



**Yeshiva University**  
**THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL STRAUS**  
**CENTER FOR TORAH AND WESTERN THOUGHT**

**Athens and Jerusalem: A Study of Greek and Jewish Philosophy**

Yeshiva College

Instructors: Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik and Dr. Neil Rogachevsky

Preceptor: Malka Lebovic

Fridays 10:00AM: BH 511

By “Athens and Jerusalem,” modern thinkers refer to two worldviews and cultures that fundamentally formed the west: that of the thinkers of classical antiquity, and that of Judaism. This course seeks to compare and contrast these perspectives through a careful reading of Greek philosophers and dramatists and Jewish philosophical texts. Questions will include: What is man’s status, role and responsibility on earth, and vis-à-vis the divine? What is the nature of the political community? How should we define heroism? In what way do ethical obligations bind us? Is friendship central to human flourishing, or is it a distraction from our religious duties? How ought human beings respond to their mortality?

**Expectations:** Class will meet every Friday; prior to every class, students will be expected to have read and reflected upon the readings of that week, and to participate in class discussions about them. Students will have been given a question to facilitate reflection on the readings for the week ahead, and will be asked to respond before class with several paragraphs of reflection in response to the question. In addition, students will write a paper, by the end of the term, that will embody a sophisticated comparative reflection on Greek and Jewish sources on a subject central to human flourishing.

**Grading:**

**25%: Class Attendance and Participation**

**25%: Readings Essay Questions**

**20%: Paper**

**30%: Final**

## **SCHEDULE:**

### **Week I – INTRODUCTION**

### **Week II – JERUSALEM AND ATHENS: SIMILARITIES AND CONTRASTS**

Leo Strauss: “Athens and Jerusalem,” Yoram Hazony: “Jerusalem and Carthage,” Pierre Manent, “Between Athens and Jerusalem”

### **Week III – THE CITY**

Aristotle *Politics* Book I,

Bereishit Chapters 3-6

Leon Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom*

Joseph Soloveitchik, “The Community”

### **Week IV-V– MAGNANIMITY VS HUMILITY**

Greek Reading: Aristotle Ethics Book V—Great Souled Man.

Maimonides, *Hilkhot De’ot*, Selections

Joseph Soloveitchik, “Majesty and Humility;” *The Lonely Man of Faith*, Selections

Lincoln Lyceum Speech, Churchill on Religion in “Thoughts and Adventures”

### **Week VI – HEROISM AND SACRIFICE**

Thucydides: “Pericles Funeral Oration”

Joseph Soloveitchik, “Catharsis”

### **Week VII - LIFE AND DEATH**

Xenophon, On the Apology of Socrates to the Jury

Plato, *Apology* and *The Phaedo*,

Nahmanides

### **Week VIII-IX - PIETY AND JUSTICE**

*Republic* Book I, Book 10

Stanley Rosen “*Plato’s Republic*: Introduction.”

1 Samuel Chapter 17

Aristotle Book V

Masekhet Sanhedrin, Selections

Week X - **FRIENDSHIP**

Aristotle Ethics Book 9

C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, “Friendship”

Leon Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom*, Selections

Week XI-XII - **ETHICS AND LAW**

Plato, *Euthyphro*

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Selections

Maimonides, *Eight Chapters*, Selections

Aharon Lichtenstein, “Is there an Ethic Independent of Halakha?”

Marvin Fox, “Maimonides and Aquinas on Natural Law”

Week XIII - **CONCLUSION: ATHENS, JERUSALEM, AND THE FUTURE OF THE WEST**

Alisdair Macintyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry*

Milton Himmelfarb, “Hebraism and Hellenism Now”

Joseph Soloveitchik, “Confrontation”