



## REL 461: War in the Jewish Tradition

Fall 2016, MW 3:35–5:15  
Spence Pavilion, Room 101

Instructor: Geoffrey Claussen  
Office: Spence Pavilion 214

Office Hours: M 10:15-11:15, W 1:30-2:30, F 10:15-11:15, and by appointment  
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This course will explore classical and contemporary Jewish views on the morality of warfare. We will take a historical approach, considering ancient and medieval texts about war in their original contexts, and then giving particular attention to modern Jewish thinking in various contexts, often critically considering how diverse modern Jews have made use of earlier Jewish traditions as they have formed their judgments about the morality of war.

As a 400-level Religious Studies seminar, this course uses the format of a graduate-school seminar—especially in that it is a reading-intensive, discussion-focused class. It is also an advanced class in that it requires at least one prior college course in Religious Studies. The course will offer you a wonderful opportunity to think deeply about difficult and important subjects with a small (and wonderful!) group of advanced students.

By the end of the course, you will:

- become familiar with the **diversity** of Jewish thought regarding the morality of war.
- be able to carefully and critically read pre-modern Jewish **texts** and analyze how those texts are deployed by later interpreters.
- recognize the ways in which Jewish perspectives on war have been shaped by diverse cultural and political **contexts**.
- analyze how Jewish discourse about war has functioned in structuring diverse Jewish **identities** and in furthering diverse **political agendas**.
- synthesize course materials and sources to generate insightful observations and reach substantial **conclusions** about war in the Jewish tradition.
- think deeply about how what we learn in this course can help us be—in the words of Elon’s mission statement—“global citizens and informed leaders motivated by concern for the **common good**.”

## VIRTUES TO BRING TO CLASS

Some important qualities for the study of a religious/moral/cultural/political tradition like the Jewish tradition include:

- **empathy** that seeks to understand what others were/are trying to communicate
- **open-mindedness** and **honesty** about your own prejudices
- **critical-mindedness**, questioning the assumptions that others were/are making

Throughout this course, we will often think critically about the attitudes of other people; at the same time, we will also think critically about our own attitudes towards war, politics, religion, and identity. I hope that you will be enriched by the serious reflection that the course will encourage.

Please also make sure that you are upholding the values of Elon's honor code:

- **HONESTY**: Be truthful in your academic work and in your relationships.
- **INTEGRITY**: Be trustworthy, fair and ethical.
- **RESPONSIBILITY**: Be accountable for your actions and your learning.
- **RESPECT**: Be civil. Value the dignity of each person. Honor the physical and intellectual property of others.

## READINGS TO BRING TO CLASS

You are required to have hard copies of five books for this course:

- Berlin, Adele, and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. *The Jewish Study Bible*, 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004/2014.
- Eisen, Robert. *The Peace and Violence of Judaism: From the Bible to Modern Zionism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Firestone, Reuven. *Holy War in Judaism: The Fall and Rise of a Controversial Idea*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Niditch, Susan. *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Saperstein, Marc. *Jewish Preaching in Times of War, 1800-2001*. Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008.

Other items on the syllabus, marked with an <sup>(M)</sup> symbol, are available on Moodle. Please make sure that you bring **printed** copies of the assigned readings to class on the day on which they are due.

As you prepare for class, you may also wish to consult additional sources that will help you understand the historical context for the events and ideas that we are considering. I especially recommend Raymond Scheindlin's *A Short History of the Jewish People* for a guide to Jewish history, and Oxford University Press's online *Dictionary of Contemporary World History* for background information regarding the various modern wars that we'll be encountering in this class.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The major requirements for this class are that you read for each class and post on our class blog before class, that you are present in class and actively participate in discussion, and that you complete a short article review and then a longer, cumulative paper. Your grade will depend on these factors:

25% **Engagement/Participation:** As this class is a small seminar, your preparation and attendance is even more important than it is in other sorts of courses. The quality of the class will depend on the degree to which you take responsibility for participating in and engaging with the course.

A	=	93 – 100
A-	=	90 – 93
B+	=	87 – 90
B	=	83 – 87
B-	=	80 – 83
C+	=	77 – 80
C	=	73 – 77
C-	=	70 – 73
D+	=	67 – 70
D	=	63 – 67
D-	=	60 – 63
F	=	below 60

You are required to attend every class, to arrive on time with your reading completed and printed out, to listen attentively to others and contribute thoughtfully to class discussions. You will also be responsible for leading at least some portion of some discussion during the semester. And please do keep computers, cell phones, and other devices off (and stored away) during our class discussion time.

If you do miss class for whatever reason, you will need to upload notes to our course Moodle site (“Notes from Missed Classes”). Your upload should include your notes on the reading, plus notes that you’ve received from a classmate who was present in class.

While your grade will be affected by any unexcused absences, your grade will begin to suffer in particularly dramatic ways if you miss more than two classes without official documentation (e.g. notes from Health Services, athletic teams, or [Religious Observance Notification Forms](#)). Each undocumented absence after 2 will result in your final *course* grade being reduced by five points (e.g., if your final course grade is an 84 and you have three undocumented absences, you’ll end up with a 79 for the course).

We will also have one brief quiz on the reading on pre-modern Judaism during the first part of the semester. This quiz will be factored into your engagement/participation grade.

20% **Posting on our Class Blog:** before each class, you are required to post a minimum-250-word reflection in response to the reading due that day. The post is due by **1:30 pm** on the day that the reading is due. You can take one “pass” during the semester and skip posting for that day and still receive a 100% for this portion of your grade. Beyond that, you will receive a “0” for that day if you don’t post before class. You will receive full credit so long as you’ve reached 250 words and engaged in some reflection about the reading. Rather than just summarizing what you’ve read, you should analyze, interpret, or raise thoughtful questions about some aspect of the reading(s).

- 10% **Article/chapter review:** on 11/28, you will be required to submit and present to the class a 1000-1200 word paper which explores some academic writing (an academic article, or chapter[s] in an academic book) that analyzes how some modern Jews have thought about the morality of war. Your review will summarize the main points in what you have read and will analyze them by bringing them into dialogue with other ideas that we have encountered in our course. I will recommend some books and articles for this project and ask you to let me know your proposed topic by 11/14.
- 40% **Final paper:** your final project for this class will be an approximately-5000-word paper regarding the past, present, and future of attitudes towards war in the Jewish tradition. The bulk of your paper will defend a thesis that you develop regarding the nature and significance of how war has historically been viewed within the tradition. You will need to demonstrate, above all, your grasp of the learning objectives listed on the first page of this syllabus. Though most of the paper will be focused on analyzing the tradition as it has developed, I will also ask you to devote some space in your conclusion to reflecting on how you think that Jewish communities might best deal with the legacy of the texts and traditions that we will be considering during the semester.

This paper will draw primarily on the readings required for the class, including the individually-chosen reading that you present to the class in November, as well as on your class notes and blog posts. You may engage in outside research to help you with this paper, but the bulk of your citations should be to the readings from the syllabus. The strongest papers will show significant engagement with a wide range of the readings that we've done over the course of the semester, drawing on diverse Jewish perspectives. Keeping good notes throughout the semester on your ideas—and writing down your ideas in your blog posts throughout the semester—will be tremendously helpful for this project.

## DISABILITY POLICY

If you are a student with a documented disability who will require accommodations in order to fully participate in this course, please contact Disabilities Services in the Duke Building, Room 108 (278-6500), for assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

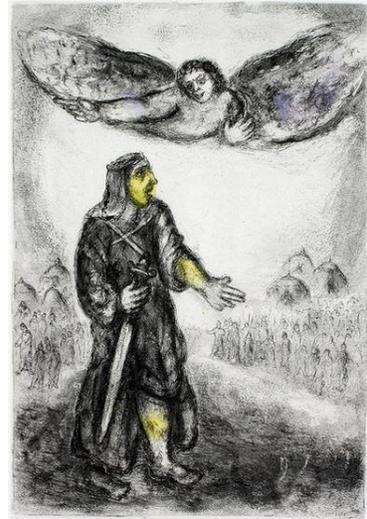
*Readings and assignments are due on the day for which they are listed.*

*Note that Biblical sources are listed by chapter, and often by chapter:verse (a colon separates chapter and verses). Judges 19-21 means the Book of Judges, Chapter 19 through the end of Chapter 21. 2 Kings 3:21-27 means The Second Book of Kings Chapter 3, verse 21 through verse 27.*

*You should always use the Jewish Study Bible for reading Biblical passages, though you're welcome—and encouraged—to compare this translation with other translations.*

**8/31 (Wed.), class #1: War as Human Sacrifice  
(8<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE)**

- Genesis 22
- Numbers 21:1-3
- Joshua 1, 6
- Judges 11
- 1 Kings 20
- 2 Kings 3:21-27
- Isaiah 34:1-8
- Micah 4:1-13



**9/5 (Mon.), class #2: War for Justice and Purity  
(8<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE)**

- Susan Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 28-89
- Deuteronomic sources:
  - Deuteronomy 6:4-7:26, 10:19, 13:13-19, 17:14-20, 20:1-21:14
  - Deuteronomy 25:17-19 (compare Exodus 17:8-16)
  - Joshua 7:1-8:29, 10-11
  - Judges 19-21
  - 1 Samuel 8, 15, 22:6-19
  - 2 Kings 10:1-31
- Priestly Sources:
  - Genesis 1:26-27
  - Leviticus 19:33-34
  - Numbers 25, 31



**9/7 (Wed.), class #3: War Between Siblings in the Bible**

- Robert Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, pp. vii-33
- Regina Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain*, pp. 1-4, 77-83<sup>(M)</sup>
- Genesis 4:1-4:15, 12:1-7, 15:13-16, 25:19-34, 27:1-46, 32:23-33:15, 36:6-9
- Jeremiah 49:7-22
- Isaiah 63:1-6
- Obadiah 1
- Malachi 1:1-5
- Exodus 32:1-29 (focus on verses 25-29)



**9/12 (Mon.), class #4: Heroism, Tricksterism, and Expediency**

- Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 90-132
- Gen. 14:1-15:1, 34, 49:5-7
- Judges 3:12-8:28, 14-16
- 1 Samuel 17-18, 30:21-31
- 2 Samuel 2:12-32, 8:1-2, 11-12
- Esther 3, 7:1-9:16



**9/14 (Wed.), class #5: Peace in the Bible**

- Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible*, pp. 132-155
- Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, pp. 34-64
- Exodus 12:29-36, 14:1-15:20, 22:21
- Genesis 18:17-32, 49:5-7
- Isaiah 1-2, 5, 11
- Amos 1-2, 9:7
- Ezekiel 38-39



**9/16 (Fri.), class #6: From the Bible to the Rabbis  
(2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE – 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE)**

- Reuven Firestone, *Holy War in Judaism*, pp. vii-ix, 26-63
- 1 Maccabees 1:1-5:3 <sup>(M)</sup>
- Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13.9.1 <sup>(M)</sup>
- James Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible* (on Esau), pp. 352-359, 369-372 <sup>(M)</sup>



**9/19 (Mon.), class #7: War in Rabbinic Judaism (3<sup>rd</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>  
centuries CE)**

- Firestone, *Holy War in Judaism*, pp. 67-107
- Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, pp. 65-97
- Selected classical rabbinic texts on war <sup>(M)</sup>

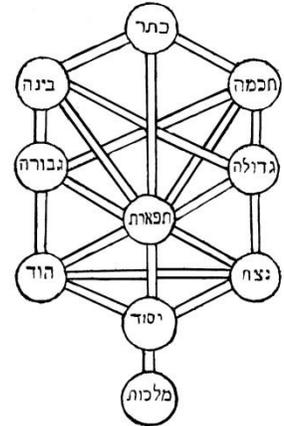


**9/21 (Wed.), class #8: War in Medieval Jewish Philosophy  
(12<sup>th</sup> century CE)**

- Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, pp. 97-128
- Firestone, *Holy War in Judaism*, pp. 108-126
- Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, selections from “The Laws of Kings and their Wars” <sup>(M)</sup>

**9/26 (Mon.), class #9: War in Medieval Kabbalah (13<sup>th</sup> century CE)**

- Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, pp. 129-139
- Firestone, *Holy War in Judaism*, pp. 127-138
- *Zohar* II 7b-8b, 57b <sup>(M)</sup>
- **Quiz on war in pre-modern Judaism**



**9/28 (Wed.), class #10: The American Civil War (1863-4)**

- Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching in Times of War*, pp. 64-70, 142-176, 192-221

**9/29 (Thurs.), 7 pm: Evening lecture by Amy-Jill Levine:**

**“Agreeing to Disagree: How Jews and Christians Read Scripture Differently”**

**10/3 (Mon.) – NO CLASS (Rosh Hashanah)**

**10/5 (Wed.), class #11: The Franco-Prussian War, Spanish-American War, and Second Boer War (1870-1899)**

- Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching in Times of War*, pp. 222-224, 235-258, 261-269, 284-295
- Kaufman Kohler, “God's Ultimatum to Spain” <sup>(M)</sup>
- Solomon Solis-Cohen, “An Unholy War” <sup>(M)</sup>
- Morris Joseph, “War” <sup>(M)</sup>



**10/10 (Mon.), class #12: World War I (1914-1918)**

- Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching in Times of War*, pp. 299-316, 324-345, 375-386
- Abraham Cahan, “This Is Not a War, But a Series of Pogroms” <sup>(M)</sup>
- Derek Penslar, *Jews and the Military*, pp. 152-3 <sup>(M)</sup>
- Brian Orend, “War” (*a bit of moral theory to help us think about wars between modern nation states*) <sup>(M)</sup>



**10/12 (Wed.) – NO CLASS (Yom Kippur)**

**10/13 (Thurs.) – Midterm Self-Assessment Due**

**10/17 (Mon.) – NO CLASS (Fall Break)**

**10/19 (Wed.), class #13: Early Religious Zionisms, Non-Zionisms, and Anti-Zionisms (late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries)**

- Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, pp. 141-150, 186-189
- Firestone, *Holy War in Judaism*, 141-178
- Abraham Isaac Kook, “The War”<sup>(M)</sup>
- Abraham Samuel Tamaret, “Zionism and Judaism”<sup>(M)</sup>
- Abraham Samuel Tamaret, “Passover and Non-Violence”<sup>(M)</sup>



**10/24 (Mon.) - NO CLASS (Shemini Atzeret)**

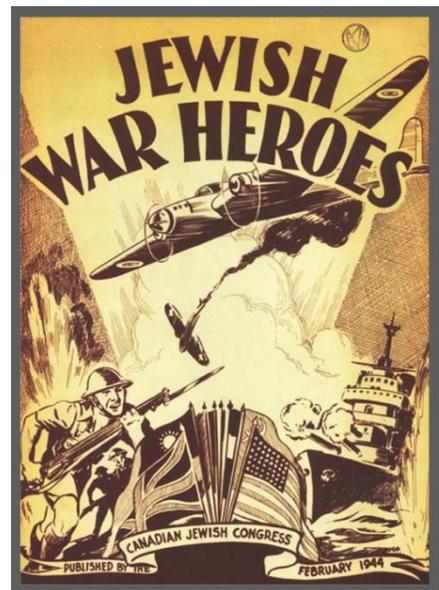
**10/26 (Wed.), class #14: “Secular” Zionisms (1900-1943)**

- Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, pp. 160-162, 167-180, 192-203<sup>(M)</sup>
- Firestone, *Holy War in Judaism*, 179-200<sup>(M)</sup>
- Anita Shapira, excerpts from *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force*<sup>(M)</sup>
- Ehud Luz, excerpts from *Wrestling with An Angel: Power, Morality, and Jewish Identity*<sup>(M)</sup>
- Avraham Stern, “18 Principles of Rebirth”<sup>(M)</sup>
- Natan Hofshi, “Selections on the Threat of War”<sup>(M)</sup>
- Martin Buber, excerpt from “A Letter to Gandhi”<sup>(M)</sup>



**10/31 (Mon.), class #15: World War II (1939-1945)**

- Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching in Times of War*, pp. 389-405, 441-470
- Aviezer Ravitzky, excerpts from *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*<sup>(M)</sup>
- Yoram Lubling, excerpt from *Twice-Dead: Moshe Y. Lubling, the Ethics of Memory, and the Treblinka Revolt*<sup>(M)</sup>



**11/2 (Wed.), class #16, The Israeli War of Independence and its Aftermath (1948-1967)**

- Firestone, *Holy War in Judaism*, pp. 201-247
- Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, pp. 163-167, 180-183, 190
- Menachem Begin, *Revolt: Story of the Irgun*, pp. 38-43 <sup>(M)</sup>
- Yeshayahu Leibowitz, “After Kibiyeh” <sup>(M)</sup>
- Martin Buber, “Samuel and Agag” <sup>(M)</sup>



**11/3 (Thurs.), 7 pm, Film Screening:**  
*Rabin: In His Own Words* (2015)

**11/7 (Mon.), class #17: Post-WWII America and the Vietnam War (1949-1968)**

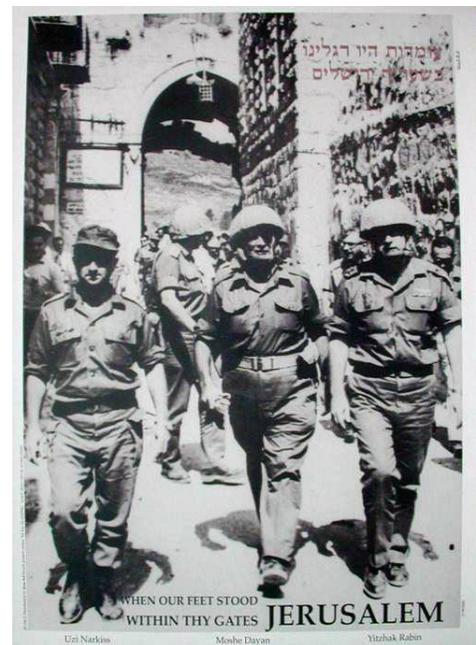
- *Skim* Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching in Times of War*, pp. 481-500; **read** pp. 500-507
- Ed Feder, “The Jew as Conscientious Objector” <sup>(M)</sup>
- Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man*, pp. 268-276 <sup>(M)</sup>
- Abraham Joshua Heschel, selections from *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity* (and from the introduction by Susannah Heschel) <sup>(M)</sup>
- Abraham Joshua Heschel, speech at Riverside church on the war in Vietnam <sup>(M)</sup>
- Reuven Kimelman, “Nonviolence in the Talmud” <sup>(M)</sup>



**11/9 (Wed.), class #18, The Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War (1967-1978)**

- Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, pp. 150-152, 183-191
- Firestone, *Holy War in Judaism*, pp. 248-305

**11/10 (Thurs.), 7 pm, Film Screening:**  
*Censored Voices* (2015)



**11/14 (Mon.), class #19: Jewish Terrorism in Israel (1978-2014)**

- Firestone, *Holy War in Judaism*, pp. 305-324
- Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, pp. 152-160
- Meir Kahane, selections from *The Jewish Idea* <sup>(M)</sup>
- Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger, *Jewish Terrorism in Israel*, pp. 82-86 <sup>(M)</sup>
- Geoffrey Claussen, “Pinhas, the Quest for Purity, and the Dangers of *Tikkun Olam*” <sup>(M)</sup>
- **Proposed Topic for Article/Book Chapter Review Due Today**



**11/16 (Wed.), class #20: American Jewish Perspectives in a Nuclear Age (1980s)**

- Bradley Artson, *Love Peace and Pursue Peace* (selections) <sup>(M)</sup>
- Sheila Peltz Weinberg, “Judaism, Feminism, and Peace in the Nuclear Age” <sup>(M)</sup>
- Michael Broyde, “The Bounds of Wartime Military Conduct In Jewish Law,” pp.29-31 <sup>(M)</sup>



**11/21-11/25 – NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)**

**11/28 (Mon.), class #21: Student Presentations**

- **Article/Book Chapter Reviews Due Today**

**11/30 (Wed.), class #22: Wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Israel (2001-2004)**

- Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching in Times of War*, pp. 529-541
- Meir Soloveitchik, “The Virtue of Hate,” with responses <sup>(M)</sup>
- Marc Gopin, “Judaism and Peacebuilding” <sup>(M)</sup>
- Marc Ellis, *Israel and Palestine Out of the Ashes*, pp. 69-73 <sup>(M)</sup>
- Lynn Gottlieb, selection from *Trail Guide to the Torah of Nonviolence* <sup>(M)</sup>
- Michael Broyde, “The Bounds of Wartime Military Conduct In Jewish Law,” pp. 35-42 <sup>(M)</sup>



**12/1 (Thurs.), 7 pm: Film Screening:  
*The Gatekeepers* (2012)**

**12/5 (Mon.), class #23: The Israel-Palestinian Conflict Today**

- Reading TBA

**12/7 (Wed.), class #24: Conclusions**

- Eisen, *The Peace and Violence of Judaism*, pp. 205-238
- Geoffrey Claussen, “A Jewish Perspective on War, Scripture, and Moral Accounting” <sup>(M)</sup>



**12/15 (Thurs.), 1:00 pm: Final papers due at the start of our scheduled exam time**

