# Course Information

## Instructor Information

**Instructor:** Matthew Kaufman  
**Office:** C-727 Wells Hall  
**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 1:30-3:30 pm or by appointment  
**Office Telephone:** (517) 432-7227  
**E-mail:** kaufm148@msu.edu

## Course Location

**Where:** A-202 Wells Hall

**When:** Tuesdays 4:10 – 7 pm

## Course Description

This seminar surveys the key issues and figures in the field of the philosophy of Judaism from the biblical period to today. Our focus will be upon philosophical approaches to Jewish religion and life. We will explore what concerns Jewish philosophers share in common with their non-Jewish counterparts and why. We will also be attentive to the historical contexts of the subject matter.

## Textbook & Course Materials

### Required Text

Frank, Daniel H., Oliver Leaman & Charles H. Manekin, eds. *The Jewish Philosophy Reader*. London: Routledge, 2000. ISBN 9780415168601.

### Other Readings

* Additional material and assignments will be distributed via D2L. It is your responsibility to check D2L every week.

## Course Communication

* Email communication will be primarily be through the course D2L email system. A valid MSU email address is required.

## Course Structure

This course will meet weekly on Tuesdays from 4:10-7:00 pm. As well, you will access additional select course materials on D2L. You will need your MSU NetID to login to the course website (found at: <https://d2l.msu.edu>).

This is a 3-credit course. In addition to the 3 hours of class time, expect to do at least an additional 5 hours of reading and writing outside of class each week.

## Technical Assistance

If you need technical assistance at any time during the course or to report a problem you can:

Visit the D2L help site at <http://help.d2l.msu.edu>.

# Course Objectives

Students will learn:

* To identify key Jewish philosophers and philosophical texts
* To describe important and recurrent philosophical themes
* To relate Jewish philosophy to its lived context
* To contextualize Jewish philosophy in its larger historical framework

You will meet the objectives listed above through a combination of the following activities in this course:

* Active participation in weekly classes
* Weekly one-page reading responses
* Midterm exam
* Final exam

# Weekly Expectations

The **reading assignments** are to be completed in advance of the class in which they are listed. Check D2L regularly for any additional information, documents, resources, and discussion forums necessary to prepare for class. There may be changes made in the assigned readings noted below, but students will be given advance notice of this. **Note:** Keeping up with the reading is critical to the success of this course.

The **weekly responses** should summarize the main points of oneof that week's readings. You should include relevant quotations from the reading that illustrate the points you are highlighting. End with a personal reflection, or compare the themes to another reading we have had. These are to be submitted on D2L by 4 pm on Monday so that I have time to consider them before class. **Note**: You are responsible for on-time submissions of your weekly responses. If you miss the deadline for a weekly response, you will receive a 0 (F) for that week's response.

## ****Class Schedule****

* **January 12 (Week 1) Introduction: What is Jewish Philosophy?**
* **January 19 (Week 2) Reading the Bible as Philosophy (part 1)**
  + **Creation**: Genesis 1-3, pp. 7-10
    - Philo "On the Creation of the World" pp. 11-15 (stop at "Creation of Humanity"), and summary on p. 23 (section LXI).
    - Maimonides "Creation vs. Eternity of the World" pp. 27-32.
  + **Ethics**: Genesis 22, pp. 39-40
    - Maimonides and Fackenheim on the Akeidah pp. 40-44
* **January 26 (Week 3) Reading the Bible as Philosophy (part 2)** 
  + **Freedom**: Exodus 9, 10, 14, pp. 46-48
    - David Shatz "Freedom, Repentance, and Hardening of the Hearts" pp. 51-57
  + **Theodicy**: Job 1-2, 42, pp. 60-62
    - Kenneth Seeskin "Job and the Problem of Evil" pp. 66-73
    - Horace Kallen "The Joban Philosophy of Life." Posted on D2L.
* **February 2 (Week 4) Medieval Jewish Philosophy** 
  + Lenn Goodman "Judah Halevi." Posted on D2L (pp. 196-221).
  + Introduction pp. 200-3
  + Judah Halevi *The Kuzari* pp. 203-14
* **February 9 (Week 5) Moses Maimonides: Aristotelianism**
  + "Maimonides" pp. 220-3
  + Maimonides *Mishneh Torah* pp. 223-32
* **February 16 (Week 6) Torah, Divine Secrets and Human Perfection: Maimonides' Philosophical Project**
  + Maimonides *The Guide of the Perplexed* pp. 232-42
  + Howard Kreisel "Moses Maimonides" pp. 245-75. Posted on D2L.
* **February 23 (Week 7) Aristotelianism Rejected**
  + Idit Dobbs-Weinstein "The Maimonidean Controversy" pp. 331-49. Posted on D2L.
  + "The Conservative Reaction in Christian Spain" pp. 263-5
  + Isaac Abravanel pp. 274-79.

March 1 (Week 8): Midterm Exam

**No class March 8 (Spring Break)**

* **March 15 (Week 9) Reason vs. Revelation: Baruch Spinoza's critique of religion & the origins of modernity** 
  + "Modern Jewish Thought: Between History and Tradition" pp. 303-4; Spinoza, "Introduction" pp. 305-6.
  + Ze'ev Levy "The nature of modern Jewish philosophy" pp. 577-86. Posted on D2L.
  + Spinoza *Theological-Political Treatise,* pp. 321-38
* **March 22 (Week 10) Torah as Divine Legislation: Moses Mendelssohn reconciles Judaism & Enlightenment**
  + "Judaism and the Enlightenment" pp. 340-1
  + Moses Mendelssohn *Jerusalem* pp. 341-61
  + Michael Morgan "Mendelssohn" pp. 660-77. Posted on D2L.
* **March 29 (Week 11) Neo-Kantian thought: Hermann Cohen** 
  + Hermann Cohen "Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism" pp. 489-502
  + Kenneth Seeskin "Jewish neo-Kantianism: Hermann Cohen" pp. 786-98
* **April 5 (Week 12) American Jewish Thought: Horace Kallen and Mordecai Kaplan**
  + Norbert Samuelson "Can Democracy and Capitalism be Jewish Values? Mordecai Kaplan's Political Philosophy" (*Modern Judaism* 3:2 1983 pp 189-215)
  + William Toll "Ethnicity and Freedom in the Philosophy of Horace M. Kallen" (*The Jews of America*, ed. Moses Rischin, ch. 9, pp. 153-170)
  + Horace Kallen "Hebraism and Hellenism" and "Why freedom is a problem". Posted on D2L.
* **April 12 (Week 13) Revelation and Dialogue in Jewish Existentialism**
  + Franz Rosenzweig *The Star of Redemption* pp. 527-31
  + Martin Buber "The Faith of Judaism" pp. 598-605
  + Oliver Leaman "Jewish Existentialism" pp. 799-817. Posted on D2L.
* **April 19 (Week 14) On the possibility of post-Holocaust life and thought**
  + Emil Fackenheim "The 614th Commandment" and "Historicity, Rupture, and *Tikkun Olam*." Posted on D2L.
  + Emmanuel Levinas "Useless Suffering." Posted on D2L.
  + In-class film: "The Quarrel"
* **April 26 (Week 15) Critique and Transformation: Jewish Feminist Philosophy**
  + Judith Plaskow "Facing the ambiguity of God" pp. 510-12
  + Heidi M. Ravven "Creating a Jewish Feminist Philosophy" pp. 513-19
  + Judith Plaskow "Beyond Egalitarianism" pp. 519-22

Final Exam: Thursday, May 5, 5:45-7:45 pm, held in A-104 Wells Hall

# Grading Policy

## Graded Course Activities:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description** | **Percentage** |
| Class Participation | 20% |
| Weekly one-page reading responses (best 10) | 25% |
| Midterm Exam | 25% |
| Final Exam | 30% |
| Total | 100% |

## Letter Grade Assignment:

Each week you will receive a letter grade for your participation and for your weekly written response. You will also receive a letter grade for your midterm and final exams.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Letter Grade** | **Percentage** |
| A+ | 95 to 100% |
| A | 90 to 94% |
| B+ | 85 to 89% |
| B | 80 to 84% |
| C+ | 75 to 79% |
| C | 70 to 74% |
| D+ | 65 to 69% |
| D | 60 to 64% |
| F | 0 to 59% |

## Final Grade Calculation:

At the end of the course, your final grade will be calculated as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Percentage | Grade |
| 90-100 | 4.0 |
| 85-89 | 3.5 |
| 80-84 | 3.0 |
| 75-79 | 2.5 |
| 70-74 | 2.0 |
| 65-69 | 1.5 |
| 60-64 | 1.0 |
| below 60 | 0.0 |

### Viewing Grades

Final grades will be available to students on STUINFO (<https://stuinfo.msu.edu/Menu.Asp>) on May 11, 2016.

# Part 5: Course Policies

## Participation

Students are expected to attend lectures and actively participate in in-class activities.

It is your responsibility to do the readings ahead of time and bring questions, read over your lecture notes and identify issues you would like to clarify and explore, and to identify questions about the assignments.

Attendance is significant for your individual learning, but you are adults and the responsibility for learning is entirely yours. Students who miss class frequently are out of the conversation loop, and students who simply come without having read the material or who are unwilling to discuss it have a negative impact on the teaching and learning experience.

## Support

Please seek help from me. You are truly invited and welcome to drop by my office hours to discuss ideas, concerns, or questions you have. If you need to see me at some time other than my posted office hours, send me an email and I will work out an alternative time to help you (I will endeavor to respond to your email within one or two days). I want to make your experience in the course as rewarding as possible, so don't hesitate to approach me if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you are having difficulty with the course requirements.

I also encourage students to consider their classmates as invaluable resources to support their learning. In-class activities and the online discussion forums are designed to facilitate building rapport with your classmates.

## Understand When You May Drop This Course

It is the student’s responsibility to understand when they need to consider un-enrolling from a course. Refer to the Michigan State University Office of the Registrar (<http://www.reg.msu.edu/>) for important dates and deadlines. The deadline to drop this course with no grade reported is March 2, 2016.

## Inform Me of Any Accommodations Needed

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. If you have a documented disability and verification from the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD), and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact your instructor as soon as possible. It is the student’s responsibility to provide documentation of disability to RCPD and meet with an RCPD specialist to request special accommodation *before* classes start.

Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation (“VISA”) form. Please present this form to the instructor at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc). Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

RCPD is located in 120 Bessey Hall, near the center of the Michigan State University campus, on the southwest corner of Farm Lane and Auditorium Road. RCPD may be contacted by phone at (517) 884-7273 (884-RCPD), or via their website (<https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/>).

## Commit to Integrity

### Academic Honesty

Work you do in this course must meet the MSU Regulations, Ordinances and Policies Regarding Academic Honesty and Integrity (see <https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/academic-integrity/index.html>). You are to do your own work and to cite the written and web-based sources of ideas, quotes, and paraphrases, which you draw on in written assignments. Drawing upon the words or ideas of others and presenting them as your own, and/or failing to cite your sources, may result in a failing grade for the course. Please speak to me if you have any questions in this regard.