

# COURSE DESCRIPTIONS—SPRING 2009

## **GOD SAID WHAT??: PROPHECY IN THE 7<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY B.C.E.**

**Rev. Russell Mack**

Mondays, March 16, 23, 30; April 6, 20, 27

Recent evidence shows that prophets functioned throughout the ancient Near-East over a considerable span of Biblical time. We will compare and contrast the prophetic figures and messages of the Neo-Assyrian Empire with Old Testament prophets Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah. Did all prophetic messages serve the same purpose? How do messages prophesied for the gods Ashur, Bel and Ishtar compare with those delivered on behalf of Yahweh? Should the answers change our beliefs about of prophecy in the Judeo-Christian tradition?

*Rev. Mack, Adjunct Professor of Bible at Cincinnati Christian University, is a Ph.D. candidate at HUC-JIR Cincinnati. He holds M.A. degrees in Biblical Literature and Hebrew Bible/Cognate Studies and has taught religious education classes for all ages.*

## **CONVERSATIONS WITH BIBLICAL AUTHORS**

**Dr. Angela Roskop**

Mondays, March 16, 23, 30; April 6, 20, 27

We all ask questions about our relationship with God and the nature of our religious communities. So did Biblical authors. Like us, they didn't always agree, and looked to resources from the past for answers. Whatever we believe about the authorship of Biblical texts, we can learn much from considering how these inspiring writings came to be. A 'conversation' with Biblical authors of the Exodus journey will reveal how they used both history and events of their time to construct a narrative with meaning relevant for our time.

*Dr. Roskop received an M.A. from the University of Wisconsin and a Ph.D. in Hebrew Bible from HUC-JIR Cincinnati, concentrating on historical narratives of ancient Israel and Mesopotamia. She has excavated at several archeological sites in the Middle East and is a well-received lecturer.*

## **LET US ENTERTAIN YOU: IN SEARCH OF AMERICAN JEWISH CULTURE**

**Rabbis Kenneth Ehrlich and Kenneth A. Kanter**

Tuesdays, March 17, 24, 31; April 7, 28; May 5

This multi-media course examines the ways in which American Jews have sought identity in a culture historically defined by Christian elements. Discover how Jews found a cultural footing in America's budding entertainment industries. Enjoy musical and video programs showcasing the contributions of Jewish immigrants and their descendants to the rich blend of elements that defines American culture today.

*Rabbi Ehrlich is Dean of HUC-JIR Cincinnati and Director of Homiletic Studies. His classes and lectures on Jewish medical ethics, literature, history and humor have been widely acclaimed throughout the community.*

*Rabbi Kanter is Director of the Rabbinical School at HUC-JIR Cincinnati. He is a renowned author and lecturer on the Jewish contribution to American popular music, which was the topic of his first book, The Jews on Tin Pan Alley.*

## **PROPHETS, MYSTICS AND MESSIAHS: A MULTI-FAITH LOOK AT INTERPRETING THE DIVINE MESSAGE**

**Rabbi Moshe Thomas Heyn**

Wednesdays, March 18, 25; April 1, 22, 29; May 6

All religions are shaped by people who claim to have a direct encounter with the Unknowable. Prophets claim to profess the will of God; mystics claim to understand the secrets of the universe; messiahs claim the ability to save humanity. How can we know if their claims are true? We will analyze religious texts and testimonials from psychological and sociological perspectives to distinguish universal truths from culture-bound interpretations. This approach is essential to taming religious extremism and finding forms of spirituality that address the needs of today's world.

*Rabbi Heyn, Director of Pastoral Care at Cedar Village Retirement Center, has taught at several area colleges, Jewish high schools and synagogues. He holds a Masters degree and ordination from HUC-JIR and is finishing requirements for chaplaincy certification.*

## **EXPLORING REDEMPTION: THE VIEW FROM MANY PERSPECTIVES**

### **Rabbi Haim Rechnitzer**

Wednesdays, March 18, 25; April 1, 22, 29; May 6

What is redemption? Is it only for the soul, or could all of humankind be moving toward a redemptive ideal state? How do Jewish and Christian ideas of redemption compare to those of other religions? Beginning with these questions, we will explore the nature of redemptive concepts and their place in major religious traditions. Selected readings will foster understanding of redemption as an ultimate religious ideal. We will also explore ways in which people might realize a 'living redemption' as they quest for redemption in its traditional sense.

*Rabbi Rechnitzer is Assistant Professor of Modern Jewish Thought at HUC-JIR Cincinnati. After ordination he taught at Franklin and Marshall College. He holds a Ph.D. from the Department of Jewish Thought at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.*

### **INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL HEBREW**

#### **Jennifer E. Quast**

Thursdays, March 19, 26; April 2, 16, 23, 30; May 7, 16

Learn to read Hebrew and gain a basic understanding of the language as it is used in Biblical text. We begin with the Hebrew alphabet, then introduce common nouns and verbs, building vocabulary and grammar skills needed to read the Hebrew Bible. The use of songs, mnemonic devices and illustrated handouts help to ease the language-acquisition process. **Required text: *The First Hebrew Primer*, available for the discounted price of \$31.50 from the HUC Bookstore. Orders must be placed by March 2.**

*Miss Quast is a Ph.D. candidate at HUC-JIR Cincinnati, where she earned a M.Phil. in Hebrew and Cognate Studies with expertise in Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic.. She has been an adjunct instructor at Ashland Theological Seminary, Malone College and Kenya (Africa) Highlands Bible College.*

### **PROPHETS AND PROPHECY IN THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES**

#### **Andrew J. Riley**

Thursdays, March 19; April 2, 16, 23, 30; May 7

What are the prophets' contributions to Judeo-Christian heritage? How do we tell true from false prophets? Seek answers by exploring the rise, decline and transformation of Old Testament Israelite prophecy. Readings from the Hebrew Bible and New Testament reveal how the behavior, appearance, family background and social landscapes of Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel influenced these prophets' acceptance in their own time, and the reasons for our perception of their messages in modern religious context.

*Mr. Riley is a Ph.D. candidate at HUC-JIR. He holds two Masters degrees and teaches at the College of Mount St. Joseph and Xavier University. He has excavated at Israel's Tel Dan archeological site and has taught archaeology to school and community groups.*