



Yeshiva University

THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL STRAUS  
CENTER FOR TORAH AND WESTERN THOUGHT

## ***Wholly Moses – in Art, Culture and Jewish Thought***

Yeshiva College / Spring 2018 / Friday, 10:00am – 12:30pm

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Co-Sponsored by The Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought & Yeshiva University Museum

### **Course Description**

No Hebrew biblical figure has exercised as much fascination throughout history as Moses. Prophet, leader, lawgiver, Moses is considered a precursor and model for the Pope and a revered figure within Christianity, Islam and the Abrahamic faiths. He has been a rich source of interpretation for writers, scholars and leaders across cultures, from Greek philosophers to America's founding fathers, and disciplines, from politics to psychoanalysis. Artists from the ancient period through the Renaissance and early modern artists, from Botticelli and Michelangelo to Rembrandt and Poussin, have found in the figure and story of Moses an unparalleled, multifaceted source of visual imagery and exegesis. For Jews, Moses is, arguably, the most important biblical figure – the person who led the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land and who received the Torah from God and gave it to the people of Israel. Moses is also a flashpoint of theological and philosophical debate. This interdisciplinary course explores the figure of Moses both within the context of art and visual culture and of theology and philosophy – in order to arrive at a richer understanding of Moses within history and world culture.

### **Course Structure**

This course is structured thematically and chronologically. We will analyze Moses according to key themes, such as Moses as a historical figure, Moses as an intermediary between God and mankind, Moses as a prophet, Moses as teacher; and we will trace the evolution of the perception and depiction of Moses in art from the ancient to modern periods. In each section of the course, we will explore a topic comparatively, from the vantage point of multiple cultures. Professors Soloveichik and Wisse, to participate together in all class meetings, will address the same issues from different perspectives within each class session. Students will be required to read primary sources (in translation) and will be called upon for at least one in-class or on-site presentation.

### **Cultures Over Time (CUOT)**

As a Core CUOT course, *Wholly Moses* will allow students to investigate the figure of Moses from various cultural vantage points over time. This course will enable students to:

- Understand the role of historical context in cultural production and the complex and multiple ways in which cultures evolve over time;
- Analyze the cultural artifacts of pre-twentieth century societies using multiple kinds of sources;
- Write and defend historically grounded theses using both primary and secondary materials.

### **Course Evaluation**

Weekly Readings and Discussion	20%
4 Critical Responses	40%
Class Presentation	15%
Paper on Work of Art and Contemporaneous Text	25%



## Topics and Class Schedule

### **January 26 (Week 1): Introduction; The Inter-disciplinary and Cross-cultural Study of Moses**

#### Readings:

- Passages from Hebrew Bible
- Selections from Sigmund Freud
- Selections from Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

#### Selected Images

### **February 2 (Week 2): “and the bush was not consumed” – Moses and the Voice of Divine Revelation**

#### Readings:

- *Midrash Rabbah*, selections
- Martin Buber, *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant*, 1958, selections.
- Jo Milgrom and Yoel Duman, “The Burning Bush – Moses’ call vision,” Visual Midrash from the Tali Education Fund.

#### Selected Images:

- *Moses and the Burning Bush*, icon from Monastery of St. Catherine, Sinai, 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> c.
- Dieric Bouts, *Moses and the Burning Bush*, 1460s
- Rembrandt van Rijn, *Moses at the Burning Bush* (drawing with pen & brush), 1650s
- Giovanni Antonio Guardi, *Moses and the Burning Bush*, 18<sup>th</sup> c.
- *Our Lady of the Burning Bush*, traditional icons of *Neopalimaya Kupina*, 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> c.

### **February 9 (Week 3): Moses in Post-Biblical Jewish & Hellenistic Literature & Art**

#### Readings:

- *Masechet Menachot*, selections
- Hayyim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Ravnitzky, *The Book of Legends (Sefer Ha-Aggadah): Legends from the Talmud and Midrash*, 1908-11, selections
- Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, selections
- Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus’s Interpretation of the Bible*, 1998, selections

#### Selected Images:

- *Dura-Europos Synagogue*, Syria, 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE
- *Paleo-Christian Sarcophagi*, 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries CE

### **February 16 (Week 4): Moses, Jesus and the Pope – Christian Typology and the Horns of Moses**

#### Readings:

- Description of Keren, Talmud, selections
- Ruth Mellinkoff, *The Horned Moses in Medieval Art and Thought*, 1970, selections
- Giselle de Nie, *Envisioning Experience in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, 2012, selections
- David Gelernter, *Judaism: A Way of Being*, 2010, selections



Selected Images:

- Images from *The Bury Bible*, 12<sup>th</sup> c., Parker Library at Corpus Christi College
- Claus Sluter, *The Well of Moses*, 1390s-1400s
- Sandro Botticelli, *The Life of Moses*, from Sistine Chapel, 1470s/1480s
- Moritz Daniel Oppenheim, *Moses with the Tablets of the Law*, 1818
- Marc Chagall, *Moses Receives the Ten Commandments*, 1950s-1960s

**February 23 (Week 5): The Birth and Death of Moses; The Finding of Moses and The Divine Kiss**

Readings:

- Jonathan Cohen, *The Origins and Evolution of the Moses Nativity Story*, 1993, selections
- Rella Kushelevsky, *Moses and the Angel of Death* (Studies on Themes and Motifs in Literature), 1995, selections

Selected Images:

- Paolo Veronese, *The Finding of Moses*, 1580s
- Jacopo Tintoretto, *The Finding of Moses*, 16<sup>th</sup> century
- Orazio Gentileschi, *The Finding of Moses*, 1630s
- Nicolas Poussin, *The Baby Moses Saved From The River*, 1650s
- Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *The Finding of Moses*, 1900s
- Nicolas Poussin, *The Infant Moses Trampling on Pharaoh's Crown*, 1640s and variations
- Nicolas Poussin, *The Conquest of Jerusalem by Titus*, 1630s

**March 2 (Week 6): Michelangelo's Moses and the Sistine Chapel**

Readings:

- Giorgio Vasari, "Michelangelo," from *Lives of the Artists*, 1550/1568, selections
- James M. Saslow, *The Poetry of Michelangelo: An Annotated Translation*, 1991, selections
- Sigmund Freud, "The Moses of Michelangelo," (1914), selections
- Leopold Ettlinger, *The Sistine Chapel before Michelangelo: Religious Imagery and Papal Primacy*, 1965, selections
- Carol Lewine, *The Sistine Chapel Walls and the Roman Liturgy*, 1993, selections

Selected Images:

- Michelangelo, *Moses*, San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome, 1510s
- Paintings from *Sistine Chapel*, 1460s/1470s

**March 9 (Week 7): Rembrandt's Moses**

Readings:

- Exodus, chapters 32-34
- Simon Schama, *Rembrandt's Eyes*, 1999, selections
- Christian Tümpel, *Rembrandt*, 2006, selections
- Shalom Sabar, "Between Calvinists and Jews: Hebrew Script in Rembrandt's Art," in: *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early European Modern Visual Culture*, ed. Mitchell B. Merback (2007), pp. 371-404, 559-73.



Selected Images:

- Rembrandt van Rijn, *Moses with the Ten Commandments*, 1650s
- Rembrandt van Rijn, *Hannah in the Temple*
- Ferdinand Bol, *Moses Descends from Mt. Sinai with the Ten Commandments*, 17<sup>th</sup> c.
- Philippe de Champaigne, *Moses with the Ten Commandments*, 1640s

**March 16 (Week 8): Politics & Law – Moses as Leader**

Readings:

- W. W. Davies, *The Codes of Hammurabi and Moses*, 2010, selections
- Winston Churchill, "Moses," in *Sunday Chronicle* (November 1931)

Selected Images:

- Anthony van Dyck, *Moses and the Brazen Serpent*, 1620s
- Nicolas Poussin, *Moses Striking Water from the Rock*, 1630s
- Guido Reni, *Moses with the Tablets of the Law*, 1620s
- Augustus John, *Moses and the Brazen Serpant*, 1890s
- Arthur Szyk, *Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh*, 20<sup>th</sup> century

**March 23 (Week 9): Moses in America**

Readings:

- *Letters from John Adams to Abigail Adams on Seal of United States*, 1776
- *Letter from George Washington to the Savannah, Ga., Hebrew Congregation*, 1790
- Bruce Feiler, *America's Prophet: Moses and the American Story*, 2009, selections
- Jenna Weissman Joselit, *Set in Stone: America's Embrace of the Ten Commandments*, 2017.

Selected Images:

- Emmanuel Leutze, *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, 1850s
- *Guardian of Liberty Pediment*, from Supreme Court, Washington, D.C.
- *Selection of Seals from American Universities*

**March 29 – April 8:** Pesach – no classes

**April 13 (Week 10): The Psychology and Literature of Moses**

Readings:

- Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 1939, selections
- Thomas Mann, *The Tables of the Law*, 1944, selections
- Sholem Asch, *Moses (A Novel)*, 1951, selections

**April 20 (Week 11): Moses on Film and Moses in the Modern World**

Readings:

- Henry S. Noerdlinger, *Moses and Egypt: The Documentation to the Motion Picture The Ten Commandments*, Introduction by Cecil B. Demille, 1956, selections
- Brian Britt, *Rewriting Moses: The Narrative Eclipse of the Text*, 2009, selections



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Selected Viewings:

- Cecile B. Demille's *The Ten Commandments*, 1923
- Cecile B. Demille's *The Ten Commandments*, 1956

**April 27 (Week 12): Student Presentations**