Course Description
The purpose of this core course is to bring classic Jewish texts about government into conversation with the foundational works of American political thought. In so doing, we will consider the following questions: How did Jewish notions of politics, the social contract, and covenant impact the eventual structure and nature of the United States? How did the Bible figure in the debates about democracy and monarchy that took place during the time of America's founding? What tensions exist between the notion of religious authority and the modern conception of personal autonomy? In what way is the United States different from European democracies, and what is the role of religion in American public life?

Attendance & Participation
Students will be expected to have read and reflected upon the readings of each week and participate in class discussions about them. At the end of every week, students will be given a question to facilitate reflection on the readings for the week ahead and will be asked to respond before the first session of the next week 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 Jewish and American sources on government. A final will conclude the course.

Grades
Participation and Reading Response 30%
Paper 30%
Final 40%

Course Outline
Introduction
1. *Sefer Shmuel Aleph* (I Samuel), chapters 8 & 12
2. Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*.
4. Talmud Sanhedrin, Perek 2, Selections.

Topic 1: David, Divine Right of Kings, the Bible, and Political Philosophy

Topic 2: Locke, The Hebrew Bible and the Hebrew Republic
3. *Chatam Sofer*, Likutei Teshuvot #82
Topic 3: Locke's Second Treatise and The Social Contract

Topic 4: Covenant vs. Social Contract
2. Sacks, Jonathan. *The Home We Build Together*.

Topic 5: Covenant and American Political Thought

Topic 6: Isaac Abravanel and the American Idea
1. Abravanel, *Commentary on the Book of Judges*, Introduction; *Commentary on Samuel*, Selections; *Commentary on Exodus*, selections
2. Soloveitchik, Rabbi Joseph B. "Belnyan Takanat Moshe"
5. Strauss, Leo. "On Abravanel's Philosophical Tendency and Political Teaching."

Topic 7: Religion and Democratic Society

Topic 8: Religious Freedom and the Public Good
1. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Confrontation."