

Prof. Jason Lustig
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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 9:30–11:30am

Seminar Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:00–9:15am

Jewish Thought, Politics, and Ethics: From Theory to Practice

This course surveys Jewish history and its traditions of philosophy, politics, and ethics, and examines how they play an active role in the twenty-first century. Students will read major figures throughout Jewish history, from ancient Alexandria to modern-day America, who straddled the boundaries between thinkers and philosophers, on one side, and active members of society who struggled with contemporary issues on the other. We will consider how and why Jewish history matters and the ways in which its lessons have moved from theory to practice, both in the past and in our own day. It will thereby offer an opportunity to consider how and why history matters and how its study can be applied to our present day and its manifold complexities and problems.

As a service-learning course, students will work with a community partner organization in the Los Angeles area on a service project. Readings will reflect the time commitment that this service component requires. Through service learning and civic engagement, students will reflect critically on issues of service, politics, peoplehood, and social justice as they may apply to the partners' ongoing work with diverse communities. Each week, we will read primary source material written by a historical figure and consider how the ideas and concepts have and continue to be put into practice. Throughout the quarter students will work to link material in these central texts with the mission and ongoing work of these community partners. This course therefore provides an introductory framework for service-learning in Jewish studies, an introduction to Jewish history through a survey of diverse thinkers and other historical figures, and connects students with a number of relevant partner sites with whom they will be able to build ongoing relationships.

The service-learning component allows students to see first-hand how the ideas and experiences of Jewish history are put into practice, sometimes with intention and sometimes unknowingly, and highlight how Jewish history and thought provides an impetus for social action in the present. Consequently, instead of a research paper the students' final project will consider their service work and the way in which it interfaces with the major thinkers and ideas we have examined in the class.

In this class, we will deeply consider in critical perspective how and why we study Jewish history and how it is, and can be, applied in our current moment. When we consider why we study the past, it is not merely for the sake of broadening our knowledge, or bringing new perspectives. It is also to consider the ideas and experiences that have shaped our world and world-views, and those of others, and to understand the horizon of possibility of the future.

Through a survey of Jewish thought, politics, and ethics over the past two thousand years, students will gain an understanding of the arc of Jewish history and also sharpen their critical thinking and writing skills as they peer into the present to see how the past is put into practice.

Definition of Service-Learning

Service-learning is a pedagogical model that links academic practice with civic engagement work outside the classroom. In this type of course, groups of students will assist social justice and community organizations. You might work on any one of these issues: drug rehabilitation, interfaith relations, Holocaust memory and genocide prevention, food insecurity, or legal aid. Depending on the community partner's needs, your service may include research and developing educational materials, working on a project alongside agency clients, assisting with events or organizing an event at UCLA, or assisting at a legal clinic. Students will also engage in group research projects related to their work with these partners. In the process, students will reflect on the experiences had on and off campus so they might understand how scholarship links with participatory efforts to create social change and the relationship between their university education and real-world application. More details on the various community partners is provided below.

Course Requirements

Course grade breakdown:

- 1) Minimum of 20 hours worked at your service learning site, as recorded on your signed timesheet**
 - a. There is not a specific percentage of the grade associated with the service learning hours, but it is the foundation for what we will do and discuss over the course of the quarter.
- 2) Preparation and active participation in class (35%)**
 - a. Active preparation for and participation in class sessions. Active participation means posing questions and contributing to class discussion in a manner that demonstrates that you have actively read the assigned material and sought to understand it within the context of the course.
 - b. *Attendance is required.* Each absence will lower your grade. *Two unexcused absences provide grounds for a zero for your participation grade. Note that the class meetings count as 40% of your total grade!* If you are ill, please email me. You will be asked to provide a note from your health care provider and do a make-up assignment. If you have *any* questions about this attendance policy, ask me.
 - c. The participation grade also includes a weekly 1-page (one full pages) reading response that synthesizes and critiques the assigned readings. You are expected to write a response for 7 out of the 10 weeks of the course. Please print and bring to class.
- 3) Short Paper (15%)**
 - a. One short paper (2 to 3 pages) that analyzes and reflects upon the mission statement of your partner organization.
- 4) Final Project (30%)**
 - a. 8- to 10-page paper that summarizes and reflects on your service-learning project, and relates the work that you did—and the wider mission of the community partner where you worked—to the themes and readings in the class. The paper will demonstrate your ability to integrate academic learning with service-learning, and will seek to demonstrate how historical ideas, figures, and works make their way from theory to practice in the twenty-first century.
 - b. This is an individual project.
- 5) Group In-Class Presentation in Week 10 (20%)**
 - a. In the final week of class, each group of students who worked together at a particular community partner will give a brief 15-minute group presentation to the class about their service-learning experience and how it relates to the themes we have discussed in class.
 - b. This presentation will be graded on a group basis (every participant will be given the same grade). However, I reserve the right to assign individual grades if it is clear that one person did all (or none) of the work on the presentation.

Required Service Learning at Community Site

Students will work a minimum of 20 hours with a pre-approved community organization between weeks 2 and 10 (at their sites). Matches will be made in week 2 based on the descriptions of the work to be done at the service learning sites and student preferences. Each site will have at least 3 service learners. **A timesheet signed by your service learning site supervisor will be due in week 10.**

Community Partners/Co-Educators

LA Museum of the Holocaust (LAMOTH)

Students will create audio guides as we look toward a future when survivors will not be available to give the tours themselves. Students would be asked to develop a curated tour that connects specific artifacts in the galleries to a survivor's experience as a pilot project. Students will be given the outline of a survivor's story, then research the museum panels and artifacts and interview and record the survivor. The final project will put it all together into an audio guide.

Beit T'shuvah healing and rehabilitation center

Students can learn with a resident "Chavrusa style" (one-on-one studying) to examine some of the texts that they are reading in class. Students are welcome to volunteer with any of the other programs at the site: including the thrift store, creative matters design company, creative arts activities.

New Ground: A Muslim-Jewish Partnership for Change

Students will assist with their Spotlight Storytelling event. They usually have 30+ partnering organizations for a program that involves Jews and Moslems telling stories to each other. Tasks might include managing the partner organizations, social media posts in the lead up to the event, working at the physical event, and editing the picture album afterwards.

Jewish World Watch

JWW works to end genocide and mass atrocities by educating and mobilizing individuals, advocating for policy changes and funding projects to support and build resilience in conflict-affected communities. JWW would like students to organize an outreach/fundraising event.

Bet Tzedek

Bet Tzedek, a leader in public interest law, assists with 70% of conservatorships in Los Angeles County and the assistants need not be lawyers. Students who would like to help with this project will need to participate in a two-part training session. Students will then assist at one of their clinics or with other legal work. If students have Spanish/English bilingual ability, they will be able to use these skills.

Facing History and Ourselves

Since the Los Angeles office opened in 1994, nearly 5000 local educators have participated in Facing History's professional development programs that examine racism, prejudice, and

antisemitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry. Students will work with Facing History on teacher training events, attend breakout sessions, and report about them as blog posts and on social media.

Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger

For 30 years, Mazon has been building an army of anti-hunger advocates through a variety of programs and outreach initiatives. Two ways students can help:

- Preparation for the return to Los Angeles of the immersive, interactive exhibit “This Is Hunger” which puts a face on some of the nearly 13 percent of U.S. households that had difficulty at some point last year providing enough food for their families. This will include developing pre- and post-exhibit experiences that will encourage visitors to educate others and advocate for change.
- Help produce a Haggadah for Mazon’s annual Hunger Seder, used by many synagogues at Passover. This will include researching possible themes and editing the readings used in the Haggadah.

Office hours: I highly recommend that you attend office hours at least once this quarter.

Academic integrity: Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person—be it a world-class philosopher or your lab partner—without proper acknowledgment of that source. This means that you must use footnotes and quotation marks to indicate the source of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or ideas found in published volumes, on the internet, created by another student, or from unpublished sources or archives.

Violations of University policies on academic integrity may result in failure in the course or on the assignment, or in suspension or dismissal from the University. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, it is your responsibility to ask for clarification.

Disability: If you are a student with a documented disability on record and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you, please see me immediately or have the OSD contact me immediately. Please keep in mind that reasonable accommodations are not provided retroactively.

Introduction to Jewish Studies

This course does not have any prerequisites or assume that you have taken courses in Jewish history. In fact, a major emphasis of this course will be to provide a basic framework for comprehending Jewish history. However, if you lack familiarity with Jewish history or Jewish studies, I recommend a number of resources that will quickly bring you up to speed. These books (with the exception of *Encyclopedia Judaica*) have been placed on library reserve. Additionally, a number of useful excerpts will be posted on the course website as PDF files.

1) *Encyclopedia Judaica*

A comprehensive set of essays and articles that provides a better introduction than anything you’ll read on Wikipedia. You can access it online through UCLA’s resources. Note: I will post some relevant articles as suggested reading for each week.

- 2) Robert M. Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought: The Jewish Experience in History*
Menahem Mansoor, *Jewish History and Thought: An Introduction*
Two useful overviews of Jewish history
It also has useful chronologies and maps, posted on the course site.
- 3) David Biale, ed., *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*
A collection of essays on Jewish history with a focus on diverse cultures. The introduction (posted to the course website) is especially illuminating.
- 4) Jewish Study Bible, introduction
Gives an overview of Jewish history in ancient times and helps place the Bible in its context

Course Outline and Schedule

Note: All readings will be posted to the course website.

I. INTRODUCTION TO COURSE: SERVICE LEARNING AND JEWISH HISTORY (WEEK 1)

Provides an introduction to the course, opportunity to choose among service-learning community partners, introduction to the scope of Jewish history, and why it matters.

Week One: Introduction to the Course of Study

Thursday 9/28

- Introduction to Jewish history/Syllabus
- Presentation, Center for Community Learning Presentation
- Moses Maimonides, Mishneh Torah VII (Seeds), “Laws of Gifts to the Poor,” ch. 10. In Twersky, pp. 134–139

Tuesday, 10/3

- Community partner presentations
- Student-community partner matching
- Dan Butin and Noam Pianko, “Jewish Studies and Service-Learning in Higher Education: What Each Can Gain From the Other,” *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* 87.1–2 (2012): 157–164

Thursday, 10/5 (Sukkot I) – Why Jewish History Matters

- David N. Myers, “Rethinking the Jewish Nation: An Exercise in Applied Jewish Studies,” *Havruta*, Winter 2011, 26–33
- Noam Pianko, *Zionism and the Roads Not Taken*, 1–25

II. JEWISH POLITICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS (WEEKS 2–6)

Each week we will consider Jewish political and philosophical writers and how their ideas have been studied and applied in the past as well as the present.

Week Two: Philo – Theme: Politics and Diaspora

Tuesday, 10/10

- Philo, “Embassy to Gaius (Caligula)” (*Texts and Traditions* 203–206)
- Torrey Seland, “Philo as Citizen: *Homo politicus*,” in Seland, ed., *Reading Philo: A Handbook to Philo of Alexandria* (2014), 47–74.
- Abraham Joshua Heschel, telegram to John F. Kennedy, June 16, 1963. In Susannah Heschel, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, vii.

Thursday, 10/12 (Shemini Atzeret)

- Michael Walzer, “Introduction,” in Walzer, et al, eds., *The Jewish Political Tradition* (Yale University Press, 2000), xxi–xxxii
- Case Study: Website and mission statement of Religious Action Center (RAC), www.rac.org

Week Three: Moses Maimonides – Theme: Philosophy and Practice

Tuesday, 10/17

- Moses Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, 3.51–54
- Micah Goodman, *Maimonides and the Book that Changed Judaism*, xiii–xxi, 229–245

Thursday, 10/19

- **Due in class:** Short paper, 2–3pp analysis of your community partner’s mission statement
- Maimonides, Mishne Torah I (Book of Knowledge), selections. In Twersky, pp. 43–45, 56–59, 64–69
- Haim O. Rechnitzer, “Hobbes, Maimonides, Health Care Reform, and *Tzelem Elohim*: The Political Theology of Universal Health Care”

Week Four: Spinoza – Theme: Survival and Antisemitism / Politics and the State

Tuesday, 10/24

- Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, ch. 3, “On the vocation of the Hebrews”
- Gershon Cohen, “The Blessing of Assimilation,” 145–156
- Pittsburgh Platform (1885)

Optional event with extra credit opportunity:

10/24, 4PM—Inaugural Leve Award Ceremony, Rabbi Elliot Dorff (314 Royce Hall)

Rabbi Elliot Dorff, rector of American Jewish University and distinguished professor of philosophy, will be honored for his significant public service and leadership in building bridges across diverse communities. Rabbi Dorff will address the topic: “I’m Right, You

Don't Agree, So You Must Be Wrong: Grounds for Pluralism in the Jewish and American Communities.”

If you plan to attend, please RSVP to cjsrsvp@humnet.ucla.edu

Optional extra credit assignment: Attend the lecture and write a 1-page summary of the talk and a brief response relating Rabbi Dorff's lecture to the course themes.

Thursday, 10/26

- Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, chs. 16–17, “On the foundations of the state” and “On the character of the Hebrew state in the time of Moses, and in the period after his death before the appointment of kings”
- Julie E. Cooper, “Reevaluating Spinoza's Legacy for Jewish Political Thought,” *Journal of Politics* 79.2 (2017): 473–484.

Week Five: “Tikkun ‘Olam” and Kabbalah

Tuesday, 10/29

- Jonathan Krasner, “The Place of Tikkun Olam in American Jewish Life,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 25, 3/4 (Fall 2013): 59–98
- Gilbert S. Rosenthal, “Tikkun ha-Olam: The Metamorphosis of a Concept,” 214–240
- Gershom Scholem, “Isaac Luria and His School,” in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 240–282

Thursday 11/2: Guest lecturer. Readings on the theme of gender and Jewish history and thought.

Week Six: The German Jewish Intellectual Tradition – Theme: Emancipation and Education

Tuesday, 11/7

- Christian Wilhelm Dohm, “On the Civic Improvement of the Jews”
- Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, 77–139
- Leora Batnitzky, *How Judaism Became a Religion*, pp. 1–7, 13–28

Thursday, 11/9

- Martin Buber, “I and Thou”
- Franz Rosenzweig, “It is Time”

III. RECENT APPROACHES AND CHALLENGES (WEEKS 7–9)

Week Seven: A.J. Heschel and Mordecai Kaplan – Theme: Applying and Adapting Jewish Thought and Culture in America

Tuesday 11/14

- Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (1962), *xxi-xxix*, 3-31
- Heschel, “The Moral Outrage of Vietnam” (1967) in *American Religion, American Politics: An Anthology*, ed. Joseph Kip Kosek (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 178–186

Thursday 11/16

- Mordcai Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization*, 1pp. 9–27; skim: 409–430, 511–522

Week Eight: Simon Rawidowicz – Theme: “Jewish Continuity”

Tuesday, 11/21

- Simon Rawidowicz, “Israel, the Ever-Dying People,” in *State of Israel, Diaspora, and Jewish Continuity: Essays on the ‘Ever-Dying People,’* pp. 53–63.
- Jonathan Sarna, “American Jews in the New Millennium,” in Y.H. Haddad, *Religion and Immigration: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Experiences in the United States*, pp. 117–127
- Pew Research Center, “A Study of Jewish Americans” (2013), introduction
 - o <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/>

Thursday, 11/23 – Class Cancelled – Thanksgiving

Week Nine: Rachel Adler and Rabbi Brad Artson – Theme: Contemporary Theology

Tuesday, 11/28

- Rachel Adler, *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics* (1998), xiv–xxviii

Thursday, 11/30

Visiting scholar: Rabbi Brad Artson, American Jewish University

- Rabbi Brad Artson, “Ba-derekh: On the Way—A Presentation of Process Theology,” *Conservative Judaism* 62, 1–2 (2010): 3–35
- Harold Schulweis, “The Pull of the Divine Lure,” *Conservative Judaism* 62, 1–2 (2010): 55–57

IV. CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION (WEEK 10)

Week Ten: Conclusion

Tuesday, 12/5 and Thursday, 12/7

- Student presentations on service-learning projects and discussion
- **Due in class 12/7:** Final project