

Three Faiths, One Land: The Coexistence of Jews, Christians and Muslims in Medieval and Modern Spain

JU Course Code:	RELG 375
SIS Course Code:	RELG 375
Subject areas:	History, Spanish studies, Cultural Studies, Religious Studies, Diversity Studies, Sociology
Language of instruction:	English
Contact hours:	45.00
U.S. semester credits:	3
Appears in JU transcript as:	RELG 375: Three Faiths – One Land: The Coexistence of Jews, Christians, and Muslims in

COURSE DESCRIPTION

For almost eight hundred years (711-1492) Christians, Muslims, and Jews lived side by side in Spain. Their interaction contributed to the formation of a highly developed society with no parallels in Western Europe. During periods of peaceful coexistence, the three religions generated outstanding models of social, political, and artistic interaction. However, religious intolerance generated persecution and the final expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Iberia at the beginning of our era. Today, the three faiths cohabit again in Spanish soil. However, this coexistence is not always easy due to religious fundamentalism and antagonistic positions on issues such as polygamy, homosexuality, the treatment of women, use of the veil, and the justified use of violence.

This course explores the coexistence (Convivencia) of Christians, Muslims, and Jews in Spain during the Middle Ages and modern times, equally contemplating the achievements and failures generated by this cohabitation. The course combines religious studies, Spanish history, art history, literary criticism, sociology, and anthropology to present a clear image of the interaction between faiths and cultures in crucial periods of Spanish and European history.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify how Judaism, Christianity, and Islam arose and flourished in medieval Spain.
- Recognize the principal political, artistic, and literary developments generated by the coexistence of the three faiths.
- Understand the impact of the Convivencia in the formation of Spain's modern culture and identity.
- Comprehend how the three faiths interact in modern Spain and how they respond to particular social and



cultural issues.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

This course employs a blended, student-centered teaching methodology designed to promote active learning and critical thinking. This approach combines classroom-based learning with experiential activities to ensure students connect theory with practice, build intercultural competence, and engage with Barcelona as an extended classroom that enriches their academic and personal development.

- **Content reviews:** The instructor will give an explanation about the main goals of each session at the beginning of each class. Students will learn about how to prioritise information, topics, and research techniques.
- **Taking notes:** The instructor will explain how to approach the process of note taking for each class in relation to the materials used, the discussion conducted in class, the lecture given by the professor, and the preparation for exams.
- **Research techniques:** Students will explore different research techniques and how to apply them to the subjects of each session.
- **Interactive lectures:** The instructor will present lectures designed primarily to contextualise the readings within a given historical period, and to broaden the subject of the reading into a wider framework.
- **Class discussions and debates:** Students will lead class discussions and debates in which the challenge will be to discuss how the readings help illuminate and serve to question the broad themes of a given historical period.
- **Field studies and guest speakers:** Students will attend two field studies. We will visit the Roman Medieval quarter in Barcelona to illustrate the ethnic and religious fusion in early Hispania and we will visit El Raval so students can witness the ethnic fusion of today. We will also have a guest speaker from the Muslim community in Barcelona.
- **Student presentations:** The final two sessions of class will be dedicated to short presentations. Presentations should promote debate and discussion, in order to enhance collective and individual learning.

COURSE EVALUATION

The evaluation of this course is based on continuous assessment, and students are provided with different assignments throughout the course to ensure constant learning. The breakdown of the final grade is as follows:

Student participation and engagement	20%
Term Paper	15%
Midterm exam	25%
Topic presentation	15%
Final project	25%

FORMS OF ASSESSMENT

Student participation and engagement: Student participation in this course involves a positive and respectful attitude, active engagement in discussions, asking questions, contributing ideas, collaborating with peers, and demonstrating preparedness through reading and assignments. It reflects a student's commitment to learning and enhances understanding by integrating diverse perspectives within the classroom environment. Class participation will be evaluated based on these five (5) skills: attitude, engagement, preparedness, and frequency and quality of



contributions. *Please see participation rubric in the Student Manual..*

Exam: The midterm exam is designed to establish and communicate your progress toward meeting the course learning objectives listed in the syllabus. It consists of three sections: a multiple-choice questions section, a short answer section, and a final analytical section, which could consist of a short essay, an analysis, a reflection, etc. depending on the course content. This exam will test your abilities in 3 important areas of competency: the amount of information you master; the accuracy of the information you present; and the significance you ascribe to the facts and ideas you have integrated across your study in this course.

Group presentation: This is a group project. Students should conduct research on any topic discussed throughout the semester and then present it to the whole class. The subject must be placed in its proper historical, social, and political contexts, be discussed within modern Spanish culture, and be compared to American reactions to the same topic. The presentation should be 20-minute long, all members must present, and discussion should be generated.

Term Paper: A 1500-word research paper where the student explores a topic chosen from a list of subjects recommended by the professor (students can also suggest different topics). The student should also research the same subject in the context of American society and make a comparison between Spanish and American procedures and points of view.

Final Project (conducted in groups): Students will submit a 15 minute video in which they discuss the modern *convivencia* of different cultures and religions in Barcelona. For this project participants should utilize: : 1) materials used in class (to support or reject different ideas about *convivencia*); 2) information collected from social media; 3) photos and videos taken in Barcelona; and 4) sound recordings/videos of the members of the group presenting data and conclusions generated after research.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: FIELD STUDIES AND GUEST LECTURES

Field studies at SIS are crucial as they provide immersive, hands-on learning experiences. They enhance cultural understanding, bridge theory with real-world practice, and foster global perspectives. This experiential learning deepens subject knowledge, develops critical thinking, and enriches personal and academic growth, making education more impactful and memorable. The following field study trips will be organized during this course:

	Field Study Site	Description of activity on site
Field Study Visit 1	Visit to the Cathedral of Barcelona.	
Field Study Visit 2	Visit to the synagogue (Sinagoga Mayor) of Barcelona (and the Jewish quarter).	
Field Study Visit 3	Visit to El Raval Neighborhood	

N.B.: *Field study trips may be subject to modification based on the semester, the number of participants, and/or the availability of the activity.*

ATTENDANCE POLICY



As a member of the BSAE community, you are expected to be present and on time every day. Attending class has an impact on your learning and academic success. For this reason, **attendance is required** for all your SIS classes, including sessions with field studies. Students should immediately notify their instructor and the Academics Team of any past or future absences, and any accommodations for missed classes, if any, will be determined by the course instructor and the Academics Team. **If a student misses more than 3 classes in any course without justification, 3 percentage points (a third of a letter grade) will be deducted from the final grade for every subsequent absence. If a student reaches 6 absences, this will result in a failing grade.** Students may apply to excuse absences due to hospitalizations, religious observance or family emergencies using this form. [Please see the Academic Student Manual for more information.](#)

LATE-WORK SUBMISSIONS

Students are expected to submit all due assignments in a timely manner to ensure fairness to all students and faculty. Assignments submitted after the deadline may incur a penalty of 10% per day late, up to a maximum of three days. After three days, late work may not be accepted and could result in a grade of zero. Exceptions can be made for documented emergencies or significant personal circumstances, but students must communicate with the instructor as soon as possible. This policy aims to promote good time management skills, accountability, and consistent academic performance while accommodating unforeseen challenges.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

SIS programs foster critical thinking and intellectual development of its students. In doing so, SIS requires that students introduce their original thoughts, opinions, and ideas in all of their assignments with the support of cited sources. Any violations of academic integrity – such as cheating, plagiarism, self-plagiarism, academic misconduct, fabrication, misuse or misrepresentation of research, and noncompliance – may result in an automatic “F” or immediate dismissal from the program if the student falls below the minimum number of credits required for the term; 12 credits during the semester, or 3 hours during the summer.

DEFINITIONS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Use of AI without permission or acknowledgment: A growing concern is the use of artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots to write entire essays and articles. While students may use AI tools to enhance learning, such as for research, study aids, or improving writing skills, please be aware that when this AI-generated information is copied directly to academic assignments, it is considered a form of plagiarism. At SIS, the use of AI to complete assignments, exams, or any form of assessment is strictly prohibited unless explicitly allowed by the instructor. This policy aims to balance the benefits of AI with maintaining academic standards.

Students using AI should be transparent about their use and make sure it aligns with academic integrity. They must disclose any AI assistance used in their work and ensure it complies with course guidelines. Passing off any AI generated content as their own (e.g., cutting and pasting content into written assignments, or paraphrasing AI content) constitutes a violation of SIS Academic Integrity and will result in disciplinary actions.

It is important to note that tools that check writing are okay to use. Examples can include the autocorrect feature in Google Docs and the app Grammarly. These tools, which scan pieces of writing for errors and/or make suggestions for edits, are very different from AI programs that write entire papers. The key difference is that it is the student's own writing that is being scanned for possible mistakes versus AI doing all the writing.



If plagiarism is suspected, a faculty member may need to speak with the student and may ask them to defend their work and/or ask them to complete an alternative assignment to verify the content of your assignment is their own.

Cheating: the act of obtaining credit, attempting to obtain credit, or assisting others to obtain credit for academic work through the use of any dishonest, deceptive, or fraudulent means:

- Copying, in part or as a whole, from another's test or other evaluation instrument
- Submitting work previously graded in another course or simultaneously presented in two or more courses
- Using or consulting sources, tools, or materials prohibited by the instructor prior to or during an examination

Plagiarism: Using someone else's words, art, data, or ideas and passing them off as one's own. Cutting and pasting is so easy that many people plagiarize without meaning to. A student may be plagiarizing if they:

- Submit someone else's work as their own.
- Buy a paper from a papermill, website, or other source.
- Cut and paste together phrases, ideas, and sentences from a variety of sources to write an essay
- Copy words, art, or data from someone else's work--published or unpublished--without giving the original author credit.
- Use an artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot to write their paper for them.

Self-Plagiarism: Submitting a piece of one's own work to receive credit for multiple assignments in one or more classes.

Academic Misconduct: Any act that impedes or threatens the open exchange, expression, or flow of information or fair evaluation of students. This includes intimidation and complicity in any acts or attempts to interfere with the ethical and fair submission and evaluation of student work.

Fabrication: Providing inaccurate or false information, including research findings, quotes, and cited sources, etc.

Non-Compliance: Failure to comply with the values, objectives, and procedures contained in this policy.

As SIS is accredited by Jacksonville University, students are held accountable to JU's [Academic Integrity and Code of Conduct](#). You are expected to read and understand the JU terms and regulations of Academic Misconduct.

FINAL GRADES REVIEW AND GRADE APPEAL

It is understood that students may have questions about their grades. Most can easily be answered through consultation with the instructor. In the event that a student feels they have been treated unfairly, in that an instructor has deviated from their prescribed formula for grading in an arbitrary or punitive manner, the student may appeal the final course grade. For more information, please consult the [Student Academic Manual](#).

Please note, **grade appeals are not intended as a means for students to improve or negotiate their grades**. They are reserved solely for cases involving administrative errors, calculation mistakes, or grading that is inconsistent with the stated course policies or criteria. Appeals must be based on evidence of such errors and not on dissatisfaction with the outcome or a desire for a higher grade.



DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Within the School for International Studies (SIS), students, faculty, and staff are committed to working together to create and maintain an inclusive and equitable learning environment. This environment – which may be understood as both in the classroom and associated class excursions/field studies, as well as online course activities – is one in which the diversity of identities, lived experiences, and backgrounds of all learners are treated with dignity and respect at all times (including but not limited to: sex, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, genetics, language, religion, political affiliation, mental or/and physical disability, age, and sexual orientation).

Furthermore, an inclusive and equitable learning environment recognizes the need for resources and reasonable accommodations for all learners to fully participate and be positioned for academic success. As such, the following are available to students at SIS:

- Academic accommodations
- Mental health: mentors + professional services
- Bias reporting form

Participants are encouraged to complete this [bias form](#) to report any incidents they witness, and will be guided through support options.

TENTATIVE COURSE CONTENT OUTLINE

N.B. Course schedule and field studies are subject to change. The final duration and distribution of content and assignments will be determined and presented to students at the onset of the course.

COURSE SESSIONS AND CONTENT		
SESSION	CONTENT	READINGS / ACTIVITIES
1	Introduction to the Course Welcome, overview and presentation of all different aspects of the course (activities, policies, assessment methods, etc.).	<i>Introduction to the Course</i> <i>Welcome, overview and presentation of all different aspects of the course (activities, policies, assessment methods, etc.).</i>
2	Origins and development of the three faiths 1: Judaism	Recommended article: Holloway, <i>A Little History of Religion</i> (The Wanderer + In the Bulrushes), pp. 36-47.
3	Origins and development of the three faiths 2: Christianity	Recommended article: F. E. Peters, <i>The Voice, The Word, The Books</i> , (What is the New Testament) pp. 17-27.
4	Origins and development of the three faiths 3: Islam	Recommended article: Holloway, <i>A Little History of Religion</i> , (The Last Prophet + Submission + Struggle) pp. 125-142.
5	A Brief History of Spain and its Three Faiths	From prehistoric times to the Discovery of America https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/espana/historyandculture/history/Paginas/index.aspx



6	Convivencia and its Many Faces	Baxter Wolf, "Convivencia in Medieval Spain: A Brief History," pp. 72–85.
7	The Jews in Spain	Roth, "The Jews in Spain and the Expulsion of 1492," pp. 17-30.
8	Jewish Identity Under Christian and Islamic Rules	Ray, "Beyond Tolerance and Persecution: Reassessing Our Approach to Medieval Convivencia," pp. 1-18.
9	Visit to the Synagogue and Jewish Quarter of Barcelona	Web Article: Synagogue. Major Synagogue of Barcelona https://www.sinagogamayor.com/en/sinagoga Video: The Call of the Jews of Barcelona https://youtu.be/qXA9OuQNBWw
10	The Islamic Conquest of Iberia: Jews and Christians, "The People of the Book."	Burckhardt, "Religions and Races," pp. 9-20. Menocal, "The Mosque and the Palm Tree," pp. 53-65.
11	Islam Becomes Popular	Fletcher, "The Curve of Conversions," pp. 35-50. Menocal, "Mother Tongues," pp. 66-78.
12	Life During the Golden Age of Islam 1	Fletcher, "The Caliphate of Cordoba," pp. 53-77. Abd al-Rahman III https://youtu.be/z5xJp9QM_vc?si=vPju0m2i9tBJmz0
13	Life During the Golden Age of Islam 2	Burckhardt, "Cordoba," pp. 23-30. Legacy of Abd al-Rahman III https://youtu.be/WHO17T8R8zo?si=XrxSfGzLK-aJnf8
14	Midterm	
15	Jews, Christians, and the Petty Islamic Kingdoms (<i>Taifas</i>)	Fletcher, "The Party Kings," pp. 79-104. Video: The First <i>Taifas</i> of Muslim Spain https://youtu.be/KfXQZk0H01g
16	Enter Islamic Fundamentalists: Intolerance and Exile to Christian Lands	Fletcher, "The Moroccan Fundamentalists," pp. 105-132. Video: The Rise of the Almohad Caliphate. https://youtu.be/LsERfwyZW1U
17	Reconquista: Jews and Muslims under Christian Expansion and Rule	Tremlett, "Reconquista - three Spains," CH. 4.
18	Convivencia and Art	Perratore, "Art at the Frontiers of Faith 1000-1200," pp. 5-43.
19	Visit to the Cathedral of Barcelona: Christianity Rules the Land	Video: Building the Majestic Gothic Cathedrals https://youtu.be/SiRRdyHuA0Q



20	Christian Intolerance: The End of <i>Convivencia</i>	Kamen, "Toleration and Dissent in Sixteenth-Century Spain: The Alternative Tradition," pp. 3-23 Amelang, "The expulsion of the Moriscos, 1609–14, Still more questions than answers," 45-54.
21	The Return to the Land: <i>Convivencia</i> in Modern Spain	Rashid, "Convivencia in Contemporary Spain," pp.36-47.
22	Field Study Visit to the Raval: <i>Convivencia</i> in Modern Barcelona	
23	Presentations 1	
24	Presentations 2	
25	Submission Final Project and course review	

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Required Readings:

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- Kamen, Henry. (1988). "Toleration and Dissent in Sixteenth-Century Spain: The Alternative Tradition," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 19, pp. 3-23.
- Loewenthal, Kate Miriam. (2016). "Religious Identity, Challenge, and Clothing: Women's Head and Hair Covering in Islam and Judaism," *Journal of Empirical Theology* 29, pp. 160-170.
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- Perratore, Julia. (2021) *Art at the Frontiers of Faith 1000-1200* (pp. 5-43). New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
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- Ray, Jonathan. (2005). "Beyond Tolerance and Persecution: Reassessing Our Approach to Medieval Convivencia," *Jewish Social Studies* 11, pp. 1-18
- Roth, Norman (2007). "The Jews of Spain and the Expulsion of 1492," *Historian* 27, pp. 17-30.
- Tremlett, Giles (2002). *Spain; A Little History of Spain* (CH 4). London: Head of Zeus.

Internet Articles and Videos:

- Synagogue. Major Synagogue of Barcelona
 - <https://www.sinagogamayor.com/en/sinagoga>
- The Call of the Jews of Barcelona
<https://youtu.be/qXA9OuQNBWw>
- Video: The First Taifas of Muslim Spain
 - <https://youtu.be/KfXQZk0H01g>
- Video: The Rise of the Almohad Caliphate.
<https://youtu.be/LsERfwyZW1U>
- Building the Majestic Gothic Cathedrals
<https://youtu.be/SiRRdyHuAOQ>
- The Three Abrahamic Religions and their Image of Women
<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2016/05/26/the-three-abrahamic-religions-and-their-image-of-woman/>
- Polygamy in Judaism and Christianity
<https://www.islamreligion.com/articles/326/polygamy-in-judaism-and-christianity/>
- Polygamy in Islamic Law
<https://islamonline.net/en/social-system-of-islam-polygamy-in-islamic-law-i-historical-perspectives/>

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<https://salamislam.com/articles/women/hijab-abrahamic-religions>
- "Sexuality - What the Major World Religions Teach // Fryp." FRYP, 6 Dec. 2018,
<http://fryp.org.uk/professionals/understand/sexuality/>
- "The Qur'an, the Bible and homosexuality in Islam"
<https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-the-quran-the-bible-and-homosexuality-in-islam-61012>