Me'ah Select Classes – Winter/Spring 2019-20

Belmont, Beth El Temple Center: "Crucial Moments in the Israeli Experience through the Lens of Short Stories"

- **Instructor: Dr. Jacob Meskin**
- Meets: Tuesday evenings, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m., beginning January 21.
- Full class schedule: January 21, 28; February 4, 11, 25; March 3, 17, 24, 31; April 7, 21. Snow/sick day: April 28.
- Cost: $280 for temple members, $300 for non-members. Financial aid is available; please contact meah@hebrewcollege.edu for details.

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This course aims to introduce students to certain critical moments in the history of the modern state of Israel through short stories that range from the earliest days of the pioneers to the twenty-first century. Written by men and women, Ashkenazim and Sefardim/Mizrachim, Jews and Arabs, secularists and traditionalists, these stories open up for us uniquely visceral and imaginative windows on many of the compelling events that have shaped the history of Israel.

Although our focus each week will be on the stories, excerpts from various academic and secondary sources will also be supplied, in order to provide historical background for the setting of each story. Depending on logistical considerations we may also screen one or two Israeli films, which tie in to some of the stories.

Beverly, Temple B'nai Abraham: "Judaism and Science Talk To Each Other: a Class for Believers, Skeptics, Scientists, and Thinkers of all Kinds"

- **Instructor: Rabbi Richard "Rim" Meirowitz**
- Meets: Wednesday evenings, 7:00 – 9:30 p.m., beginning February 5.
- Full class schedule: Feb. 5, 12, 26; March 4, 11, 18, 25; April 1, 22, 29. Snow/sick days: June 3 and June 10.
- Cost: $250 for temple members, $350 non temple members. Financial aid is available; please contact meah@hebrewcollege.edu for details.

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Much discussion about science and religion in the past century has fallen into two schools of thinking. One is that science and religion are incompatible and in opposition to each other. We see that in the battle between evolution and creationism. Another school of thought is that religion and science are two distinct ways of looking at the world that don't intersect or speak to each other. Stephen Jay Gould says that science discovers how things work. Religion talks about how things ought to be. They have different sources of authority. He calls them "non-overlapping magisterial."

This course will attempt to have science and Judaism overlap each other, talk to each other, and inform each others' thinking. The basic text for the course will be: "Renewing the Process of Creation: A Jewish Integration of Science and Spirit" by Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson. Other books we will refer to include: "Judaism, Physics and God: Searching for Sacred Metaphors in a Post-Einstein World," by Rabbi David Nelson, "The God that Could Be Real: Spirituality, Science and the Future of Our Planet," by Nancy Ellen Abrams, and "The View From the Center of the Universe: Discovering Our Extraordinary Place in the Cosmos," by Dr. Joel R. Primack, emeritus professor of physics and one of the principal originators of the theory of Cold Dark Matter, and his wife, Nancy Ellen Abrams, a philosopher of science.

Each class will have its own focus, i.e. what does neuroscience tell us about the soul. One could do a lot of reading for the class, but I will try to make sure each class is generally understandable with a reasonable amount of reading.

Boston, The Boston Synagogue: "Magic, Miracles, and Messiahs: The Supernatural in Jewish Tradition"

- **Instructor: Dr. David Bernat**
- Meets: Thursday evenings, 7:00 – 9:30 p.m., beginning January 16.
- Full class schedule: January 16, 23, 30; February 6, 13, 27; March 5, 12, 19, 26. Snow/sick days: April 2, 23.
- Cost: $300. Financial aid is available; please contact meah@hebrewcollege.edu for details.

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The course takes an in-depth and historical perspective on aspects of the supernatural in Jewish practice, text, and tradition. Topics include amulets, exorcism, and omens, miracle working "super-heroes," angels and demons, underworld, afterlife, resurrection of the dead, and Messianic movements. We will study material from the Biblical period to the Rabbinic era, looking at authoritative writings such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Talmud, alongside artifacts of "popular culture," such as the Jewish Aramaic incantation bowls of Nippur, Babylon.

Lexington Collaborative: “The Sacred and the Profane: Creating Modernity and the Modern Jew,” meeting at Temple Emunah

- **Instructor: Rabbi Leonard Gordon, D. Min.**
- Meets: At Temple Emunah, Thursday mornings 9:30 a.m. – 12 p.m., beginning January 30.
- Full class schedule: January 30; February 6, 13, 27; March 5, 12, 19, 26; Apr. 2, 23. Snow/sick days April 30; May 7.
- Cost: $350. Financial aid is available; please contact meah@hebrewcollege.edu for details.
- Registration for this class is through **chaverweb**. Please note that when registering via chaverweb, Temple Emunah members may use their login; all others may create a guest account. Then go to “events sign-up” and look for “Me’ah Select.”

Beginning with Spinoza and concluding with contemporary Jewish feminists, our class will consider how secular and religious Jews shaped modern Judaism and modernism itself. Often pairing religious and secular figures who were contemporaries we will look at the enlightenment, messianism, moral philosophy, Hassidism, life in Israel and the diaspora, the origins of the denominations and Feminism. Figures we will read include: Spinoza, Mendelssohn, Marx, Scholem, Ahad Haam, Freud, Salanter, the Hafetz Hayyim, Buber, Rosenzweig, Roth, Bialik, Rachel, Amichai, Plaskow, Piercy, Falk and Lefkovitz.

Lexington Collaborative: "Yesodot: Foundational Jewish Values and Core Ideas," meeting at Temple Isaiah

- **Instructor: Rabbi Benjamin Samuels**
- Meets: At Temple Isaiah, Monday evenings, 7:00 – 9:30 p.m., beginning February 10.
- Full class schedule: February 10, 24; March 2, 16, 23, 30; April 6, 27; May 4, 11. Snow/sick day: May 18.
- Cost: $350. Financial aid is available; please contact meah@hebrewcollege.edu for details.
- Registration for this class is through **chaverweb**. Please note that when registering via chaverweb, Temple Emunah members may use their login; all others may create a guest account. Then go to “events sign-up” and look for “Me’ah Select.”

What does it mean to be Jewish? Jewish life hopscotches across four different domains of relationship: between us and God (ultimacy); between people (interpersonal ethics); between us and our world (peoplehood and stewardship); and between each person and his/herself (personal responsibility). In this course, we will study core values and ideas in each of these domains, seek to establish for ourselves fundamental literacy in foundational Jewish values and core ideas.

Marblehead, JCC of the North Shore: "The Modern Jewish Experience through the Lens of Short Stories"

- **Instructor: Dr. Jacob Meskin**
- Meets: Thursday evenings, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m., beginning January 30.
- Full class schedule: January 30; February 6, 13, 27; March 5, 12, 19, 26; April 2, 23, 30. Snow/sick days May 7, 14.
- Cost: $300. Financial aid is available; please contact meah@hebrewcollege.edu for details.

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Most of us learn the history of Jews and Judaism in the modern period from scholarly texts and original documents. This invaluable view of the big picture leaves out the lived dimension of the events.

How did Jewish individuals in widely separated and quite different communities experience the challenges and changes of modernity? How did these experiences, and the feelings they evoked, shape new Jewish hopes and projects?

This course uses Jewish short stories, beginning in the late 19th century, from England, Russia, Eastern Europe, Israel, and America.

The stories give us unique insights into generational struggles, changing gender roles, and the search for "authentic Judaism" outside the precincts of religion. The most recent stories highlight the fear that traditional forms of Jewish memory and identity may be disappearing entirely, and ask whether these can be replaced with a commitment to social justice or with "Israeliness."

Writers include Mizrachim and Ashkenazim, a European Christian, Christian Arab and Muslim Arab citizens of the state of Israel, Eastern European and Russian Jews, British Jews, American Jews, and Jewish Israelis. A partial list of authors includes: Grace Aguilar, Sholem Aleichem, Isaac Babel, Chaim Grade, George Eliot, Nathan Englander, Michal Govrin, Dara Horn, Franz Kafka, Sayeed Kashua, Amy Levy, Savyon Liebrecht, Bernard Malamud, Arthur Miller, Amos Oz, Cynthia Ozick, Grace Paley, Philip Roth, Mendele Mocher Seforim, Yaakov Shabtai, Moshe Shamir, Anton Shammas, Ayelet Tsabari, Israel Zangwill, and Stefan Zweig.

Newton, Hebrew College: "Values in Practice: The Jewish Holidays in Jewish Law and Custom"

- **Instructor: Rabbi Benjamin Samuels**
- Meets: Tuesday mornings, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., beginning February 25.
- Full class schedule: February 25; March 3, 17, 24, 31; April 7, 21, 28; May 5, 12. Snow/sick day: May 19.
- Cost: $350. Financial aid is available; please contact meah@hebrewcollege.edu for details.

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Imagine a rolling ball. As it rolls the ball revolves, even as it advances forward. So too the Jewish calendar. Over the cycling course of the Jewish year, we rehearse the Jewish story, shape our identities and reimagine our personal potential, reaffirm our national destiny, and experience the full gamut of human emotion – celebration, mourning, inspired responses to calls to kindness and justice, and reliving formative experiences as if for the first time. Embedded in all our ritual practices are the core values of Jewish living and aspiration. In this course, we will study the Jewish calendar and yearly holiday cycle. We will highlight the primary mitzvot and ritual practices of the year, and study deeply their historical roots and religious power.

Newton, Hebrew College: "Unpacking Antisemitism: Religious Origins, Modern Forms, and Contemporary Dynamics"

- **Instructor: Dr. Jacob Meskin**
- Meets: Thursday mornings, 9:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m., beginning February 6.
- Full class schedule: February 6, 13, 27; March 5, 12, 19, 26; April 2, 23, 30. Snow/sick days May 7, 14.
- Cost: $350. Financial aid is available; please contact meah@hebrewcollege.edu for details.

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In this course we will study the complex origins of ancient and medieval “antijudaism,” focusing on Christian and Islamic sources, on how different thinkers interpreted these sources in different times and places, and on the historical events that flowed from these interpretations. With respect to Christian tradition these origins are to be found in certain New Testament writings, and in the history of the first two or three centuries of the first millenium, which saw the gradual formation of the Church. With respect to Islamic tradition they lie in re-tellings of the paradigmatic life-story of Muhammad, and in parts of certain surahs (chapters) in the Qu’ran.

However — according to many historians and sociologists, it is vital to understand the distinction between this ancient and medieval “antijudaism,” which is hatred of Jews on religious grounds, and what we call today “antisemitism.” In this course we will strive to understand how religious antijudaism became transformed, with the rise of the Enlightenment, into modern “antisemitism.” Modern antisemitism, unlike its ancient and medieval ancestor which was rooted in religion, has a dangerous variety of forms: it can be religious, or economic, or racial, or political, or all of these together, and so on. We will draw on this understanding to try to grasp the many currents and trends that drive antisemitism today in our contemporary world. In addition, we will look at psychological and cultural accounts of antisemitism, to determine how they help us make sense of this challenging phenomenon. Finally, we will explore ways in which intellectual elites made use of the idea of Judaism, often in the absence of any contact with or knowledge of flesh and blood Jews, to concoct antisemitic narratives and images. These antisemitic narratives and images, once disseminated via books and pamphlets, and now

via the internet, all too often end up shaping how common people would look at real, flesh and blood Jews.

Readings will be drawn from the New Testament, the Qu'ran, early Christian and Islamic interpretive materials, modern documents, and secondary sources on the history and nature of modern and contemporary antisemitism.

Newton, Hebrew College with the Newton Centre Minyan: "The Modern Jewish Experience through the Lens of Short Stories"

- **Instructor: Dr. Jacob Meskin**
- Meets: Wednesday evenings, 7:15 – 9:15 p.m., beginning February 5.
- Full class schedule: February 5, 12, 26; March 4, 11, 18, 25; April 1, 22, 29; May 6, 13. Snow/sick days May 20, 27.
- Cost: $350. Financial aid is available; please contact meah@hebrewcollege.edu for details.

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Newton, Temple Emanuel: "Thrice-told Tales: Biblical Stories in Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Traditions"

- **Instructor: Rabbi Micha'el Rosenberg**
- Meets: Wednesday mornings, 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., beginning February 5.
- Full class schedule: February 5, 12, 26; March 4, 11, 18, 25; April 1, 22, 29. Snow/sick days May 6, 13.
- Cost: $325; $625 if you register for both fall and spring class. Financial aid is available; please contact meah@hebrewcollege.edu for details
- Please register through the Temple Emanuel website: https://www.templeemanuel.com/event/meah-select-thrice-told-tales/2020-02-05/

You know the story of Joseph and his brothers? Its plot, its characters, its setting? But are you sure there's only one story of Joseph? What about Sarah, who sent out her husband's concubine Hagar? Or how about a story from Christian scriptures, such as Mary the mother of Jesus? In this course, we will consider biblical stories from both the Hebrew Bible as well as the Gospels to see how Jews, Christians, and Muslims have told and retold these tales in antiquity and the early medieval period.

Sudbury, Congregation B'nai Torah with Metrowest in Sudbury: "Women Warriors of Latin America"

- **Instructor: Dr. Dalia Wassner**
- Meets: Thursday evenings, 7:00 – 9:30 p.m., beginning March 12.
- Full class schedule: March 12, 19, 26; April 2, 23, 30; May 7, 14, 21; June 4. Snow/sick day June 11.
- Cost: $350. Financial aid is available; please contact meah@hebrewcollege.edu for details.

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Centered on the interplay between gender and religion in Latin America, this course focuses on the women who impacted the cultural, social, and political landscapes of the Jewish communities and broader societies of which they were a part. Through an emphasis on literature from the region, students will learn of Jewish minority culture in the historical contexts of colonialism, national independence, modern revolutions, migrations, borderland politics, and diaspora-Israel relations.

Wellesley, Temple Beth Elohim: "An Introduction to Islam for Jews"

- **Instructor: Dr. Alan Verskin**
- Meets: Wednesday mornings, 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 p.m., beginning February 12.
- Full class schedule: Feb 12, 26; March 4, 11, 18, 25; April 1, 22, 29; May 6, 13, 20. Snow/sick day May 27.
- Cost: $300. Financial aid is available; please contact meah@hebrewcollege.edu for details.

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This course provides a general introduction to Islam with special attention given to its commonalities and differences with Judaism. We will explore the life of Muhammad and how Islam developed after his death, including the emergence of Sunni, Shiʿi and other Islamic sects. We will discuss important forms of Islamic religious expression including Sufism (mysticism), Islamic philosophy and Shari'ah law. We will discuss Islamic ideas of religious toleration and how they relate to the concept of Jihad. Special attention will be paid to Islamic parallels with Judaism, e.g., the Qur'an and its relationship to the Bible, and Shari'ah and Halakhah. Finally, we will discuss contemporary relations between Muslims and Jews, including the impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict.