

INTRODUCTION TO MODERN JEWISH THOUGHT

Dr. Netanel Kupfer

Spring semester

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Office Hours: by request

Short description:

The aim of the course is to provide an introduction to key themes and central figures of Modern Jewish Thought. It is structured according to both a chronological order - from the 17th to the 20th century - as well as a thematic order, following some of the main problems, challenges and developments that modern era brought into religious thought in general and Jewish thought in particular. Special attention will be therefore paid to the inner connections between the major trends in modern philosophy and the Jewish philosophers that were influenced by them, challenged by them, challenged them, or were an inner part of them.

The course is divided into the following sections:

1. Intro 1: Modernity and the problem of authority of reason (in science, ethics and politics) vs. the authority of God
2. Intro 2: particularity vs. universality, praxis vs. dogma, nation vs. religion in Judaism.
3. Intro 3: God in medieval philosophy and God in modern philosophy.
4. The authority of reason vs. the authority of religion: Spinoza the philosopher and Spinoza the Bible critic and political thinker.
5. The moderate Enlightenment and the authority of religion: the philosophy of Leibniz and Mendelssohn's Jerusalem.
6. The limits of reason and the possibility of faith: Kant's critical philosophy and kantian Jewish thinkers (Ludwig Steinheim, Hermann Cohen, Yeshayahu Leibowitz, Rabbi Josef D. Solovejchik and others)
7. Man's moral autonomy and the heteronomous religious law: Kant's humanism and Judaism.
8. Judaism and the 19th century concept of history : Hegel's philosophy and Jewish thought (Nachman Krochmal, Franz Rosenzweig, Rabbi A. Kook and others)
9. Romanticism and Nationalism in modern Jewish thought.
10. Socialism in modern Jewish thought.
11. Existentialism, Dialogism and Phenomenology in modern Jewish thought (Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Emmanuel Levinas and others).

Assessment:

Full attendance, preparation of reading assignments, and participation in class discussions (10%)

A midterm assignment (20%)

A final take-home exam (70%)

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. Students are permitted a maximum of three absences without penalty. Any additional absences will affect the final grade and may result in failure of the course.

Academic conduct:

Plagiarism is taken extremely seriously. Any instance of academic misconduct which includes: submitting someone else's work as your own; failure to accurately cite sources; taking words from another source without using quotation marks; submission of work for which you have previously received credit; working in a group for individual assignments; using unauthorized materials in an exam and sharing your work with other students, will result in failure of the assignment and will likely lead to further disciplinary measures.