JWST 60003 Introduction to Judaism
3 credit hours

Instructors: Ariel Feldman & Ralph Mecklenburger
Prerequisites: None

Description of Content:
The course will define Judaism as a religious system based on Torah, with two main aspects — beliefs and practices. We will analyze the concept of Torah, as well as the methods of Jewish hermeneutics, by which Torah is explained and applied to changing historical circumstances. The basic creed of Judaism — its fundamental beliefs about God, the world, humankind, the people of Israel, and history — will be explored, as they are expressed in Jewish law, Jewish mysticism, Jewish ethics, and Jewish philosophy. We will consider the major practices and rituals of Judaism, especially those which involve the sanctification of time, space, and persons. This account of the broad structure of Judaism will be set within a historical overview of Judaism, which will identify the major events, developments, and figures. We will examine factors which have created diversity (history, geography, and ideology) and address the major modern varieties of Judaism — Hasidism, Orthodoxy, Reform, and Conservatism. The course will conclude with a consideration of some of the major issues which currently exercise the Jewish community (e.g. assimilation and loss of identity, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, the State of Israel).

Class Procedures:
Lectures, discussions, and student presentations.

Requirements:
1. Attendance and informed participation in the class sessions.
2. In-class presentations.
3. Written assignment (to be completed before the course begins).

Books:

Grading Procedures:
Class Participation: 15%
Class Presentations: 15%
Written Assignment: 20%
Final Paper: 50%