JEWISH ENGAGEMENTS:
JUDAISM'S ENCOUNTER WITH CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Jacob J. Schacter

Sy Syms School of Business

Fall 2015

This course is presented in conjunction with the Straus Center at Yeshiva University.

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

Lectures: Mondays 6:45-8pm
Class Discussions: five times throughout the semester, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30-2:30

Requirements:
1) Attend each lecture and class discussion. Let your Teaching Assistant know in advance if you will be missing a lecture or class discussion. You will be allowed up to two excused absences from lectures and one from class discussions.

2) Prepare all assigned primary sources and secondary readings in advance of each class. Emphasis will be placed on close textual readings from primary sources.

3) Participate, however appropriate, in class discussion about the material. Attendance and participation in class and in smaller groups will count for 20% of your final grade.

4) Complete the Rabbi Lichtenstein article assignment during the Yom Tov break (see below). It will count for 10% of your final grade.

5) Submit answers to five pop quizzes that will be held on random days throughout the semester at the beginning of class to insure that you did the assigned required reading(s) for that class. Each one will be worth 5% of your final grade for a total of 20% of your final grade (you will be able to drop your lowest grade).

6) Write a final examination covering, in depth, the material covered in the lectures, class discussions and readings. The examination will count for 50% of your final grade.
7) For extra credit, you are invited to write around a 500 word summary of any recommended article for one extra credit point on your final grade with a cap at five points of extra credit for the semester.

There may be a midterm, depending on the Instructor’s and Teaching Assistants’ sense of whether or not you are doing your work in a responsible timely fashion. If there is a midterm, it will count for 20% of your final grade and the final will then count for 30% of your final grade.

There will be no research paper required for this course.

I. August 24
Introduction
Framing the Subject I: “Torah Only”
Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter

Required Reading:
Shimon Schwab, ... אל יהוה: These and Those (New York, 1966).

Recommended Reading:

II. August 31
Framing the Subject II: “Torah and” or “Torah u-Madda”
Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:


There will be a six weeks break at this point. The required reading for this time is Aharon Lichtenstein, "Torah and General Culture: Confluence and Conflict," in Jacob J. Schacter, ed., Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures: Rejection or Integration? (Northvale and Jerusalem, 1997), 217-95.
You will be given a number of focused questions to answer.

III. October 12
Setting the Tone:
On the Ethics of Disagreement: Learning to Disagree Agreeably
Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter

Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:

October 13 - Tuesday
October 15 - Thursday
CLASS DISCUSSION #1

IV. October 19
Authority and Autonomy: Relevance and Limits
The Challenge of Choice in Twenty-First Century American Jewish Life
Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter

Required Reading:
Jacob J. Schacter, “Halakhic Authority in a World of Personal Autonomy,” in Michael J. Harris, Daniel Rynhold and Tamara Wright, eds., Radical Responsibility: Celebrating the Thought of Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks (New Milford and Jerusalem, 2012), 155-76.


Recommended Reading:


V. October 26
Confronting the Challenges of Medicine and Science
GUEST LECTURER: Dr. Edward Reichman

Required Reading:


October 27 - Tuesday
October 29 - Thursday
CLASS DISCUSSION #2

VI. November 2
Religious Zionism
Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter

Required Reading:


VII. November 9
Tikkun Olam
GUEST LECTURER: Rabbi Dr. J. David Bleich

Required Reading:
Recommended Reading:

November 10 – Tuesday
November 12 - Thursday
CLASS DISCUSSION #3

VIII. November 16
OPEN
Leave open to answer larger questions

IX. November 23
The Changing Roles for Women in Jewish Learning, Leadership and Ritual
Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter

X. November 30
Must I Love Every Jew?: The Status of Non-Observant Jews in Jewish Law and Tradition
Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:


XI. December 7
Jews and Non-Jews: Christianity
GUEST LECTURER: Dr. David Berger


http://www.jcrelations.net/Dabru_Emet_A_Jewish_Statement_on_Christians_and_Christianity.2395.0.html

December 8 - Tuesday
December 10 - Thursday
CLASS DISCUSSION #4

XII. December 14
Role of Non-Jews in the World
GUEST LECTURER: Dr. David Shatz

Required Reading:


XIII. December 21
Recreation and Leisure
Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter

Required Reading:


Recommended Reading:

December 24 - Thursday  
CLASS DISCUSSION #5

December 29 - Tuesday  
CLASS DISCUSSION #5  
(in Reading Week)
TEACHING ASSISTANTS

TUESDAYS

Jacob Bernstein (jacob.bernstein@mail.yu.edu) is currently a second year semikha student at RIETS, as well as a graduate student studying Jewish History and Jewish Education at Revel and Azrieli Graduate Schools respectively. Prior to RIETS, Jacob attended Yeshivat Har Etzion (Gush) and Yeshiva College, where he majored in Jewish History and Mathematics, and minored in Business at Syms. He is also currently teaching Jewish History at YUHSB (MTA) and lives in Washington Heights with his wife Penina, and daughter Leora. Jacob is excited for a productive and enriching semester.

Jonathan Bloom (ibloom64@gmail.com) grew up in Fairlawn, NJ and is currently a fourth year semicha student at RIETS as well as the assistant JLIC Rabbi at NYU. Jonathan spent two years learning at Yeshivat Sha'alvim after which he attended YU, where he majored in Psychology. He lives in Washington Heights with his wife, Sharone, and he looks forward to getting to know you as your TA this semester.

THURSDAYS

Daniel Goldberg (danielgoldberg2121@gmail.com) is a rabbinical student at RIETS and is the rabbinic intern at Beth Aaron in Teaneck, NJ. He is also pursuing a Ph.D in Bible from the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies and is a Wexner Graduate Fellow. Daniel graduated Yeshiva College in 2013 with a B.A. in English Literature. He lives in Teaneck with his wife, Dina, and their son, Moshe.

Noach Goldstein (NoachGoldstein@gmail.com) currently lives in Washington Heights with his wife, Alexis (Mayer), and is beginning his fourth year in the Semikah Honors Program at RIETS while finishing M.A. in Medieval Jewish History at the Bernard Revel Graduate School and serving as rabbinic intern at the Jewish Center in Manhattan. Originally from Teaneck, Noach spent two years studying at Yeshivat Har Etzion in Israel prior to majoring in History and English at YU, where he learned in Rabbi Michael Rosensweig’s shiur.

GUEST LECTURERS:

Dr. David Berger is Ruth and I. Lewis Gordon Professor of Jewish History and Dean at the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Yeshiva University. For many years he was Broeklundian Professor of History at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He was also co-chair of the Academic Advisory Committee of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture and has served as a member of the Academic Committee of the Rothschild Foundation Europe and of the Executive Committee of the American Academy for Jewish Research, where he is a Fellow. He serves on the Council of the World Union of Jewish Studies and the editorial board of Tradition. From 1998 to 2000, he was President of the Association for Jewish Studies.
He is the author of *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages*, which was awarded the John Nicholas Brown Prize by the Medieval Academy of America, and co-author of *Judaism’s Encounter with Other Cultures: Rejection or Integration?* (edited by Jacob J. Schacter), a Finalist for the Jewish Book Award in Jewish Thought. His book, *The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference*, which has also been published in an updated Hebrew version translated by the author ("Ha-Rebbe Melekh ha-Mashiach," Sha‘ar uriyyat ha-Adishut, ve-ha-‘iyum al Emunat Yisrael), received the 2003-2004 Samuel Belkin Literary Award. He has written numerous articles on medieval Jewish history, Jewish-Christian relations, antisemitism, contemporary Judaism, and the intellectual history of the Jews. The articles on Jewish-Christian relations have now been collected in *Persecution, Polemic and Dialogue: Essays in Jewish-Christian Relations* and those on intellectual history in *Cultures in Collision and Conversation: Essays in the Intellectual History of the Jews*. He has been a Fellow of the Annenberg Research Institute, a Visiting Scholar at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Jerusalem, and a Visiting Professor at Yale University and Harvard University.

**Rabbi Dr. J. David Bleich**, Ph.D. is Rosh Yeshivah (Professor of Talmud) and Rosh Kollel, Kolel le-Hora‘ah (Director, Postgraduate Institute for Jurisprudence and Family Law), Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary; Professor of Law, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law; Tenzer Professor of Jewish Law and Ethics, Yeshiva University; Rabbi, The Yorkville Synagogue, New York City; has taught at the University of Pennsylvania, Hunter College, Rutgers University and Bar Ilan University; ordained, Mesivta Torah Vodaath; Graduate Talmudic Studies, Beth Medrash Elyon, Monsey, N.Y. and Kollel Kodshim of Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim of Radun; Yadin Yadin ordination; Doctor iuris, honoris causa, Humboldt University; Member, Order of the Coif; Woodrow Wilson Fellow; Post-Doctoral Fellow, Hastings Institute for Ethics, Society and the Life Sciences; Visiting Scholar, Oxford Center for Post-Graduate Hebrew Studies; Editor, Halakhah Department, Tradition; Contributing Editor, Sh’ma; Associate Editor, Cancer Investigation; Past Chairman, Committee on Medical Ethics, Federation of Jewish Philanthropies; Founding Chairman, Section on Jewish Law, Association of American Law Schools; Contributor, Encyclopedia of Bioethics; Fellow, Academy of Jewish Philosophy; Fellow, International Academy for the Study of the Jurisprudence of the Family; Member, Board of Directors, International Academy for the Study of the Jurisprudence of the Family; Member, New York State Task Force on Life and the Law; Past Chairman, Committee on Law, Rabbinical Alliance of America; Member, Executive Board, COLPA (National Jewish Commission on Law and Public Affairs); Member, Board of Directors, Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America; Member, National Academic Advisory Council of the Academy for Jewish Studies Without Walls; Member, Committee on Ethics, Hospital for Joint Diseases and Medical Center; Member, Bioethics Committee, Metropolitan Hospital; Author, *Contemporary Halakhic Problems* (6 vols.), *Be-Netivot ha-Halakhah* (4 vols.), *Bioethical Dilemmas* (2 vols.), *Judaism and Healing, The Philosophical Quest: Of Philosophy, Ethics, Law and Halakhah, Time of Death in Jewish Law*, Providence in the Philosophy of Gersonides and Bircas Ha-Chamnna; Editor, *With Perfect Faith: Readings in the Foundations of Jewish Belief*; Editor (with Fred Rosner), *Jewish Bioethics*; and has written extensively on topics of Jewish law and ethics in publications such as Ha-Ma‘yan, Ha-Ne‘eman, Or Ha-Mizrah, Ha-Pardes, Moriah, Shanah be-Shanah, Tehumin, Jewish Observer, Tradition, Sh’ma, Jewish Life, Judaism, Jewish Quarterly
Dr. Edward Reichman is a Professor of Emergency Medicine and Professor in the Division of Education and Bioethics at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University, where he teaches Jewish medical ethics. He received his rabbinic ordination from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University and writes and lectures internationally in the field of Jewish medical ethics. He is the recipient of a Kornfeld Foundation Fellowship, and has been a member of the advisory boards of the Institute for Genetics and Public Policy, the New York Organ Donor Network, the Halakhic Organ Donor Society, and the Rabbinical Council of America. He has been a mentor of the Medical Ethics Society of Yeshiva University since its inception. His research is devoted to the interface of medical history and Jewish law.

Dr. David Shatz is University Professor of Philosophy, Ethics, and Religious Thought at Yeshiva University. He is also editor of The Torah u-Madda Journal. After graduating as valedictorian of his class at Yeshiva University, Prof. Shatz received ordination at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary and then earned his Ph.D with distinction in general philosophy from Columbia University. He has edited, co-edited, or authored fifteen books and has published approximately eighty articles and reviews, dealing with both general and Jewish philosophy. His work in general philosophy focuses on the theory of knowledge, free will, ethics, and the philosophy of religion, while his work in Jewish philosophy focuses on Jewish ethics, Maimonides, Judaism and science, and twentieth century rabbinic thinkers. He also is editor of the MeOtzar HoRav series, which has brought into print many of the previously unpublished manuscripts of The Rav, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt”l.

Prof. Shatz has appeared on PBS television several times, and has been chosen numerous times as outstanding professor by the senior class of Stern College for Women. He is also a member of the Editorial Board of Tradition and the Steering Committee of the Orthodox Forum. In recognition of his achievements as a scholar and teacher, he was awarded the Presidential Medallion at Yeshiva University.