



# Yeshiva University

## THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL STRAUS CENTER FOR TORAH AND WESTERN THOUGHT

### The Thought of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks: Syllabus

**Semester:** Spring 2022

**Course Number:** JTP 4930H – 231 [CRN: 62151]

**Sessions Meet:** M/W (3-4:15pm) [Location TBD]

**Instructor:** Rabbi Dr. Dov Lerner ([dov.lerner@yu.edu](mailto:dov.lerner@yu.edu))

#### *Course Overview*

The aim of this class is to explore the thought of perhaps the most renowned and influential teachers of Judaism at the start of the twenty-first century: the late Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. With such a wide-ranging and voluminous oeuvre, we will divide his thought into three distinct but intersecting fields—Theology, Ethics, and Politics—and read selections of his writing in those areas. We will cover parts of his *Reith Lectures*, *Covenant & Conversation*, *The Home We Build Together*, *To Heal a Fractured World*, *The Great Partnership*, *Not in God's Name*, and *Future Tense*, along with a number of smaller stand-alone essays—with an eye toward considering his sources and examining his central theses, while assessing his unique contribution toward the history of Jewish thought.

#### *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 reality—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 considerably.

### *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](mailto: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.mymvonline.com](http://yu2.mymvonline.com). Click on the arrow next to "Academic Advisement" and scroll down to "Student Academic Support".*

### **Evaluation:**

Attendance and Participation – 10%

Midterm – 30%

Class Presentation – 20%

Final – 40%

### **Week 1: Welcome**

Readings: n/a

**January 24<sup>th</sup>:** Welcome and Overview

Readings: *Alienation and Faith* (for Next time)

**January 26<sup>th</sup>:** Meeting Rabbi Sacks

### **Week 2: Introduction**

Readings: *Alienation and Faith* (as above)

**January 31<sup>st</sup>:** Setting the Stage

Readings: *Torah and Wisdom: Judaism and the World*

**February 2<sup>nd</sup>:** Source and Method

### **Week 3: Theology I—The Great Partnership**

Readings: *In Two Minds*

**February 7<sup>th</sup>:** Is and Ought

Readings: *Finding God; Why God?*

**February 9<sup>th</sup>:** Choice and Joy

### **Week 4: Theology II— Not in God's Name**

Readings: *Dualism*

**February 14<sup>th</sup>:** Monotheistic Dignity

Readings: *The Universality of Justice, The Particularity of Love*

**February 16<sup>th</sup>:** Biblical Peace

### **Week 5: Ethics I—To Heal a Fractured World Part 1**

Readings: *Faith as Protest*

**February 21<sup>st</sup>:** Evil and Ethics

Readings: *Charity as Justice*

**February 23<sup>rd</sup>:** Capital & Independence

### **Week 6: Ethics II—To Heal a Fractured World Part 2**

Readings: *Love as Deed*

**February 28<sup>th</sup>:** Attention & Identity

Readings: *Sanctifying the Name, Mending the World*

**March 2<sup>nd</sup>:** Example & Faith; Creed & Hope

### **Week 7: Ethics III—To Heal a Fractured World Part 3**

Readings: *Like a Single Soul*

**March 7<sup>th</sup>:** Connection & Solidarity

Readings: *The Kindness of Strangers*

**March 9<sup>th</sup>:** Connection & Presence

### **Week 8: Ethics IV—To Heal a Fractured World Part 4**

Readings: *Responsibility for Society*

**March 14<sup>th</sup>:** Beyond our Borders

Readings: n/a

**March 16<sup>th</sup>:** Ta'anit Esther

### **Week 9: Politics I—Reith Lectures Part 1**

Readings: **\*\*\*MIDTERM\*\*\***

**March 21<sup>st</sup>:** **\*\*\*MIDTERM\*\*\***

Readings: *The Environment of Faith; Numbers: Then and Now*

**March 23<sup>rd</sup>**: Achieving Freedom?

**Week 10: Politics II—Reith Lectures Part 2 & 3**

Readings: *The Demoralization of Discourse; The Social Animal (Exodus)*

**March 28<sup>th</sup>**: Between State and Self

Readings: *The Family; Family, Faith, Freedom (Genesis)*

**March 30<sup>th</sup>**: The Nuclear Option

**Week 11: Politics III—Reith Lectures Part 4, 5 & 6**

Readings: *Paradoxes of Pluralism; The Home We Build Together*

**April 4<sup>th</sup>**: The Common Good

Readings: *Fundamentalism; Community of Communities; Democracy and Religion*

**April 6<sup>th</sup>**: The Seat of Power

**Week 12:**

Readings: *Future Tense: The Voice of Hope in the Conversation of Humankind*

**April 11<sup>th</sup>**: The Unique Jewish Creed

Readings: *Guest Lecture – Dr Abe Socher*

**April 13<sup>th</sup>**: [REMOTE] Editing Rabbi Sacks

**Week 13: Pesach**

**Week 14: ‘Covenant and Conversation’**

Readings: n/a

~~**April 25<sup>th</sup>**: Thursday Schedule~~

Readings: Presentations

**April 27<sup>th</sup>**: Presentations

**Week 15: ‘Covenant and Conversation’**

Readings: Presentations

**May 2<sup>nd</sup>**: Presentations

Readings: Presentations

**May 4<sup>th</sup>**: Presentations

**Week 16: Looking Backwards and Forwards**

Readings: *Creativity and Innovation in Halakha*

**May 9<sup>th</sup>**: Halakha & History

Readings: Final Prep.

**May 11<sup>th</sup>**: An Ending without an Ending

**May 25<sup>th</sup> @ Midday**: *Final Assessment Due*