



Abraham in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam RELIGST 1L03

Lectures: Tuesday/Thursday 2.30-3.20

Tutorials: Th 9.30-10.20 or 10.30-11.20

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TA

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Description: People often refer to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as the three Abrahamic Faiths. Such language acknowledges the important role that Abraham plays in these religions. This course will examine what is distinctive and what is common to these depictions of Abraham.

Learning Outcomes

- become familiar with the figure of Abraham in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam
- understand how historical and social contexts led to the development and use of the figure of Abraham
- become familiar with the religious traditions of the Abrahamic faiths
- become conversant with modern notions of religious diversity and tolerance

Textbook

- Adam J. Silverstein and Guy G. Stroumsa, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Abrahamic Religions (OHAR)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Various readings on the internet or posted to Avenue to Learn

Assignments

- **Daily Assignments (20%):** Every class and tutorial, students will hand in directly (not via email) to their TAs a response sheet to the reading for that class. Each assignment must contain 5 observations and 2 questions about that day's readings. Students will be graded on the thoughtfulness of their observations and questions. There are 27 classes/tutorials with required reading, and students must hand in 20 response sheets. Each response sheet is worth 1% of the total grade. This assignment seeks to encourage regular attendance and preparation, a necessity for succeeding at university and learning from this course! Due: every class and tutorial that has required readings.
- **Personal Response (10%):** Without any research/preparation, describe what you believe to be the most important facts you know about Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This should be 2.5-3 pages, double-spaced, and should treat each religion separately. You will not be graded on your knowledge of these three religious traditions, but you will be graded on your writing, grammar, spelling, etc. This is an easy 10%, but it helps your instructors get a better sense of what students know prior to taking this course. Due: Wednesday, September 19, at midnight on Avenue to Learn.
- **Annotated Bibliography (25%):** using the ATLA database and other academic sources (not indiscriminate use of internet sources!), read 8 essays on a single topic related to Abraham, Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. Then construct an annotated bibliography, summarizing each of the essays you read in about 6-8 sentences. Follow the style guide that I give you as closely as possible. ****Do not merely copy/reword abstracts, etc. Turn-it-in will catch you. Being able to summarize academic sources accurately and succinctly will serve as the bedrock for all your academic work!** Due November 1, at midnight, via A2L
- **Final Response (10%):** Read over what you initially wrote regarding your knowledge of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Think over the readings, lectures, tutorials, and your own personal research, and reflect on what you believe you have learned this semester. Again, this is an easy 10%, but the point is to help your instructors see what outcomes the course is having and for you to assess your own academic and intellectual growth. Due: November 27, midnight, via A2L
- **Research a Religion (35%):** In 7-8 pages, double-spaced (Times New Roman font 12), describe as accurately and sympathetically as possible one of the Abraham religions that **you do not personally belong to**. Use reputable, scholarly sources! Obviously, 7-8 pages will not enable you to cover everything of importance in a religious tradition, so choose

wisely in terms of discussing what you deem to be the most important aspects of a religion. Write succinctly and clearly. Due: December 4, at midnight, via A2L.

Additional Information

- *Late Policy*: All late assignments will be penalized by one full letter grade (10%) for each day the assignment is late, unless you contact the professor or TA prior to the due date. Any claim of illness or a familial death requires written documentation.
- *MSAF Policy*: the university has an MSAF policy. In this class, any use of an MSAF will not absolve a student from the set requirements of the course.
- *Academic Honesty*: any attempt to represent the work of another as one's own will not be tolerated. All instances of plagiarism will be dealt with according to McMaster University's policy: <https://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>. ***Students turn in their assignments via Avenue to Learn, where Turn-It-In checks for any issues of plagiarism. This is a powerful system which **will** catch any and all plagiarism.

Tentative Schedule

Week One

Thursday, September 6: Introduction to the Abrahamic Religions

Week Two

Tuesday, September 11: Creation and the Call of Abraham

- Read Genesis 1-12

Thursday, September 13: God's Promises and the Birth of Ishmael

- Read Genesis 13-16

Tutorial: Discuss the academic study of religion

Week Three

Tuesday, September 18: The Covenant of Circumcision and the Birth of Isaac

- Read Genesis 17-21
- Personal Response due Wednesday, September 19, at midnight on Avenue to Learn

Thursday, September 20: The Binding of Isaac

- Read Genesis 22-25

Tutorial: Read and discuss Nicolai Sinai's essay in *OHAR*

Week Four

Tuesday, September 25: **No Class**

Thursday, September 27: The Book of Jubilees

- Read Jubilees 11-23 (<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/index.htm>)

Tutorial: Identifying and Locating Academic Treatments of Religion (ATLA)

Week Five

Tuesday, October 2: Apocalypse of Abraham

- Read Apocalypse of Abraham
(http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/pseudepigrapha/Apocalypse_of_Abraham.html)

Thursday, October 4: Philo

- Read **XXX**

Tutorial: Read and discuss Carol Bakhos's essay in *OHAR*

Week Six (October 8–12): Fall Break

Week Seven

Tuesday, October 16: Josephus

- Read Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.154–256 (chapters 7–17 at <http://sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-1.htm>)

Thursday, October 18: Paul

- Read Romans 4 and Galatians 3–4 (online Bible)

Tutorial: Read and discuss David Irenberg's essay in *OHAR*

Week Eight Oct 22–26)

Tuesday, October 23: Origen

- Read Homilies on Genesis **XXX**

Thursday, October 25: Ambrose

- Read <http://www.ctonline.org/sample/OA.pdf>

Tutorial: Read and discuss Malise Ruthven's essay in *OHAR*

Week Nine

Tuesday, October 30: Chrysostom

- Read Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* **XXX**

Thursday, November 1: Genesis Rabbah 1

- Read Genesis Rabbah **XXX**

Tutorial: Read and discuss David Ford's essay in *OHAR*

- Annotated Bibliography due November 1, at midnight, via A2L

Week Ten

Tuesday, November 6: Genesis Rabbah 2

- Read Genesis Rabbah **XXX**

Thursday, November 8: The Koran

- Read **XXX**

Tutorial: Read and discuss Peter Och's essay in *OHAR*

Week Eleven

Tuesday, November 13: Al-Kisai

- Read **XXX**

Thursday, November 15: No Class

Tutorial: Read and discuss Tariq Ramadan's essay in *OHAR*

Week Twelve

Tuesday, November 20: No Class

Thursday, November 22: Al-Tarafi

- Read **XXX**

Tutorial: No Tutorial

Week Thirteen

Tuesday, November 27: Al-Thalabi

- Read **XXX**
- Final Response due Tuesday, November 27, at midnight, via A2L

Thursday, November 29: Ibn Kathīr/Al-Rabghūzī

- Read **XXX**

Tutorial: Student Reflections on Learning

Week Fourteen

Tuesday, December 4: Conclusions

- Research a Religion due Tuesday, December 4, at midnight, via A2L.