



Yeshiva University

THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL STRAUS CENTER FOR TORAH AND WESTERN THOUGHT

Maimonides and his Enemies: Syllabus

Semester: Spring 2022

Course Number: JPHI 1650H N [CRN: 62039]

Sessions Meet: T/Th (3—4:15 PM) [Location – TBD]

Instructor: Rabbi Dr. Dov Lerner (dov.lerner@yu.edu)

Course Overview

This semester we will explore the legacy of perhaps the most renowned and influential Jewish thinker in history: Maimonides. Over the first half of the course, we will examine his historical and intellectual context, and then survey his central works—attending to their central claims and innovations. The second half of our course will be devoted to the study of a series of thinkers—ranging from Nachmanides and Gersonides to Luzzatto—who opposed at least a portion of Maimonides' thought, and, through the lens of their critique, deepen our grasp of what's at stake in the Maimonidean imagination that shaped Judaism as we know it today.

Required Texts

For this course there are no materials that you will be required to purchase—all readings will be made available on canvas or are available online and will be linked or indicated on the canvas page.

Attendance and Participation

This class is a collaborative endeavor and depends for its success on your steady attendance and informed participation, so your final grade may well be swayed by the quality—in addition to the quantity—of your participation in class. Poor attendance (i.e., more than three absences during the term and/or frequently arriving late to class) will lower your final course grade noticeably.

Due Dates

Assignments must be turned in on the date and hour they are due unless an extension has been arranged in advance. If you anticipate needing an extension, please let me know well before the due date. Readings listed above a particular date are to be read for that date.

Please be aware of the University's *Academic Integrity Statement* as all students are expected to abide by it, and note the following two announcements:

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations should contact the Office of Disability Services, rkohn1@yu.edu during the first weeks of class. Once you have been approved for accommodations, please submit your accommodation letter and discuss any specifics with me to ensure the successful implementation of your accommodations.

Academic support is available to you if you are having any difficulties that could include the following but are not limited to these: understanding assignments, navigating research papers, issues with time management of your schedule and your life or general college adjustment, please make an appointment with Dr. Beth Hait. She is available Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9am - 6pm. To make an appointment, go to yu2.mywconline.com. Click on the arrow next to "Academic Advisement" and scroll down to "Student Academic Support".

Evaluation:

Attendance and Participation – 10%

Midterm – 35%

Final Assessment – 55%

Week 1: Overview

Readings: n/a

January 25th: Welcome and Overview

Readings: J. Kraemer, *Moses Maimonides: An Intellectual Portrait*

January 27th: Biography I

Week 2: Introduction I—Meeting Maimonides

Readings: J. Kraemer, *Moses Maimonides: An Intellectual Portrait*

February 1st: Biography II

Readings: P. Remes, *Neoplatonism (Introduction)*

February 3rd: Intellectual Context

Week 3: Commentary to the Mishna I

Readings: Maimonides, *Commentary to the Mishna* [selections on Canvas]

February 8th: COMMENTARY TO THE MISHNA—Purpose and Law

Readings: Maimonides, *Introduction to Sanhedrin Ch. 10* [selections on Canvas]

February 10th: COMMENTARY TO THE MISHNA II—Philosophy

Week 4: Commentary to the Mishna II and Sefer HaMitzvot

Readings: Maimonides, *Introduction to the Commentary to Avot* [selections on Canvas]

February 15th: COMMENTARY TO THE MISHNA III—Ethics

Readings: Maimonides, *Sefer HaMitzvot* [selections on Canvas]

February 17th: BOOK OF COMMANDMENTS—Root and Branch Reform

Week 5: Mishneh Torah I

Readings: Maimonides, *Book of Knowledge* [selections on Canvas]

February 22nd: MISHNEH TORAH I—Law and Philosophy I

Readings: Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* [selections on Canvas]

February 24th: MISHNEH TORAH II—Law and Philosophy II

Week 6: Mishneh Torah II

Readings: Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* [selections]

March 1st: MISHNEH TORAH III—Conceptual Halakha I

Readings: Maimonides, *Book of Judges* [selections]

March 3rd: MISHNEH TORAH IV—Conceptual Halakha II

Week 7: The Guide and the Writer

Readings: D. Frank, *Structure of the Guide*

March 8th: GUIDE OF THE PERPLEXED—Perspectives

Readings: Maimonides, *Letter to Yemen*

March 10th: Community and Consolation

Week 8: Letters II

Readings: Maimonides, *Letter to Obadiah*

March 15th: Being Jewish and Human

Readings: n/a

March 17th: PURIM

Week 9: Midterm, Mystics and Maimonides

Readings: ***MIDTERM***

March 22nd: ***MIDTERM***

Readings: Nachmanides [selections on Canvas]

March 24th: Nachmanides, Maimonides, and Mysticism

Week 10: Gersonides and Maimonides

Readings: Gersonides [selections on Canvas]

March 29th: Gersonides, Maimonides, and Miracles
Readings: Gersonides [selections on Canvas]

March 31st: Gersonides, Maimonides, and Politics

Week 11: Crescas and Maimonides

Readings: Crescas [selections on Canvas]

April 5th: Crescas, Maimonides, and Prophecy

Readings: Crescas [selections on Canvas]

April 7th: Crescas, Maimonides, and Free Will

Week 12: Modernity and Maimonides

Readings: Alan Nadler, “Rambam Revival”

April 12th: Modernity and Maimonides—Rambam Revival?

Readings: n/a

April 14th: *Pesach*

Week 13: Pesach

Week 14: Luzzatto and Maimonides

Readings: Luzzatto [selections on Canvas]

April 25th: Luzzatto, Maimonides, and Sympathy

Readings: Luzzatto [selections on Canvas]

April 26th: Luzzatto, Maimonides, and Community

Readings: **Guest Lecture**

April 28th: Wyschogrod, Maimonides, and the Bible (Rabbi Dr. Soloveichik)

Week 15: Presentations

Readings: n/a

May 3rd: Presentations I

Readings: n/a

May 5th: *Yom Ha'atzmaut*

Week 16: Maimonides' Legacy

Readings: n/a

May 10th: Presentations II

Readings: Menachem Kellner, “Maimonides’ Disputed Legacy”

May 12th: Overview

May 25th @ Midday: *Final Due*