caesar, Eddie Cantor (Edward Israel Iskowicz), Goldie Hawn, Billy Crystal, Rodney Dangerfield (Jack Cohen), Larry David, Al Franken, Kinky Friedman, Larry Gelbart, Whoopi Goldberg, Elliot Gould, Buddy Hackett (Leonard Hacker), Buck Henry (Buck Henry Zuckerman), Judy Holliday (Judith Tuvim), George Jessel, Madeleine Kahn, Andy Kaufman, Danny Kaye (David Kaminsky), Alan King (Irwin Alan Kniberg), Robert Klein, Lisa Kudrow, Burt Lahr, Tom Lehrer, Oscar Levant, Jerry Lewis (Joseph Levitch), Richard Lewis, Shari Lewis (Shari Hurwitz), Jon Lovitz, Bill Maher, Howie Mandel, Marx Brothers (Chico, Groucho, Gummo, Harpo, and Zeppo = Leonard, Julius, Milton, Adolf, and Herbert), Jackie Mason, Walter Matthau, Elaine May (Elaine Berlin), Anne Meara, Rick Moranis, Zero Mostel, Mike Nichols, PDQ Bach (Peter Schickele), Molly Picon, Gilda Radner, Tony Randall (Leonard

Rosenberg), Carl Reiner, Rob Reiner, Don Rickles, Joan Rivers (Joan Sandra Molinsky), Mort Sahl, Soupy Sales (Milton Supman), Adam Sandler, David Schwimmer, Jerry Seinfeld, Gary Shandling, Dick Shawn (Richard Schulefand), Wallace Shawn, Harry Shearer, Alan Sherman, Sarah Silverman, Phil Silvers (Philip Silversmith), Neil Simon, Jon Stewart, Ben Stiller, Jerry Stiller, Larry Storch, Three Stooges (Moe Howard, Larry Fine, Shemp Howard, Curly Howard = Moe Horwitz, Laurence Feinberg, Shemp Horwitz, and Jerome Lester Horwitz), Sophie Tucker (Sophia Abuza), Nancy Walker (Ann Myrtle Swayer), Gene Wilder (Jerome Silverman), Shelley Winters (Shirley Schrift), Henny Youngman. Robin Williams is not Jewish, but considers himself an “honorary Jew” and has a working knowledge of Yiddish.

3. Oral Presentation II: Students will do an oral presentation on their research paper, discussing subject matter, themes, insights, analysis, and synthesis. This is worth **10% of the final grade.**

3. Term Paper: With the approval of the professor, students will choose a topic. This paper will involve research (including footnotes and bibliography), an argument, and theological thought. The paper will be anywhere from 8-15 pages of text (excluding bibliography). This is due **May 12** and worth **50 percent** of the grade.

H. **GRADES:** Grades follow the standard numerical breakdowns (93-100 = A; 90-92 = A-; 87-89 = B+; 83-86 = B; 80-82 = B-; 77-79 = C+; 73-76 = C; 70-72 = C-; 67-69 = D+; 63-66 = D; 60-62 = D-; 0-59 = F). “A/A-” means work of the highest quality and is a very difficult grade to achieve. A satisfactory grade is somewhere between a “B-” and a “C+.” Anything “C” through “D-” means passable work, but of low quality. “F” indicates that the student did not meet the requirements of the course by not attending a sufficient number of classes, by not submitting passable work, and/or by failing to submit all work. Grades are based on work at a graduate level.

The ability to write with clarity, correct grammar and syntax, correct spelling and punctuation, good communication skills, some style, and in an organized fashion, is essential. In written assignments, students must also demonstrate the capacity to think on their own and generate their own coherent and convincing arguments. Where appropriate, students must further display research skills such as the following: intelligent use of secondary literature, thoughtful sifting of data, and deft handling of footnotes. Grades will in part reflect student writing skills. Remember also: GOOD WRITING IS AN EDITORIAL PROCESS that almost always involves multiple drafts and rewrites.

Students should realize the importance of writing for their careers in ministry and in other religious professions. For example, writing an application for a position requires good writing skills. Ministers and others will have to write correspondence, sermons, newsletters, pastoral letters and essays, etc. Recipients will expect you to have the ability to communicate clearly, succinctly, imaginatively, and in an organized fashion.

If students are uncertain about their writing, the professor strongly encourages them to see Dr. Margie Ralph, the Director of the Writing Center, for assistance. The professor may also decide to recommend that certain students see Dr. Ralph, in which case the student is obligated to see Dr. Ralph.

Everyone should read and always have near their computer William Strunk and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style* (4th ed.). I also recommend that everyone read Deborah Core, *The Seminary Student Writes*. It will not only help students in this course, but in others at LTS as well.

For assistance with editing papers, students should consult someone with good writing skills. An on-line service that some institutions of higher education use is Smarthinking (www.smarthinking.com), available to individuals for a reasonable fee.

- I. **ABSENCES:** Class attendance is essential. Unexcused absences will result in automatic lowering of the student's grade at the discretion of the professor. Excused absences (which do not include circumstances over which one has personal control) are allowed, but three or more absences may lead to lowering of the grade at the discretion of the professor. **Please do not telephone the professor about an impending class absence or a prior class absence, but send an e-mail describing the situation.**
- J. **OTHER POLICIES:**
- **Assignment Due Dates:** All assignments are due on the dates listed. Late assignments will receive a significant reduction in grade at the discretion of the professor.
 - **Paper Format:** Turabian style or the University of Chicago *Manual of Style*, 15th ed., is preferred; most important is **consistency** of citation.
 - **Cell Phones:** Cell phones should be turned OFF or put on silent mode during class.
 - **Inclusive Language:** Students should be aware of the Inclusive Language Policy of LTS and adhere to it in their class discussions and written materials.
 - **Respect:** In classroom discussion, participants should show respect to one another by listening and paying attention before speaking.

- **Integrity:** For exams and papers, please adhere to the rules of honesty and integrity as outlined in the Student Handbook policies on cheating and plagiarism. Serious breaches of ethics may result in class failure and/or suspension or expulsion from the seminary. Needless to say, LTS expects students, as potential pastors and religious leaders, to adhere the highest ethical and moral standards.

K. **DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS:** Lexington Theological Seminary complies with the American with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If you believe you have a condition which will require accommodation, please refer to the *Student Handbook* and follow the procedures outlined. Please review this syllabus carefully and make an appointment with the professor to discuss any assignment for which you believe you will need accommodation according to the arrangements made with the dean.

L. **CLASS SCHEDULE** (The professor reserves the right to alter this schedule or assignment, if learning needs or time constraints require it):

*Unless otherwise stated, all readings should be completed by the first day of the section under study. Films should be viewed by the dates indicated.

(**Make sure to begin reading Halevi at the beginning of the course, reading approximately 18 pages per day)

February 4

February 11

de Lange, Chapter 1
Stories, Chapter 1
Jewish Literacy, 23-43
“Sunshine”

February 18

de Lange, Chapter 2
Stories, Chapter 2
Jewish Literacy, 44-67
“Chariots of Fire”

February 25

de Lange, Chapters 3-4
Stories, Chapter 3
I Am Jewish, Part I
“Fiddler on the Roof”
Recommend: Jewish Literacy, Chapter 13

March 4

de Lange, Chapters 5-6
Stories, Chapter 4
I Am Jewish, Part II
“Night at the Opera”
“Annie Hall”
Recommend Jewish Literacy, Chapter 14

March 11

de Lange, Chapter 7
Stories, Chapter 6-7
Jewish Literacy, Chapter 4
“The Chosen”
Recommend: I Am Jewish, Part III; Jewish Literacy, Chapter 8
Annotated Bibliography Due

March 18: READING WEEK

March 25

Stories, Chapter 5
Night
Jewish Literacy, Chapters 7 and 10
“The Last Days”

April 1

de Lange, Chapter 8
Jewish Literacy, Chapter 6
I Am Jewish, Part IV
“The 50 Years War”
“Walk on Water”

April 8

de Lange, Chapter 9
Halevi
I Am Jewish, Part V
“The Producers” (1968 version)

April 15
Oral Presentations

April 22
Oral Presentations

April 29
Oral Presentations

May 12: **Term Paper Due**