This course will explore the history and cultures of the Land of Israel, which was renamed Philistine/Palestine Syria (Syria-Palaestina) ca. 132 CE. Among other subjects, students will become acquainted with historical crises within Judean (Jewish) civilization that established the groundwork for the foundation in the Middle East of three of the world’s most influential monotheistic cultures—(Rabbinic) Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

In particular, the course will explore how the Hebrew Bible, as well as the Christian Old Testament, the New Testament, and various apocryphal Hebrew works, shed light on the ancient Judeans—or Jews—including the first followers of Jesus of Nazareth, not to mention Jesus himself, and how they dealt with the challenges of Greek and Roman cultures in a dramatic age of empires.