# History of Jewish thought

## Prof. Claudia Milani

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The aim of the course is to present the key aspects of Jewish tradition (revelation, precepts, liturgy), as well as helping students understand how this tradition has developed through the centuries, the rules on which it has been based and what it has in common with other forms of knowledge or its distinguishing features. In the second part of the course, the objective will be to illustrate what has been learnt in the first part, with reference to various authors and texts from different historical periods.

At the end of the course, students will be capable of:

being aware of and understanding the key concepts underlying Jewish thought;

being proficient in the use of the lexicon of the discipline, which enables them to describe the internal divisions and the development of Jewish thought over the centuries;

applying the main rules of interpretation to texts;

presenting examples of how what they have learnt has been reworked in different historical and cultural contexts.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The first part of the course will include the introductory presentation of the concepts of Torah (revealed teaching), Halakhah (Jewish Law), Tefillah (prayer). There will be a particular focus on Torah’s polysemic value: the definition of revealed teaching; what the Jewish biblical canon is; the reason why the hermeneutics of texts is essential and the main rules of rabbinic hermeneutics; the difference between the written Torah (Jewish Bible) and the oral Torah (Mishnah and Talmud).

The second part of the course will offer some interpretations which will enable students to compare the biblical text with philosophy and science from different historical periods. More specifically, a few pages will be read from the *Guide for the perplexed* by Mosè Maimonide (which compare the Jewish Bible and Aristotelian philosophy); works on the Bible in Italian by Samuel David Luzzatto (which compare traditional Jewish reading and the historical-critical approach to texts); biblical essays by Franz Rosenzweig (which reinterpret the Jewish Bible on the basis of rabbinic tradition, but also of an original philosophy of translation).

***READING LIST***

Lecture notes and the material available on the University BlackBoard platform.

Students must choose a text among those which will be presented and recommended during lectures.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course will be taught in the classroom, with frontal lessons. On various occasions, lessons may be held in the form of a seminar, using participatory and interative teaching methods.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students will be assessed with an oral exam, of the duration of about 30 minutes, three-four questions will be asked on the entire course programme.

During the oral exam students will have to demonstrate knowledge of the concepts dealt with during the course; they must be capable of understanding the different topics; show that they are proficient in expressing themselves using an appropriate lexicon; they must be capable of presenting and analysing the contents of the texts read during lessons.

In order to achieve a high final mark, students must demonstrate that they have critical thinking skills and adequate argumentative skills.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Given the introductory nature of the course, there are no specific prerequisites, in terms of knowledge or language skills, in order for students to attend the course.

The teaching will make the most of the opportunities offered by the University BlackBoard platform, on which students will be able to find all the material illustrated and discussed during lessons, and students’ understanding and knowledge thereof will be assessed in an oral exam.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.