



# Yeshiva University

## THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL STRAUS CENTER FOR TORAH AND WESTERN THOUGHT

### Maimonides and his Enemies: Syllabus

**Semester:** Spring 2022

**Course Number:** JPHI 1650H N [CRN: 62039]

**Sessions Meet:** T/Th (3—4:15 PM) [Location – TBD]

**Instructor:** Rabbi Dr. Dov Lerner ([dov.lerner@yu.edu](mailto:dov.lerner@yu.edu))

#### *Course Overview*

This semester we will explore the legacy of perhaps the most renowned and influential Jewish thinker in history: Maimonides. Over the first half of the course, we will examine his historical and intellectual context, and then survey his central works—attending to their central claims and innovations. The second half of our course will be devoted to the study of a series of thinkers—ranging from Nachmanides and Gersonides to Luzzatto—who opposed at least a portion of Maimonides' thought, and, through the lens of their critique, deepen our grasp of what's at stake in the Maimonidean imagination that shaped Judaism as we know it today.

#### *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 quantity—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 noticeably.

#### *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](mailto: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.mywconline.com](http://yu2.mywconline.com). Click on the arrow next to "Academic Advisement" and scroll down to "Student Academic Support".*

**Evaluation:**

Attendance and Participation – 10%

Midterm – 35%

Final Assessment – 55%

## Week 1: Overview

Readings: n/a

**January 25<sup>th</sup>:** Welcome and Overview

Readings: J. Kraemer, *Moses Maimonides: An Intellectual Portrait*

**January 27<sup>th</sup>:** Biography I

## Week 2: Introduction I—Meeting Maimonides

Readings: J. Kraemer, *Moses Maimonides: An Intellectual Portrait*

**February 1<sup>st</sup>:** Biography II

Readings: P. Remes, *Neoplatonism (Introduction)*

**February 3<sup>rd</sup>:** Intellectual Context

## Week 3: Commentary to the Mishna I

Readings: Maimonides, *Commentary to the Mishna* [selections on Canvas]

**February 8<sup>th</sup>:** COMMENTARY TO THE MISHNA—Purpose and Law

Readings: Maimonides, *Introduction to Sanhedrin Ch. 10* [selections on Canvas]

**February 10<sup>th</sup>:** COMMENTARY TO THE MISHNA II—Philosophy

## Week 4: Commentary to the Mishna II and Sefer HaMitzvot

Readings: Maimonides, *Introduction to the Commentary to Avot* [selections on Canvas]

**February 15<sup>th</sup>:** COMMENTARY TO THE MISHNA III—Ethics

Readings: Maimonides, *Sefer HaMitzvot* [selections on Canvas]

**February 17<sup>th</sup>:** BOOK OF COMMANDMENTS—Root and Branch Reform

## Week 5: Mishneh Torah I

Readings: Maimonides, *Book of Knowledge* [selections on Canvas]

**February 22<sup>nd</sup>:** MISHNEH TORAH I—Law and Philosophy I

Readings: Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* [selections on Canvas]

**February 24<sup>th</sup>:** MISHNEH TORAH II—Law and Philosophy II

## Week 6: Mishneh Torah II

Readings: Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* [selections]

**March 1<sup>st</sup>:** MISHNEH TORAH III—Conceptual Halakha I

Readings: Maimonides, *Book of Judges* [selections]

**March 3<sup>rd</sup>:** MISHNEH TORAH IV—Conceptual Halakha II

## Week 7: The Guide and the Writer

Readings: D. Frank, *Structure of the Guide*

**March 8<sup>th</sup>:** GUIDE OF THE PERPLEXED—Perspectives

Readings: Maimonides, *Letter to Yemen*

**March 10<sup>th</sup>:** Community and Consolation

## Week 8: Letters II

Readings: Maimonides, *Letter to Obadiah*

**March 15<sup>th</sup>:** Being Jewish and Human

Readings: n/a

**March 17<sup>th</sup>:** PURIM

## Week 9: Midterm, Mystics and Maimonides

Readings: \*\*\*MIDTERM\*\*\*

**March 22<sup>nd</sup>:** \*\*\*MIDTERM\*\*\*

Readings: Nachmanides [selections on Canvas]

**March 24<sup>th</sup>:** Nachmanides, Maimonides, and Mysticism

## Week 10: Gersonides and Maimonides

Readings: Gersonides [selections on Canvas]

**March 29<sup>th</sup>**: Gersonides, Maimonides, and Miracles  
Readings: Gersonides [selections on Canvas]

**March 31<sup>st</sup>**: Gersonides, Maimonides, and Politics

**Week 11: Crescas and Maimonides**

Readings: Crescas [selections on Canvas]

**April 5<sup>th</sup>**: Crescas, Maimonides, and Prophecy

Readings: Crescas [selections on Canvas]

**April 7<sup>th</sup>**: Crescas, Maimonides, and Free Will

**Week 12: Modernity and Maimonides**

Readings: Alan Nadler, “Rambam Revival”

**April 12<sup>th</sup>**: Modernity and Maimonides—Rambam Revival?

Readings: n/a

**April 14<sup>th</sup>**: *Pesach*

**Week 13: Pesach**

**Week 14: Luzzatto and Maimonides**

Readings: Luzzatto [selections on Canvas]

**April 25<sup>th</sup>**: Luzzatto, Maimonides, and Sympathy

Readings: Luzzatto [selections on Canvas]

**April 26<sup>th</sup>**: Luzzatto, Maimonides, and Community

Readings: **Guest Lecture**

**April 28<sup>th</sup>**: Wyschogrod, Maimonides, and the Bible (Rabbi Dr. Soloveichik)

**Week 15: Presentations**

Readings: n/a

**May 3<sup>rd</sup>**: Presentations I

Readings: n/a

**May 5<sup>th</sup>**: *Yom Ha'atzmaut*

**Week 16: Maimonides' Legacy**

Readings: n/a

**May 10<sup>th</sup>**: Presentations II

Readings: Menachem Kellner, “Maimonides' Disputed Legacy”

**May 12<sup>th</sup>**: Overview

**May 25<sup>th</sup> @ Midday**: *Final Due*