

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM
Rothberg International School
Division of Undergraduate Studies

**48635: Religion and the Conflict in the Middle East:
A Jewish Perspective**

It is clear that religion plays a role in the conflict in the Middle East. In recent times more and more people are becoming aware of this and are recognizing the need to address religion and religious communities in the context of the peace effort. Despite this positive development, most of the work done in this field focuses on “liberal religion”. The challenge that we must face is how to deal with the non-liberal religion that is widespread in the region and which, in Israel plays a significant role, for example, in the settler ideology. Assuming that the liberalization of radicals is not a viable option, what paths are there to peace dialogue with non-liberal religious actors?

Peace is a fundamental value in both Biblical and Rabbinic texts. But, in contemporary Israeli politics, peace is a value almost exclusively associated with the secular West. Perhaps some of the problem's in today's efforts to achieve Middle East peace can be accounted for in the light of this observation. This course will focus on the meaning of "peace" as a classical Jewish value demonstrating the significant differences between it and the modern Western secular model.

The course will start with an analysis of the politics of peace in western philosophy, tracing this discourse from the work of Kant to that of contemporary post-critical political philosophers. We will trace similarities between contemporary critiques of Kant and the alternative strategies for peace-making offered in the Jewish tradition. We will study the meaning of peace in both classical and modern Jewish literature, examining the connection between peace and Messianism and exploring the implications of this connection for Zionist and religious Zionist political thought. Finally we will look at the different ways in which alternative articulations of peace might suggest entirely new approaches to the challenge of accomplishing peace in today's Middle East after a fashion that will enable us to tackle such loaded questions as the sanctity of the holy land, the Temple Mount etc.

Pre-requisites – one course in either Jewish Studies, Political Philosophy, Middle East Studies or International Relations.

Course Requirements

1. Attendance
 2. Readings and Class Participation
 3. 4 short papers (3-4 pages) – 40% of final grade (NB students will be able to resubmit these papers as often as they choose throughout the course).
 4. Final Paper (10-15 pages) 60% of final grade
- All readings will be distributed by the teacher via e-mail

Course Topics:

Kant, the Enlightenment and the western secular theory of Peace

The privatization of religion and the separation of Church and State

The State and Religion in post-critical thought

Prophetic Peace; Anti-Politics, the Unity of Opposites and the Knowledge of God

Peace in Biblical Literature
Peace in Rabbinic Literature
The clash between Peace and Zionism in the writings of Rabbi Ashlag and Rabbi Tamaret
Peace in Rav Kook's Religious Zionism
Engaging Radical Religious Leaders in Peace dialogue today

Bibliography:

Primary Texts – Handed out in Class

Articles and chapters for Reading:

“Legal Fiction”, in *American Law Encyclopedia*, volume 6:

<http://law.jrank.org/pages/8149/Legal-Fiction.html>

Boyarin, Daniel. *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007. **Overseas Library 296.133 B789; E-BOOK**

Unheroic Conduct. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. **Overseas Library Y301.417 B789; E-BOOK**

Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. Translated by Walter Kaufman. New York: Touchstone, 1970. **Overseas Library 296.19 B917**

Cavanaugh, William T., "A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House: The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the Nation State", in J. Milbank and S. Oliver (eds.), *The Radical Orthodox Reader*, London, New York: Routledge, 2009, pp. 314-337. **Overseas Library 230 M638; ERESERVE**

David, Joseph E. and Rosenak, Avinoam. “Judaism And Peace: Between responsibility and identity” in *The Role of Religious and Philosophical Traditions in Promoting World Peace: An Asian Perspective*, edited by Imtiyaz Yusuf. Singapore: Select Books, 2007, pp. 43-90. **Overseas Library 291.17 Y95; ERESERVE**

Doyle, Michael W., *Liberal Internationalism: Peace, War and Democracy*, 2004.

http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/articles/doyle/

Fisch, Menachem. *Rational Rabbis: Science and Talmudic Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997. **Overseas Library 296.138 F528; E-BOOK**

Hartman, David. Foreword to *The Jewish Political Tradition, volume I: Authority*, edited by Michael Walzer, Menachem Lorberbaum, Noam Zohar, co-edited by Yair Lorberbaum. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000. **Overseas Library Y320.9 W242; E-BOOK**

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. “No Religion is an Island” *Union Theological Seminary Quarterly Review* 21 (January 1966).

<http://www.cs.auckland.ac.nz/~alan/chaplain/Heschel.html>

The Prophets. New York and London: Harper Collins Perennial Classics, 2001 [1962]. **Overseas Library 221.12 H583**

Heavenly Torah As Refracted through the Generations (Torah Min Hashamayim Beaspaklaria Shel Hadorot). Edited and translated by Gordon Tucker. New York and London: Continuum, 2007. **Overseas Library 296.122 H583T (2005 edition)**

Isaacs, Alick. "Benamozegh's Tone: A Response to Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz." *Common Knowledge* 11:1 (winter 2005), p. 48-55. [E-JOURNAL](#)

Kant Immanuel, "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch," in H. Reiss (ed.), *Kant's Political Writings* (2nd ed.; trans. H. B. Nisbet), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 93-130. **Main Library B 2799 P6 R4 1991; ERESERVE (1970 ed.)**

Sagi, Avi. *The Open Canon, On the Meaning of Halakhic Discourse*. Translated by Batya Stein. London: Continuum, 2007. **Overseas Library 296.5(01) S129**

Sommer, Benjamin. "Revelation at Sinai in the Hebrew Bible and in Jewish Theology" in *The Journal of Religion* 79:3 (July 1999), p. 422-451. [E-JOURNAL](#)

Taylor, Charles. "A Catholic Modernity?" in *A Catholic Modernity?: Charles Taylor's Marianist Award Lecture, with responses by William Shea, Rosemary Luling Haughton, George Marsden, and Jean Bethke Elshtain*, edited by James L. Heft. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. **Overseas Library 282 H461; ERESERVE**

Zabala Santiago. "A Religion Without Theists or Atheists" in Richard Rorty & Gianni Vattimo. *The future of religion*, edited by Santiago Zabala. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005, pp. 1-27. **Main Library BL 48 R54 2004; [E-BOOK](#)**