



**REL 343 / RLTS 730L: MODERN JEWISH THOUGHT:
ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL / MORDECAI M. KAPLAN**

Emory University

TTh 1:00 - 2:15 Fall 2000

Callaway, S 102 Wrt. Req.: yes

Instructor:

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Content:

Abraham Joshua Heschel and Mordecai Kaplan were, probably, the two most important Jewish religious thinkers of the twentieth century. Heschel tried to evolve a religious philosophy rooted in religious experience while Kaplan tried to evolve one rooted in reason and community. They, thus, embodied the perennial conflict of reason and feeling in religion. This course will study carefully the key works of each of these two thinkers, read critiques of their work, and consider the implications of each.

Texts:

Abraham J. Heschel, *God in Search of Man* [sic].

Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Meaning of God in Jewish Religion*.

David R. Blumenthal, *Facing the Abusing God: A Theology of Protest*

Arthur Green, *Seek My Face; Speak My Name*

Recommended:

Abraham J. Heschel, *Who Is Man?* [sic].

Mordecai M. Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization*.

Reserve:

Abraham J. Heschel, *The Insecurity of Freedom*.

"Reflections on Death."

"No Religion is an Island."

"The Moral Outrage of Vietnam"

S. Heschel, "My Father: Abraham Joshua Heschel"

Heschel critical articles:

D. Blumenthal, "The Inadequacy of the Ecumenical Response"

D. Blumenthal, review of Heschel's *Maimonides*.

E. Berkovits, "Dr. A. J. Heschel's Theology of Pathos"

A. Cohen, "The Rhetoric of Faith"

W. Kaufman, "Beyond the Meaning of Mystery"

Mordecai M. Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization*.

Questions Jews Ask.

The New Haggadah.

Kol Ha-Neshamah.

"Introduction to *The Sabbath Prayerbook*"

D. Blumenthal, "Mordecai M. Kaplan as a Rationalist Mystic"

Kaplan critical articles:

"A Declaration about Dr. Kaplan's Siddur"

E. Borowitz, "The Limits of Naturalism"

A. Cohen, "Mordecai M. Kaplan"

E. Berkovits, "Reconstructionist Theology"

Particulars:

We will read the assigned texts carefully. For this, we will use the "study partner" system.

Students will be expected to compile a comprehensive critical bibliography and to report on additional works by each author or on critiques thereof.

At the end of each unit, we will summarize in writing and also respond personally to each of the theologies we have studied. Guidelines on how to do these will be handed out.

Grading will be based on class participation and a final paper.

Students will need to create two computer files called Heschel and Kaplan. We will put in them: your biographical sketches, your critical bibliographies, your summaries, and your critiques. You can also include your personal responses to the authors and even a file of "quotable quotes." This will give you complete Heschel and Kaplan files for the future.

SYLLABUS

Introduction -- 8/31

Abraham Joshua Heschel

Language and Religious Experience -- 9/5,7

God in Search of Man, Part One

Texts and Religious Experience -- 9/12,14

God in Search of Man, Part Two

Deeds and Religious Experience -- 9/19,21

God in Search of Man, Part Three

Theology in Real Life -- 9/26,28

The Insecurity of Freedom

"Reflections on Death."

"No Religion is an Island."

"The Moral Outrage of Vietnam"

student reports on other works by Heschel -- 10/3,5

critiques of Heschel's work --10/10,12

S. Heschel, "My Father: Abraham Joshua Heschel"

D. Blumenthal, "The Inadequacy of the Ecumenical Response"

D. Blumenthal, review of Heschel's *Maimonides*.

E. Berkovits, "Dr. A.J. Heschel's Theology of Pathos"

A. Cohen, "The Rhetoric of Faith"

W. Kaufman, "Beyond the Meaning of Mystery"

(10/17 -- no class; fall break)

open session -- 10/19

hand in summary of Heschel as well as personal response

Mordecai M. Kaplan

The Challenges to Judaism from Modernity -- 10/24,26

Judaism as a Civilization, 19-27, 36-46.

Questions Jews Ask, (as relevant).

The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion, 17-20.

Judaism is a Civilization -- 10/31; 11/2

Judaism as a Civilization, 389-91, 186-208 (skim).

Questions Jews Ask, (as relevant).

Repercussions for Faith and Liturgy -- 11/7,9

"Introduction to *The Sabbath Prayerbook*"

Questions Jews Ask, (as relevant).

The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion, 25-29, 43-57, 106-19, 134-35, 244-64.

"Mordecai M. Kaplan as a Rationalist Mystic."

student reports on *Kol Ha-Neshamah* --11/14,16

(11/23 -- no class; Thanksgiving Day)

critiques of Kaplan's work -- 11/24,28

"A Declaration about Dr. Kaplan's Siddur"

E. Borowitz, "The Limits of Naturalism"

A. Cohen, "Mordecai M. Kaplan"

E. Berkovits, "Reconstructionist Theology"

open session -- 11/30

hand in summary of Kaplan as well as personal response

Disciples

Arthur Green -- 12/5
Seek My Face; Speak My Name

David R. Blumenthal -- 12/7
Facing the Abusing God: A Theology of Protest

Conclusion -- 12/12

Final paper due -- Friday, Dec. 15, 4:30, Department of Religion office.
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GUIDELINES FOR CRITICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Use the Emory data bases.

Use the Web.

Find and give the call number of the two major indexes of Jewish materials.
Thoroughness counts.

Divide your bibliography into the following parts:

books by ...

books co-authored by ...

articles by ...

anthologies of the works of ...

books about ...

articles about ...

books critical of ...

articles critical of ...

GUIDELINES

HESCHEL SUMMARY AND PERSONAL RESPONSE

I. A complete summary of Heschel would include the following:

The ineffable

what it is

relationship to divine pathos

definition of faith

definition of spiritual knowledge

Revelation

what it is for God, what it is for humanity

relationship of revelation to the text of the Bible

Deeds (using *Search* and *Insecurity*)

kavvana -- what it is, relationship to ritual
social justice

A few words of critique of Heschel.

II. Write three or four paragraphs, using the guidelines for the short reflection paper.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SHORT REFLECTION PAPER

The purpose of this paper is to give you time to absorb and reflect on **what** you have learned and **how** you are learning.

There are two questions; please answer **both**. It is possible that a strong poem or other response could answer one or both of these questions indirectly.

There is no "correct answer" for this reflection paper; only my sense of how thoughtfully you deal with the issues.

(1) The material and I:

(a) What was my purpose in taking this course? Am I achieving that purpose?

(b) How did my past experience, values, and culture shape the way I perceived this material? How has the material changed my perception of myself and my culture? Or: How did studying this material heighten my awareness of my assumptions, perceptions, and positions? How did it affect them?

(c) What was the most emotionally or spiritually difficult part of this material? What was the part I was most in sympathy with?

(2) The class and I:

(a) How am I relating to my study partner? Am I contributing to the study session all I could?

(b) With which of my fellow students do I agree? With whom do I disagree? Are there any non-intellectual, personal dimensions to this agreement / disagreement? Have I spoken to them on the subject?

(c) Have I met with someone outside the class to discuss this material? How did that discussion go?

GUIDELINES

KAPLAN SUMMARY AND PERSONAL RESPONSE

I. A complete summary of Kaplan would include the following:

- (1) Kaplan's definition of modernity, including science, history, democracy, freedom, and humanism.
- (2) A discussion of the main effects of the ideas of modernity on pre-modern, classic Judaism, especially in the areas of hierarchy and authority, and the traditional doctrines of God, Torah, chosenness, messiah, and redemption.
- (3) Identify the following Kaplanian terms: folkways, sancta, transnaturalism, supernaturalism, evolving religious civilization, culture, revaluation, salvation, Power / Spirit that makes for salvation, biculturalism, and a vote but not a veto.
- (4) A word about Kaplan's "philosophic mysticism" / spirituality experientialism + a word about the Reconstructionist movement.
- (5) A few words of critique of Kaplan.

II. Write three or four paragraphs, using the guidelines for the short reflection paper.