



Yeshiva University

THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL STRAUS CENTER FOR TORAH AND WESTERN THOUGHT

Philosophy of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks: Syllabus

Semester: Spring 2023

Course Number: JTP 4930 361 [CRN: 12506]

Sessions Meet: T/R (6:45pm-8pm) [Location: TBD]

Instructor: Rabbi Dr. Dov Lerner (dov.lerner@yu.edu)

Course Overview

The aim of this class is to explore the thought of perhaps the most renowned and influential teachers of Judaism at the start of the twenty-first century: the late Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. With such a wide-ranging and voluminous oeuvre, we will divide his thought into three distinct but intersecting fields—Theology, Ethics, and Politics—and read selections of his writing in those areas. We will cover parts of his *Reith Lectures*, *Covenant & Conversation*, *The Home We Build Together*, *To Heal a Fractured World*, *The Great Partnership*, *Not in God's Name*, and *Future Tense*, along with a number of smaller stand-alone essays—with an eye toward considering his sources and examining his central theses, while assessing his unique contribution toward the history of Jewish thought.

Required Texts

For this course there are no materials that you will be required to purchase—all readings will be made available on canvas or are available online and will be linked or indicated on the canvas page.

Attendance and Participation

This class is a collaborative endeavor and depends for its success on your steady attendance and informed participation, so your final grade may well be swayed by the quality—in addition to the reality—of your participation in class. Poor attendance (i.e., more than three absences during the term and/or frequently arriving late to class) will lower your final course grade considerably.

Due Dates

Assignments must be turned in on the date and hour they are due unless an extension has been arranged in advance. If you anticipate needing an extension, please let me know well before the due date. Readings listed above a particular date are to be read for that date.

Please be aware of the University's *Academic Integrity Statement* as all students are expected to abide by it, and note the following two announcements:

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations should contact the Office of Disability Services, rkohn1@yu.edu during the first weeks of class. Once you have been approved for accommodations, please submit your accommodation letter and discuss any specifics with me to ensure the successful implementation of your accommodations.

Academic support is available to you if you are having any difficulties that could include the following but are not limited to these: understanding assignments, navigating research papers, issues with time management of your schedule and your life or general college adjustment, please make an appointment with Dr. Beth Hait. She is available Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9am - 6pm. To make an appointment, go to yu2.mymvonline.com. Click on the arrow next to "Academic Advisement" and scroll down to "Student Academic Support".

Evaluation:

Attendance and Participation – 10%

Midterm – 40%

Class Presentation/Final – 50%

Week 1: Welcome

Readings: n/a

January 19th: Welcome and Overview

Week 2: Introduction

Readings: *Alienation and Faith* (for Next time)

January 24th: Meeting Rabbi Sacks

Readings: *Alienation and Faith* (as above)

January 26th: Setting the Stage

Week 3: Sources, Aims and Methods

Readings: *Torah and Wisdom: Judaism and the World*

January 31st: Revelation & Redemption

Readings: *Creativity and Innovation in Halakha*

February 2nd: History & Halakha

Week 4: Theology I—The Great Partnership

Readings: *In Two Minds*

February 7th: Is and Ought

Readings: *Finding God; Why God?*

February 9th: Choice and Joy

Week 5: Theology II— Not in God's Name

Readings: *Dualism*

February 14th: Monotheistic Dignity

Readings: *The Universality of Justice, The Particularity of Love*

February 16th: Biblical Peace

Week 6: Introducing Ethics—To Heal a Fractured World Part 1

Readings: *Faith as Protest*

February 21st: Dissonance & Deed

Readings: *Charity as Justice*

February 23rd: Capital & Independence

Week 7: Ethics I—To Heal a Fractured World Part 2

Readings: *Love as Deed* and *Sanctifying the Name*

February 28th: Attention & Identity, and Example & Faith

Readings: *Mending the World*

March 2nd: Creed & Hope

Week 8: MIDTERM

Readings: n/a

March 7th: PURIM

Readings: n/a

March 9th: *MIDTERM*

Week 9: Ethics II—To Heal a Fractured World Part 3

Readings: *Like a Single Soul*

March 14th: Connection & Solidarity

Readings: *The Kindness of Strangers*

March 16th: Connection & Presence

Week 10: Ethics III—To Heal a Fractured World Part 4

Readings: *Responsibility for Society*

March 21st: Beyond our Borders

Readings: *n/a*

March 23rd: GUEST LECTURE

Week 11: Politics I—Reith Lectures Part 1 & 2

Readings: *The Environment of Faith; Numbers: Then and Now*

March 28th: Achieving Freedom?

Readings: *The Demoralization of Discourse; The Social Animal (Exodus)*

March 30th: Between State and Self

Week 12-13: PESACH

Week 14: Politics II—Reith Lectures Part 3

Readings: *The Family; Family, Faith, Freedom (Genesis)*

April 18th: The Nuclear Option

Readings: *Paradoxes of Pluralism; The Home We Build Together*

April 20th: The Common Good

Week 15: Politics III—Reith Lectures Part 5 & 6

Readings: *Fundamentalism; Community of Communities; Democracy and Religion*

April 25th: The Seat of Power

Readings: *Future Tense: The Voice of Hope in the Conversation of Humankind*

April 27th: The Unique Jewish Creed

Week 16: ‘Covenant & Conversation’

Readings: Presentations

May 2nd: Presentations

Readings: Presentations

May 4th: Presentations

Week 17: Endings

Readings: Presentations

May 9th: Presentations

Readings: *‘An End Without and Ending’*

May 11th: In-Conclusion

May 22nd @ 11:59pm: *Final Assessment Due*