

Professor Benjamin R. Gampel
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 Spring 2008

MDS 5102y - Classics of the Jewish Tradition (2)

This semester will serve as an introduction to medieval and modern Jewish civilization through the reading of selected primary sources. We will consider the social, religious, and historical significance of the works treated in class against the background of the period in which it was written.

Requirements for this course include readings and class participation, and a (take-home) final examination. NO INCOMPLETES WILL BE GRANTED.

Reading assignments for each session will be explicated at the end of the previous lecture.

I - January 28 Introduction

II - February 4 Saadia Gaon

"Book of Doctrines and Opinions" in Alexander Altmann ed., Three Jewish Philosophers, pp. 25-47; 75-92; 93-114; 115-125; and 141-154

III – February 11 Yehudah Halevi

"Kuzari" in ibid., pp. 27-49; 68-69; 101-107; 126-129; and 132-137

"Songs" in ibid., pp. 132-137

IV - February 25 Maimonides

"Letter to Samuel ibn Tibbon" in I. Twersky, A Maimonides Reader, pp. 7-8

"Mishneh Torah" in ibid., pp. 35-85; 93-95; 145-146; 222-227

"Guide for the Perplexed" in ibid., 341-349

V – March 3 Nahmanides

Ramban. Commentary on the Torah, ed. Ch. Chavel, Vol. 1, Introductory Verses, pp. 3-6; 7-16; 17-25 (on Genesis 1:1); 214-218 (on 17:1); 290-293 (on 24:1); and 586-593 (on 49:10)

VI – March 10 Samuel Usque

Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel ed. Martin A. Cohen, pp. 37-46; 194-263

VII – March 17 Barukh Spinoza

Tractatus Theologico-Politicus (translated by Samuel Shirley), pp. 46-57; 88-100; 140-172; 214-227

VIII - March 24 Glückel

The Memoirs of Glückel of Hameln, ed. and trans., Beth Zion Abrahams, skim entire book

IX - March 31 "Origins of Hasidism"

D. Ben-Amos and J. Mintz eds. and trans., In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov, skim entire book and focus on Nos. 14, 15, 16, 41, 66, 137, 147, 159, 177, 212, and 232

X – April 7 Moses Mendelsohn

Jerusalem (translated by Allan Arkush), pp. 33-62; 74-75; 84-90; 94-102; and 126-139

XI – April 14 Theodor Herzl

The Jewish State, pp. 27-41; 47-62; and 79-100

XII – March 5 Mordecai M. Kaplan; Summation

Judaism as a Civilization, pp. 173-224; 409-522