

**Huron University College**  
**Fall 2018**  
**Jewish Studies 1250F**  
**Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought**  
**Tuesday 2:30 PM-3:30 PM; Thursday 3:30 PM-5:30 PM; HC V208**  
**Course Outline**

**Instructor:** Dr. D. Conter

**Office:** V 131

**Office Hours:** Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, 8:30 AM-9:30 AM in the Huron Food Court (Students who require strict confidentiality can arrange to meet me in my office – V131.)

**E-mail:** [dconter@uwo.ca](mailto:dconter@uwo.ca)

**Description**

A selective survey of various recent Jewish philosophical self-examinations, consisting of three parts.

In the first half of the course, students will sample some contemporary Jewish Biblical scholarship, written from the perspective of Conservative Judaism, dealing with disputed moral issues, such as homosexuality, abortion, the position of women, capital punishment, and the environment.

The second half of the course will present a selection of major Jewish philosophical and religious writers from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The presentation will begin with Jewish responses and accommodations that began with the Scientific Revolution, the rise of modern rationalism, the political development of religious toleration, and the rejection of tradition. From there, the course will move to the effort in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to recover the traditions of Jewish life, and on to further Orthodox attempts to rediscover specifically Jewish conceptions of holiness.

**Objectives**

Students will learn to assess the impact on Jewish religious ideas of a variety of historical factors: our current ancient historical and archaeological knowledge of the context in which biblical documents first appeared; the impact of the Scientific Revolution and the changed picture that it presented of the universe in which people live; political movements in Western Europe and North America toward democracy, religious toleration, constitutional freedom of religion – developments which greatly changed the social and political position of many Jews; and the recent increase, in Western countries at least, of secularization.

## **Course Method**

Lecture; with professor/student and student/professor question/answer exchanges.

## **Texts**

Richard Elliott Friedman and Shawna Dolansky, *The Bible Now* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Alan T Levenson, *An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thinkers: From Spinoza to Soloveitchik, second edition* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

## **Assessment:**

Students' grades will be determined on the basis of **three very short essays for which no outside research is required** – each 3-4 pages in length, and **each worth 22 %** – for a total of **66 %**.

There will also be a **two-hour final examination worth 34 %**.

1. **The due dates for the essays are Friday, October 5; Friday, November 2; and Friday, November 30.**

The essays **MUST** be submitted in hard copy at the Huron University College essay drop box by 3:30 PM on the relevant due dates. The essays **MUST** also be submitted on **owl.ca** by 3:30 PM on the relevant due dates. For each essay, the topic will appear on **owl.ca** at approximately 10 AM on the day preceding the due date. The topic will not be handed out in class. **Note that you have *not much more than 29 hours* in which to complete each assignment. Obviously, you need to arrange your work schedule appropriately.**

**Under no circumstances will extensions be granted. Students who fail to submit an essay on time must consult the Academic Advisor. In such a case, if there is a recommendation from the Academic Advisor, students who get such a recommendation from the Academic Advisor must submit their assignments within 48 hours of the Academic Advisor's recommendation. Notwithstanding the above, students who FOR ANY REASON AT ALL fail to submit the three essays on time will not be permitted to write the final exam.**

2. The **final exam** will be written during the final exam period at a date and time specified by the University. **DO NOT MAKE TRAVEL**

**ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CHRISTMAS BREAK UNTIL YOU KNOW  
THE EXACT DATE OF YOUR FINAL EXAM. THE PRIVILEGE OF  
WRITING A SPECIAL FINAL EXAM WILL NOT BE GRANTED ON THE  
BASIS OF A STUDENT'S TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS**

Students who for any reason at all miss the scheduled final exam and are granted permission to write the special final on the date specified by the College must understand that both the content and the format of the special final may be different from the regularly scheduled final exam.

**Syllabus**

**Week 1 September 11, 13**

**NOTE: There will be no class on Tuesday, September 11, because that is the second day of Rosh Hashanah.**

Friedman and Dolansky, Preface, Chapter 1

**Week 2 September 18, 20**

Friedman and Dolansky, Chapter 1 continued

**Week 3 September 25, 27**

Friedman and Dolansky, Chapter 2

**Week 4 October 2, 4**

Friedman and Dolansky, Chapter 3

**Week 5 October 9, 11**

Thanksgiving and Fall Reading Week-no classes

**Week 6 October 16, 18**

Friedman and Dolansky, Chapter 4

**Week 7 October 23, 25**

Friedman and Dolansky, Chapter 5

**Week 8 October 30, November 1**

Levenson, Introduction, Chapters 1-2

**Week 9 November 6, 8**

Levenson, Chapters 3-4

**Week 10 November 13, 15**

Levenson, Chapters 5-7

**Week 11 November 20, 22**

Levenson, Chapters 8-9

**Week 12 November 27, 29**

Levenson, Chapters 10-11

**Week 13 December 4, 6**

Levenson, Chapters 12-13



**The Appendix to Course Outlines is posted on the OWL course site.**