

## **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 provide 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 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:**

1. Articulate your own worldview or religious belief system while empathically and respectfully engaging people whose worldviews, religious practices, and religious beliefs differ from your own
3. At the level needed to take part in substantive dialogue, demonstrate knowledge of the roles of the scriptures and sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
  2. Explain and differentiate between various methods of historical and contemporary scriptural interpretation by adherents, paying attention to both the differences within and differences between religions.
4. At the level needed to take part in substantive study, demonstrate knowledge of the theological and legal traditions within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
  1. Identify and explain the major tenets and religious worldviews of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
5. Express your ideas and perspectives clearly in oral and written communication.
  1. Write sustained, coherent arguments or explanations in clear academic English, with well-formed sentences and paragraphs.

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.

**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 activities are to be completed after the Tuesday class and before the next session.

**Course Assumptions:**

1. The study of historical encounters is instructive and important for current and future relationships.
2. Positive relationships between religious communities are possible, but take intentionality, persistence and patience.
3. Ministry within all religious communities is done in an inter and intra-religious context.
4. Encounter and dialogue are a given component that need not abandon faith claims and can provide guidelines for mutual and respectful interaction.

**Hartford 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

**Required Texts:**

Peters, F.E. *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, Islam*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2018. [ISBN 978-0-691-18103-5]

Selections from: Silverstein, Adam J. and Guy G. Stroumsa eds. Blidstein, Moshe. *The Oxford Handbook of Abrahamic Religions*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2015. [ISBN 978-0-199-69776-2]

Trible, Phyllis, ed. *Hagar, Sarah, and Their Children: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2006 [ISBN 978-0-664-22982-5; ASIN B0093IET02]

**Students should also have access to a Tanakh, 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 *mushaf*. Online versions are acceptable.

**PLUS** one fiction or non-fiction book or film on pages 7-8 below.

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

Cohen, Mark R. *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-691-13931-9]

Feiler, Bruce. *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of the Three Faiths*. New York: Harper, 2005. [ISBN 978-0-060-83866-9]

Freidenreich, David M. *Jewish Muslims: How Christians Imagined Islam as the Enemy*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2023. [ISBN 978-0-520-34471-6]

Glick, Leonard B. *Abraham's Heirs: Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999. [ISBN 978-0-815-62779-1]

Goodman, Martin, et al. *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham*. Brill, 2010. [978-9-004-18843-3]

Levenson, Jon D. *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christian and Islam*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014. [ISBN 978-0-691-16355-0; ASIN: B0091XBKWY]

Looney, Chris. *A Vanished World: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Medieval Spain*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. [ISBN 978-0-19-531191-4]

## Course Assignments and assessment:

Assignment	Due Date(s)	Course Outcomes fulfilled by assignment	% of course grade
1. Take the ungraded syllabus quiz	By Tuesday, September 10, 5 pm.		NA
2. Weekly Class preparation (required reading and video material on Canvas) and contribution in 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, in consultation with the instructor.	Proposals are due by Tuesday, September 17 by 5:00 pm; Reviews should be posted by 5:00 pm on the assigned Tuesday due date.	Course Outcome 4	20%
4. Check-in with instructor	TBD	Course Outcomes 1 and 2	10%
5. Final Paper or Project	Proposals and working bibliography are due Nov. 19; paper due Dec. 17	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 on the required reading for that session.*
3. **Critical Book or Film Review**: Students should write a 600-800-word critical Book or Film Review, or post a five-minute video, of one of the books or films listed below, in consultation with the instructor. Students will sign up for a time and 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 should consult with the instructor. **Proposals are due to the instructor by Tuesday, 17 September by 5:00 pm.** Based on the book or film, the instructor will assign the Tuesday due date.  
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. **Students will write a final paper or project** on one topic or theme covered in the course, that includes both historical and contemporary inter-communal identities. The paper should be 2000-3000 words MA students, and a project relating to one's ministry setting for DMin students of approx.. 4,000-5,000 words. Proposals for the paper and a working bibliography should be selected in consultation with the instructor and emailed to the instructor by **Tuesday, November 19, 5:00 pm**. The final paper is due by **Tuesday, December 17** at 5:00 pm, at the latest.

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### Course outline:

**September 3: Introduction to the Course: Which Abraham?**

**Required Reading:** Silverstein, 37-70

**Asynchronous activity due before next class session:** Ungraded quiz on the syllabus

### Written and Oral Sources of Identity

**September 10: Overview of Written and Oral Sources of Authority**

**Required Reading:** Silverstein, 3-21; 226-251; Peters, 85-102

**Asynchronous activity due before next class session:** Answer the prompt in the Canvas module and respond to at least one other student. Email the instructor you selection of book or film review.

**September 17: The Call of Abram/Avram/Ibrahim**

**Required Reading:** Genesis 12:1-9; Romans 4:1-25; *al-Anbiyā'* 21:51-73; Peters, 1-20

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

### **September 24: The Inheritance of Abraham: Chosenness**

**Required Reading:** Genesis 22:1-9; John 8: 30-59; *al-Şāffāt* 37:100-113; Peters, 21-40

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

### **October 1: Sarah and Hagar in the Scriptures**

**Required Reading:** Genesis 21:1-21; Galatians 4:21-31; *al-Baqarah* 2:122-141; Tribble, 33-100; 149-170

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

### **October 8: Sarah and Hagar in contemporary conversations**

**Required Reading:** Tribble, 101-126, 171-197

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

## **Inter-twined Social Relationships**

### **October 15: The “Parting of the Ways” or “the Ways that Never Parted”**

**Required Reading:** Peters, 41-66

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

### **October 22: Social interactions in Egypt and Spain**

**Required Reading:** Silverstein, 121-136; Peters, 67-84

**Asynchronous activity due before next class session:** watch Simon Schama, “Among

the Believers,” Episode 2 of *The Story of the Jews*. [Available on Amazon Prime](#). (If you do not have Amazon Prime, speak with Dr. Grafton.) Answer the prompt in the Canvas module and respond to at least one other student.

**October 29: The Cross fertilization of Medieval Philosophy (*falsafa*), Theology (*kalam*) Science, Medicine, and Art**

**Required Reading:** Silverstein, 332-372; Peters, 138-166

**Asynchronous activity due before next class session:** For those students in person, attend the HIU Art Exhibition – “The Holy City;” remote students will watch the live stream or recording.

**Modern Inter-communal Identities**

**November 5: 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 next class session:** Answer the prompt in the Canvas module and respond to at least one other student.

**November 12: Israel/Palestine and the Effects of 1967**

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

**Asynchronous activity due before next class session:** watch [John Haggee: The Eye of God is on Israel](#) (2022). Proposal for final papers (including topic and working bibliography) are due November 19.

**November 19: Christian Zionism post 1967**

**Required Reading:** Tribble, 1-32

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

**November 26: NO Class – Thanksgiving Week**

## Contemporary Dialogue

### December 3: 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 below, in consultation with the instructor, to present to the class for 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 10: Dialogue Documents

**Required Reading:** select one of the documents below to read and discuss in class

**Asynchronous activity due before next class session:** individual consultation with instructor on final paper

### December 17: Submission of final papers on Canvas Site

#### List of Books and Films for Reviews:

##### Fiction:

- Abulhawa, Susan. *Mornings in Jenin: A Novel* (Bloomsbury, USA, 2010. [978-1608190461]  
Ashour, Radwa. *Granada*. Syracuse, NY: 2003.[978-0815607656]  
\_\_\_\_\_. *The Woman from Tantoura: A novel from Palestine*. Cairo: American University of  
Cairo Press, 2014. [978-9774166150]  
Bakr, Salwa. *The Man From Bashmour*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press. 2007.  
[9789774161094]  
Brooks, Geraldine. *People of the Book*. New York: Penguin, 2008. [9780670018215]  
Falcones, Ildefonso, *The Hand of Fátima*. Trans. Nick CAISTOR (London: Transworld Pub.s, 2011),  
[978-0552776479]  
Kahf, Mohja. *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*. New York: Public Affairs, 2006 [978-0786715190]  
Kurban, Said. *Ali and Nino: A Love Story*. New York: Anchor Books, 2000. [978-0385720403]  
Lalami, Leila. *The Moor's Account*. New York: Vintage Books, 2015. [978-0804170628]  
Maalouf, Amin. *Leo Africanus*. Chicago: New Amsterdam Books, 1988. [978-0393026306]  
\_\_\_\_\_. *Ports of Call*. New York: Random House, 2001. [9781860464461]  
Memmi, Albert. *The Pillar of Salt*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992. [978-0807083277]  
Yehoshua, A. B. *A Journey to the End of the Millennium - A Novel of the Middle Ages*. Mariner  
Books. 2000. [978-0156011167]

**Non-Fiction:**

- Chacour, Elias. *Blood Brothers*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Chosen Books, 2003. [9780800793210]  
David, Anthony. *An Improbable Friendship: The Remarkable Lives of Israeli Ruth Dayan and Palestinian Raymonda Tawil and Their Forty-Year Peace Mission*. Arcade Pub., 2015. [978-1628725681 hardcover; B0140EF8J4 e-book]  
Davis, Natalie Zemon. *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2006. [9780809094349]  
Lagnado, Lucette. *The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit: A Jewish Family's Exodus from Old Cairo to the New World*. New York: Harper, 2008. [978-0060822187]  
Power, Carla. *If the Oceans Were Ink: An Unlikely Friendship and a Journey to the Heart of the Quran*. New York: Holt Press, 2015. [978-0805098198]  
Raheb, Mitri. *I am a Palestinian Christian*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. [9780800626631]  
Roden, Claudia. *The Book of Jewish Food: An Odyssey from Samarkand to New York*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997. [9780394532585]  
Sabar, Ariel. *My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for his Jewish Past in Kurdish Iraq*. New York: Algonquin Books, 2008. [9781565124905]  
Shadid, Anthony. *House of Stone: a memoir of home, family, and a lost Middle East*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012. [9780547134666]  
Shamash, Violette. *Memories of Eden: A Journey Through Jewish Baghdad*. London: Forum, 2008. [9780955709500]  
Tolan, Sandy. *The Lemon Tree*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2006. [1596913436]

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

- [Arranged](#) (2007)  
[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)  
[Little Mosque on the Prairie](#) (Season One 2007)  
[Malcolm X](#) (1992)  
[New Muslim Cool](#) (2009)  
[Of Gods and Men](#) (2010)  
[The Syrian Bride](#) (2004)  
[The Sultan and the Saint](#) (2016)  
[Where Do We Go Now?](#) (2011)

## **Dialogue Documents for discussion:**

### **Contemporary Jewish-Christian Dialogue**

[Ecumenical Considerations on Jewish-Christian Dialogue](#) (1982)  
[Guidelines for Jewish-Lutheran Relations](#) (1998)  
[Declaration to the Jewish Community](#) (1994)  
[Talking Points: Topics in Christian-Jewish Relations](#) (2002)  
[Dabru Emet](#) (2000)  
[Kairos: Palestine Document](#) (2009)  
[To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven: Toward a Partnership between Jews and Christians](#) (2017)

### **Contemporary Muslim-Christian Dialogue**

[Building Bridges Seminar](#) (2002-2012)  
["Christian-Muslim Relations in the United States"](#) (2003)  
[Toward an Understanding of Christian-Muslim Relations](#) (2010)  
["Amman Declaration"](#) (2005)  
["A Common Word"](#) (2007)

### **Contemporary Jewish-Christian-Muslim Dialogue**

[Resolution 21: Jews, Christians, Muslims: The Way of Dialogue](#) (1988)  
[The First Alexandria Declaration](#) (2002)  
[National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East](#) (2003)  
[Windows for Understanding: Jewish-Muslim-Lutheran Relations](#) (2007)  
[The New Mardin Declaration](#) (2010)  
[From the Nile to the Euphrates: The Call of Faith and Citizenship](#) (2014)  
[The Marrakesh Declaration](#) (2017)

## Policies and Miscellany:

**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 9<sup>th</sup> ed.*** (or later). Please include a title page on all papers more than one page, and make sure that your name is included below your name on the cover page. 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 Hartsem 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> .

**AI tools for learning:** Artificial Intelligence programs, including Chatbots, are here to stay. If used properly, they can help you become a better learner. AI programs can assist in your writing and clarity. 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 that you have used this as a source.
2. Proofread and check the AI generated material. You are solely responsible for its content. (AI software can generate fake sources, as well as provide incorrect information.)
3. I reserve the right to ask for an oral exam along with submitted written material to assist you in learning and retaining content.

**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:** The following evaluation process will be utilized as a guideline: (based on a 4-point system)

- A (4-3.8 / 100-96) Demonstrates excellent mastery of the subject matter, a superior ability to articulate this, and provides helpful connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
- A- (3.7-3.5 / 95-90) Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, ability to articulate this well, and makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.
- B+ (3.4-3.1 / 89-86) Demonstrates a very good understanding of the subject matter, able to articulate lessons

- learned in the assignment well. Meets expectations of the course.
- B (3.0-2.8 / 85-83) Demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate lessons learned. Meets expectations of the course.
- B- (2.7-2.4 / 82-80) Demonstrates an understanding of the material at hand, has some difficulty articulating this, and basic connection of the material to daily life or contemporary issues/life. Meets basic expectations for the course.
- C+ (2.3-2.1 / 79-77) Demonstrates a basic comprehension of the subject matter, weak articulation and connections. Does not meet expectations for the course.
- C (2.0-1.8 / 76-73) Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections. Does not meet expectations of the course.
- F (1.7-0.0 / 72 >) Unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

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 webpage](#), or the [Student Handbook](#).