

CJS401 H1F 2014
Community and Identity: Jewish Social Philosophy in Theory and Action
Monday, 2pm – 4pm
Jackman Humanities Building 235

INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Sol Goldberg

sol.goldberg@utoronto.ca

Office hour: Thursday 1pm-2pm

Office: Jackman Humanities Building 218b (located in the Centre for Jewish Studies)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is the relationship between Jewish ethics as an academic discipline and Jewish ethics as embodied in the practices of those who work in or for Toronto's own Jewish community? This question recalls a famous Talmudic debate over whether Torah study or good deeds should be prioritized. Although the rabbis' resolution ranks study highest, their reasoning emphasizes deeds: learning is more important than doing because learning leads to doing, and indeed to doing in the right way. The core insight here appears to be that, while action not guided by study is blind, study which does not result in action is empty.

This course intends to avoid both potential pitfalls by bridging the world of study to the world of action. Students will take up positions within organizations or agencies that in one way or another define themselves as being Jewish, while also contemplating how different parts of the Toronto Jewish community interpret, both explicitly and implicitly, "being Jewish" in the light of key works from the tradition of Jewish social philosophy. By combining philosophical analysis, personal reflection, and social engagement, the course offers students an opportunity not only to develop professional skills and explore career paths, but also to understand better and imagine differently the individual and collective possibilities of Jewish community and identity.

EVALUATION

Class Participation (10%)

- You are expected to have the assigned readings with you in every class. The amount of weekly reading in the course is not insubstantial. Although it might not be possible to study in detail for every class all of the assigned texts, the expectation is that students will do their best to be basically familiar with them. Our time together in class will involve a great deal of discussion and dialogue, and these will be more productive for everyone the better all of us have prepared for them.

Placement Performance (5%)

- The service-learning component of the course requires you to contribute to an organization within the Jewish community. You'll spend on average two hours a week in your placement, which is a real-world work experience. You are expected to demonstrate professionalism, which consists of punctuality; self-presentation; reliability; respect; and impact. Since these are skills that the course intends to help you learn and develop, your demonstration of them will be assessed.

Keywords (15%)

- Language is at once the lens through which perceive the world and a tool we use to reshape it. Paying attention to and reflecting on our linguistic practices is thus a crucial aspect of learning. Every week you are required to distribute to everyone in the class a very brief (75-100 words) discussion of a concept or term (mitzvah, mensch, tikkun olam, etc.) that struck you as interesting and significant when it came up in class, in an assigned text, or in a service-learning placement.

Reflective Practice (15% = 5% x 3)

- Answers the following questions: 1. What? (Report objectively an experience in your placement); 2. So what? (Analyze and explain the experience's significance); 3. Now What?(Consider the future impact of the experience on you and on others)
- Due dates: End of October; before the second semester; and end of February

"Commentaries"(25% = 5% x 5)

- The tradition of Jewish thought has developed above all by means of "commentary," which is the process of using existing sources to think through contemporary issues. As the newest participants in this tradition, you'll write six,500-word commentaries (three each semester) that respond to the texts we've discussed in class. You are invited, but not required, to incorporate your service-learning experiences in your commentaries.

Final Essay (30%)

- 3000-4000 words combining – in accordance with the topic – personal reflection, textual commentary, and policy statement

TRANSPARENCY & ON-GOING STUDENT INPUT

Students, I believe, have the right to inquire about the pedagogical methods and objectives adopted in the course. Although students should not expect everything in the course to be exactly as they would wish, they are entitled to justifications for why I have decided to do things one way rather than another. So please ask at any point during the semester if you are not clear about the purpose or value of a topic, text, or assignment. It is the responsibility of a teacher to accommodate as many learning styles as possible. But this responsibility assumes that students make known their difficulties as soon as they arise.

EMAIL POLICY

I try to answer emails as quickly as possible. But bear in mind that I am not always online and that the quantity of emails which I receive is greater at some points in the semester than at others. This is to say: please don't be surprised if I don't immediately reply to all of your emails. Expect an answer within 48 hours, especially if the issue can be handled quickly over email. If you anticipate that an issue requires a discussion (e.g., questions about your essay or an assignment), then it is best to make an appointment to meet with me in person since more involved issues will not be addressed through email exchanges.

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Students with diverse needs are welcome in this course. Please contact the Accessibility Centre (<http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>) for needs assessment, referrals and arrangements. The instructors will be glad to provide whatever assistance is necessary.

PLAGIARISM

From the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters:

"It shall be an offence for a student knowingly:

To represent as one's own any idea or expression of an idea or work of another in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work, i.e. to commit plagiarism. Wherever in the Code an offence is described as depending on 'knowing,' the offence shall likewise be deemed to have been committed if the person ought reasonably to have known."

CLASSROOM CONDUCT

Please switch off cell-phones before class; do not talk to your classmates during class; use laptops only for taking notes. Distraction of other students is unacceptable.

TEXTS

The weekly readings will come primarily from *The Jewish Political Tradition: Volume 1: Authority* and *The Jewish Political Tradition: Volume 2: Membership*, both of which are edited by Michael Walzer, Menachem Lorberbaum, No'am Zohar, and Yair Lorberbaum. Our course will also make use of the publications available online at The Berman Jewish Policy Archive (<http://www.bjpa.org/>). Managed by NYU's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, the BJPA is the central electronic address for Jewish communal policy and offers a vast collection of policy-relevant research and analysis on Jewish life to the public, free of charge, with holdings spanning from 1900 until today.

SEMINAR SCHEDULE

<i>Fall</i>		<i>Winter</i>	
09/08	Learning by doing and by discussing (includes presentation by J. Esmail & R. Wolfe, UofT Centre for Community Partnerships)	01/05	"Election" I
		01/12	"Election" II
		01/19	"Social Hierarchy"
09/15	Public policy out of Jewish sources (includes presentation by J. Turner, UofT Career Centre)	01/26	"Gender Hierarchy" I
		02/02	"Gender Hierarchy" II
		02/09	"Converts" I
09/22	"Covenant: God's law and people's consent"	02/23	"Converts" II
09/29	"Revelation: Torah and reason"	03/02	"Heretics and Apostates" I
10/6	"Kings"	03/09	"Heretics and Apostates" II
10/20	"Priests"	03/16	"Heretics and Apostates" III
10/27	"Prophets"	03/23	"Gentiles" I
11/03	"Rabbis and sages"	03/23	"Gentiles" II
11/10	"Controversy and dissent"		
11/24	"The good men of the town"		
12/01	"The gentile state"		