

# IDS 2935: Faith and Reason in Jewish Thought

## Quest 1: The Examined Life

### I. General Information

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#### Class Meetings

- Spring 2025
- Required 100% In-Person, no GTAs, 35 residential students
- Day/Time MWF 10:40 AM - 11:30 AM
- Location MAT 0117
- 3 Credits

#### Instructor

- Prof. Alexander Green
- CSE E446
- Office hours: Office hours Mondays and Wednesdays 12-1pm and by appointment
- [agreen5@ufl.edu](mailto:agreen5@ufl.edu)
- 352 294 2136

If you need to schedule an appointment outside of office hours, please email the course instructor.

#### Course Description

What is the relationship between religious belief and human reason? How much of life do we attribute to divine providence, and to what extent do we rely on human initiative, effort and creativity? Are the positions of faith and reason reconcilable, or are they in perennial conflict? This course will seek to explore some of the major contributors to this debate in the Jewish tradition, beginning with a comparison of the worldviews expressed in the Bible and ancient Greek philosophy. We will then present a comparative study of two different attempts to reconcile faith and reason in the medieval period: Judah Halevi (1075-1141) in his *Kuzari: The Book of Refutation and Proof in Defense of the Despised Faith* and Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) in his *Eight Chapters, Mishneh Torah* and *Guide of the Perplexed*. We will then proceed to study the work of Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), who presented one of the sharpest critiques of the harmonization of faith and reason in his *Theological-Political Treatise*. In examining this pivotal work, we will see how Spinoza made the case for liberal democracy, freedom of speech and the separation of religion and politics. The final text in the course will be *The Lonely Man of Faith* by Joseph Soloveitchik (1903-1993), whose deep reflections on faith and reason were shaped by the development of modern science and the challenges this raises for human life.

#### Quest and General Education Credit

- Quest 1

- Humanities
- Writing Requirement (WR) 2000 words

*This course accomplishes the [Quest](#) and [General Education](#) objectives of the subject areas listed above. A minimum grade of C is required for Quest and General Education credit. Courses intended to satisfy Quest and General Education requirements cannot be taken S-U.*

*The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.*

*Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.*

### **Required Readings and Works**

- The primary source readings for the course will be available for download in pdf on Canvas. Login to Canvas and select ISS 2395.
- Writing Manual: R. M. Ritter, *The New Oxford Style Manual*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2016). ISBN: 978-0198767251.
- Materials and Supplies Fees: n/a

### **Course Objectives**

1. Identify, describe, and explain the methodologies used across the disciplines of medieval and early modern Jewish thought to examine essential ideas about faith and reason.
2. Identify, describe, and explain key ideas and questions about faith and reason.
3. Analyze the relationship of faith and reason from ancient world to present.
4. Analyze and evaluate debates about whether faith and reason are in harmony or conflict, using close reading, critical analysis, class discussion, and personal reflection.
5. Develop and present clear and effective written and oral work that demonstrates critical engagement with course texts.
6. Communicate well-supported ideas and arguments effectively within class discussion and debates, with clear oral presentation and written work articulating students' personal experiences and reflections on faith and reason.
7. Connect course content with students' intellectual, personal, and professional lives at UF and beyond.
8. Reflect on students' own and others' experience with thinking about the practical consequences of their religious beliefs, in class discussion and written work.

## II. Graded Work

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### Description of Graded Work

**1. Active Participation and Attendance: 20%**

**a. Participation: 10%**

- i. An exemplar participant shows evidence of having done the assigned reading before each class, consistently offers thoughtful points and questions for discussion, and listens considerately to other discussants. See participation rubric below. (R)

**b. Class Attendance: 10%**

- i. On-time class attendance is required for this component of the course grade. Class attendance will be recorded daily.
- ii. Except for absence because of religious holiday observance, documentation is required for excused absences, per university policy. Excessive unexcused absences (10 or more) will result in failure of the course. If you miss 10 or more classes (excused or not), you will miss material essential for successful completion of the course.

**2. Reading Responses: 10%**

- a. Reading responses will be due five times throughout the semester. A reading response paper asks you to examine, explain and analyze a particular aspect of the reading that you find interesting and of importance. See reading response rubric below. (R)

**3. Experiential Learning Component: 10%**

During this semester, the class will visit the Isser and Rae Price Library of Judaica in the UF Smathers Library. Students will meet with the collection's curator and examine a wide range of manuscripts and printed books related to Judaism and Western Civilization. Students will experience handling these rare materials with their own hands and examining them directly. By Friday, on the 7<sup>th</sup> week of class at 11:59pm, students will submit a minimum 200-word assignment that compares at least two physical characteristics of these books examined at the library with a book you own (including photos of the relevant features of each).

**4. First Essay: 20%**

- a. During Week 6, you will submit a 1,200 word (minimum) analytical essay addressing a prompt provided to you by Week 5. You will develop an analytic argument based on your own thesis responding to the prompt. Your paper must incorporate at least four course readings. See Canvas for more details. Professor will provide written feedback. See writing rubric below. (R)
- b. Professor will evaluate and provide written feedback, on all the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization.
- c. You may want to access the university's Writing Studio.
- d. An additional writing guide website can be found at OWL.

**5. Second Essay: 20%**

- a. During Week 12, you will submit a 1,200 word (minimum) analytical essay addressing a prompt provided to you by Week 5. You will develop an analytic argument based on your

own thesis responding to the prompt. Your paper must incorporate at least four course readings. See Canvas for more details. Professor will provide written feedback. See writing rubric below. (R)

- b. Professor will evaluate and provide written feedback, on all the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization.
  - c. You may want to access the university's Writing Studio.
  - d. An additional writing guide website can be found at OWL.
- 6. Final Exam: 20%**
- a. At the end of the course, a final examination will be administered. The examination will be a 50-minute exam with essay questions. Professor will provide written feedback on your exam and/or short-answer questions. See examination rubric below. (R)

### III. Annotated Weekly Schedule

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#### WEEK 1: THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE: PROF RICHARD DAWKINS VS. RABBI JONATHAN SACKS (JANUARY 13-17, 2024)

Our first discussion in the course will begin by students watching a debate between Prof Richard Dawkins and Rabbi Jonathan Sacks at the Think Festival in the UK in 2012. This debate represents a contemporary example of the conflict between faith and reason in its most extreme form. Dawkins is a prestigious scientist, a defender of the achievements of the human intellect and considers himself one of the New Atheists. For Dawkins, the most logical consequence of science is its rejection of religion as a dangerous myth. In contrast, Sacks was the chief rabbi of the UK and an articulate defender of religion and especially Judaism, as containing deep truths that are both individually and socially important and relevant. Both make strong arguments for their respective positions and the goal is for the students to discern the key issues about which they are debating and on what basis they conflict.

#### Readings (36 pages):

1. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*. New York: First Mariner Books, 2006, pp. 1-7, 113-119, 211-227.
2. Jonathan Sacks, *A Letter in the Scroll: Understanding Our Jewish Identity and Exploring the Legacy of the World's Oldest Religion*. New York: Free Press, 2000, pp. 51-85.

## WEEK 2: PHILOSOPHY AND THE QUEST FOR ENLIGHTENMENT (JANUARY 21-24, 2024)

In studying the conflict between faith and reason, it is important to discern the origins of philosophy as articulated in ancient Greek philosophy. We will read selections from Plato's *Republic* to understand the character of Socrates as the exemplification of the philosopher. We will also probe the idea of philosophy as an attempt to comprehend the nature of the human soul, with justice representing the proper ordering of the soul. We will ask why Socrates' three initial conversation partners, Cephalus, Polemarchus and Thrasymachus, fail to give adequate definitions of justice. In addition, we will examine the allegory of the cave and ask how it represents a key image in understanding the nature of the life guided by human reason, especially in its relationship to the rest of society.

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**Readings (42 pages):**

1. Plato, *The Republic*. New York: Basic Books, 2016, 3-40 (327a-362c).
2. Plato, *The Republic*. New York: Basic Books, 2016, pp. 193-200 (514a-521c).

## WEEK 3: THE MORAL UNIVERSE OF THE BIBLE (JANUARY 27-31, 2024)

The first eleven chapters of Genesis present a contrasting worldview to that of ancient Greek philosophy. In these nascent biblical stories, we see that human beings are created to imitate the creative activity of God, yet at the same time, the pursuit of wisdom is presented as dangerous and sinful. Many penetrating textual questions will be raised in our careful reading of these chapters, such as why there are two conflicting creation stories, why the first murderer is the founder of the first city, and how to understand the equal failure of the second city, the Tower of Babel. We will also ask whether these first chapters should be seen as a failed experiment in a universe without divine intervention or legislation. We will then examine how the Bible argues for a moral universe, governed by a God who cares about the weakest parts of society.

### **Readings (18 pages):**

1. *The Jewish Study Bible: Featuring The Jewish Publication Society TANAKH Translation*, eds. Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler and Michael Fishbane. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 12-30 (Genesis 1-11).

WEEK 4: JUDAH HALEVI'S *KUZARI*: THE KING'S DREAM AND THE ARGUMENTS  
OF THE PHILOSOPHER, CHRISTIAN, MUSLIM, AND JEWISH SCHOLAR  
(FEBRUARY 3-7, 2024)

Our fourth week will transition to the medieval period and will introduce us to the study of one of the central Jewish philosophical works dealing with the conflict between faith and reason in Judaism. The *Kuzari* by Judah Halevi is a dialogue depicting a pagan king who is severely troubled by a perplexing dream that he cannot understand according to his own theology. He seeks out a host of community scholars to ask for help with this conundrum: a philosopher, a Christian, a Muslim, and a rabbi to discern which of them can convincingly interpret the meaning of his dream. We will analyze how each respondent utilizes elements from his own traditions to answer the king's query, and determine whether the king is justified in his response to each.

The reader eventually learns that the king is pleased with the arguments of the Jewish scholar and converts to Judaism. What makes the Jewish argument more convincing to the King than those offered by the Philosopher and the other religious traditions? It appears that the king chooses Judaism because it represents the faith from which all three originate thus allowing him to avoid taking sides between the battles of the Christian and Muslim armies. Does that mean that the Jewish scholar did not actually make the best argument for faith over reason? Did the counterarguments of the King compel the Jewish scholar to revise and rethink many of his own positions? Through this exchange, it appears that the Jewish Scholar comes to learn how religion needs philosophy. How can philosophy help religion without falling into the atheistic or agnostic position of the philosopher at the beginning?

**Readings (70 pages):**

1. Judah Halevi, *The Kuzari: The Book of Refutation and Proof in Defense of the Despised Faith*, Book 1, sections 1-116.



WEEK 5: JUDAH HALEVI'S KUZARI: PROPHECY AND TORAH: RATIONAL OR  
SUPRA-RATIONAL?  
(FEBRUARY 10-14, 2024)

As the dialogue proceeds, the Jewish scholar continues to develop his own form of theology which recognizes human reason for parts of the natural world, but limits it and proposes a realm of divine intervention that supersedes the natural. The intellect can both understand the world, while not claiming absolute supremacy. We will examine the discussion of the role of science in the Torah, the rationality of the commandments in categorizing the commandments into distinct categories, and the nature of prophecy. The dialogue ends with a parting of ways: the King remains in charge of his kingdom and the Jewish scholar moves to the holy land. Why do they part ways at the end of the dialogue? Is the Jewish scholar unable to fully convince the King even after he converts? How does this reflect the difference between their two worldviews?

**Readings (58 pages):**

1. Judah Halevi, *The Kuzari: The Book of Refutation and Proof in Defense of the Despised Faith*, Book 4, sections 1-27.

**Assignment:** First Essay Due

WEEK 6: MAIMONIDES: TORAH, ETHICS AND THE GOOD LIFE  
(FEBRUARY 17-21, 2024)

As the the most significant Jewish thinker of the medieval period, Moses Maimonides offered a compelling synthesis of philosophy and the Torah. Since Maimonides was deeply influenced by Aristotelian philosophy, we will examine how it played a vital role in how he interpreted the teachings of Judaism. Accordingly, we will scrutinize how Maimonides depicts the tension between faith and reason and whether they should in fact be understood as complimentary. This question becomes particularly apparent in our reading of Maimonides' *Eight Chapters*, which is his introduction to the portion of the *Mishnah* dedicated to ethics, known as *Pirkei Avot*. Maimonides argues that an understanding of the structure of the human soul is a key requirement to practice the laws of the Torah, such that the ultimate goal of the Torah is the knowledge of God. We will also examine how Maimonides presents the laws of the Torah as a means toward helping perfect one's character. In addition, we will discuss how Maimonides views the tension between divine foreknowledge and human freedom and how he characterizes the difficulty in resolving this paradox.

**Readings (45 pages):**

1. Maimonides, *Commentary on the Mishnah: Eight Chapters (Introduction to Pirkei Avot)*. English translation in *Ethical Writings of Maimonides*, ed. Raymond L. Weiss and Charles Butterworth. New York: Dover Publications, 1975: pp. 59-104.

**Assignment:** Experiential Assignment Due

WEEK 7: MAIMONIDES: THE ORIGIN OF PERPLEXITY AND THE SECRETS OF THE TORAH  
(FEBRUARY 24-28, 2024)

Maimonides' philosophic *magnum opus* is called the *Guide of the Perplexed*. He characterizes perplexity as an existential condition suffered by those who see contradictions between philosophy and religion. Maimonides presents the solution as the recognition that the Torah has a secret teaching, represented by the phrases "The Account of the Beginning" referring to the mystery of creation in Genesis 1 and "The Account of the Chariot" referring to the description of God riding on a chariot as described in Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1. The question we will pose is what it means that the Torah has a secret teaching and how these biblical chapters convey this teaching according to Maimonides' reading. We will do a close reading of the first two chapters of the *Guide* are an exegesis of Genesis 1-3 in order to determine how Maimonides interprets the creation narratives as representing the conflict between reason and the imagination.

**Readings (40 pages):**

1. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963, pp. 3-26 (Dedicatory Letter, Introduction, I 1-2).

WEEK 8: MAIMONIDES: PROPHECY, MOSES AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE TORAH  
(MARCH 3-7, 2024)

Maimonides' articulation of the uniqueness of Judaism is viewed through the achievements of its prophetic lawgiver, Moses. Maimonides develops a science of prophecy that combines morality, rationality and the imagination, depicting prophecy as a combination of the perfection of all three. Moses is described by Maimonides as achieving the highest level of perfection in these three categories.

According to Maimonides, the legislation achieved through Moses' prophecy the Torah, can be understood through its purposes; hence he sees an inherent rationality to its structure and goals. Maimonides differentiates a political law from a divine law, so that a political law only perfects the body, while a divine law perfects the body and the soul.

The most challenging implication of this thesis is the practice of biblical sacrifice. Maimonides describes these religious rituals as relics of ancient pagan worship which the Israelites absorbed during their enslavement in Egypt, but which are not the true goal of the Torah. If so, how can we explain their central place in biblical worship?

**Readings (29 pages):**

1. Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah*, Chapter 7 (2 pages).
2. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963, pp. 360-363, 373-385, 510-512, 525-531 (II 32, 37-40, III 27, 32).

WEEK 9: MAIMONIDES: ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE: CREATION VS. ETERNALITY  
(MARCH 10-14, 2024)

The origin of the universe was one of the most controversial debates of the Middle Ages. Does the universe have a beginning and if so, how did it come into being? Maimonides describes three approaches offered by Aristotle, Plato and the Torah, which represent the positions of eternity, creation from pre-existent matter, and creation from nothing (*ex nihilo*). We will look back again at the text of Genesis 1 and examine different possible readings of the text and see which theory best fits the biblical narrative. Maimonides, however, suggests that *any* of the three theories could actually be read into Genesis 1 if proven scientifically correct and that the reason to defend creation from nothing is that biblical theology and miracles are reliant on it. Why does biblical theology require this notion of creation? Could we imagine a model of Judaism based on Aristotle or Plato's theory of creation?

**Readings (21 pages):**

1. Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah*, Chapter 1 (4 pages).
2. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963, pp. 281-293, 327-330 (II 13-15, 25)

WEEK 10: MAIMONIDES: PROVIDENCE, JOB AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL  
(MARCH 24-28, 2024)

One of the challenging implications of the biblical worldview is the question of how a God who is all powerful, all knowing, and good and loving of His creatures allows the existence of evil in the world. Could not God have just created a world without evil? This is referred to as the problem of theodicy and is represented in the biblical canon by the Book of Job. Job appears to be moral and righteous, but suffers great misfortune. We will examine the character of Job, the responses of his friends, and God's answer to Job from the whirlwind. Maimonides' unique interpretation is that Job achieved moral perfection, but was lacking in intellectual perfection. How does this explain the evil that Job experienced?

We will also look carefully at Maimonides' grouping of evil into the following categories: natural, political and individual as well as his five views on the nature of divine providence. The key for Maimonides in explaining evil is that evil is a privation of knowledge. We will use these frameworks to try and explain the tragedy of Job's suffering and the nature of evil in the world.

**Readings (38 pages):**

1. *The Jewish Study Bible: Featuring The Jewish Publication Society TANAKH Translation*, eds. Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler and Michael Fishbane. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 1505-1508, 1539-1541, 1555-1562 (Job 1-2, 28, 38-42).
2. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963, pp. 440-448, 464-474, 486-490 (III 11-12, 17, 22).

WEEK 11: MAIMONIDES: THE SULTAN'S PALACE AND THE MEANING OF LIFE  
(MARCH 31 - APRIL 4, 2024)

The relationship of the life of contemplation (*via contemplative*) to the life of action (*via activa*) is one that is at both the heart of Western philosophy and is central to the Jewish tradition. Aristotle deals with this question at the end of his work on ethics, the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The Rabbis in the Talmud investigate the same question of whether it is better to study Torah or go out into the world and perform good deeds. Maimonides ends the *Guide* by returning to the same question: What is the ideal goal for which we should all strive in life? What is human perfection?

Maimonides describes the quest to know God through the metaphor of a journey to discover the Sultan of a kingdom who resides in a well-guarded palace with seven levels. We will examine each level and try to discern the nature of the progression. In this model, the key path to success is knowledge and not actions. However, a crucial aspect of the prophetic description of God is His actions, such as Jeremiah's description of "I am the Lord who exercise loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth." Maimonides describes these divine attributes as actions of God in the world. How do the divine actions relate to the divine essence? Are we better imitating God through imitation of knowledge or imitation of action?

**Readings (26 pages):**

1. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963, pp. 618-638 (III 51-54).
2. Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963, pp. 123-128 (I 54).

**Assignment:** Second Essay Due

WEEK 12: SPINOZA, THEOLOGICAL-POLITICAL TREATISE: CRITIQUING GOD, PROPHECY  
AND ELECTION  
(APRIL 7-11, 2024)

Baruch Spinoza was excommunicated from the Amsterdam Jewish community in the seventeenth century by the rabbinic authorities for expressing views that were considered heretical and dangerous. Much of these views became a central part of his work, *Theological-Political Treatise*, where he critiques biblical theology as superstition. We will look at his critique of the biblical God, prophecy, and the idea of the election of Israel. In contrast, Spinoza presents a God that is equivalent to nature (*deus sive natura*) who is not interested in the particularities of human life. Instead, human beings, according to Spinoza, must struggle to persevere as individuals. A key part of Spinoza's critique of Jewish theology is the attempt to harmonize faith and reason. We will examine how Spinoza chastises Maimonides for reading Aristotle into the biblical text and his reasoning for proposing a clear separation of science from religion.

**Readings (60 pages):**

1. Spinoza, *The Collected Writings of Spinoza*, vol. ii. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016, pp. 65-125 (Preface, Chapters 1-3).



WEEK 13: SPINOZA, THEOLOGICAL-POLITICAL TREATISE: THE BIBLE AND LIBERAL  
DEMOCRACY  
(APRIL 14-18, 2024)

In making a case for the separation of faith from reason, Spinoza advocates the political model of liberal democracy with freedom of thought and expression as its central goal. However, here Spinoza finds an important role for Judaism and the biblical tradition, not as a model of rationality and science, but as an example of an ancient political constitution that bears important lessons for developing constitutional liberal democracy. We will discuss how the political leadership of ancient Israel used religion to unify the commonwealth, and why it eventually lost that common bond. We will also examine how this commonwealth was eventually hijacked by internal opponents and why it returned to a chaotic state of nature.

Spinoza ends the *Theological-Political Treatise* with the final chapter arguing that a free republic must provide the populace with the freedom to think and speak as they choose. Although Spinoza's position was undoubtedly influenced by his own personal experience, he nevertheless forged a new path in creating a completely new model of the social contract that radically differentiated itself from that of Hobbes's *Leviathan* which relied on the authority of the sovereign. Spinoza emphasizes that his project for liberal democracy is not a secular one. He devotes an entire chapter to developing a civil religion which he refers to as the doctrines of the universal faith, which are a political necessity for peace and security. We will explore the following questions:

- How does civil religion differ from traditional religion?
- Does civil religion distinguish between Judaism and Christianity?
- Why does a liberal society need a civil religion?
- Why is freedom of thought and speech essential for liberal society to flourish?
- Do civil religion and freedom of speech conflict?

**Readings (70 pages):**

1. Spinoza, *The Collected Writings of Spinoza*, vol. ii. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016, pp. 282-331 (Chapters 16-18).
2. Spinoza, *The Collected Writings of Spinoza*, vol. ii. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016, pp. 257-271, 344-354 (Chapters 13-14, 20).

WEEK 14: JOSEPH SOLOVEITCHIK AND THE LONELY MAIN OF FAITH  
(APRIL 21-23, 2024)

Joseph Soloveitchik was an influential twentieth century Jewish theologian who portrayed the tragic conflict between faith and reason by reinterpreting the two creation stories in Genesis 1-3 in his seminal work, *The Lonely Man of Faith*. Unlike Spinoza, who was responding to a theocratic world, Soloveitchik was responding to the success of materialism in modern science, the individualism achieved by liberal democracy, and the privatization and commodification of faith. We will discuss this work with an eye to determining how Soloveitchik conveys the downside of modern success. He structures his reading of Genesis 1-3 by focusing on the two depictions of Adam in the text. Adam I attempts to discern the complex workings of the world and harness it for human productivity and comfort. Adam II seeks to understand the purpose and meaning behind the world, striving for a relationship with a higher power. The outcome of these paradigms is that Adam II, the person of faith, feels lonely, estranged and alienated, because Adam I rejects his dialectical nature. He regards himself as the totality of the human person. He is narcissistic, arrogant, and demonic. He cannot hear Adam II and dismisses covenantal faith community as superfluous and obsolete. As a result, Adam II withdraws from society, lonely and solitary. Does Soloveitchik's description convey an accurate representation of conflicts in our own society? Can this rift be repaired?

**Readings (65 pages):**

1. Joseph Soloveitchik, *The Lonely Man of Faith* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), pp. 1-44, 75-96.

## IV. Grading Scale and Rubrics

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### Grading Scale

For information on UF's grading policies for assigning grade points, see [here](#).

A	94 - 100%		C	74 - 76%
A-	90 - 93%		C-	70 - 73%
B+	87 - 89%		D+	67 - 69%
B	84 - 86%		D	64 - 66%
B-	80 - 83%		D-	60 - 63%
C+	77 - 79%		E	<60

## Grading Rubrics

### Participation Rubric

<b>A</b> (90-100%)	Typically comes to class with pre-prepared questions about the readings. Engages others about ideas, respects the opinions of others and consistently elevates the level of discussion.
<b>B</b> (80-89%)	Does not always come to class with pre-prepared questions about the reading. Waits passively for others to raise interesting issues. Some in this category, while courteous and articulate, do not adequately listen to other participants or relate their comments to the direction of the conversation.
<b>C</b> (70-79%)	Attends regularly but typically is an infrequent or unwilling participant in discussion. Is only adequately prepared for discussion.
<b>D</b> (60-69%)	Fails to attend class regularly and is inadequately prepared for discussion. Is an unwilling participant in discussion.
<b>E</b> (<60%)	Attends class infrequently and is wholly unprepared for discussion. Refuses to participate in discussion.

### Examination Rubric: Essays and Short Answers

	<b>Completeness</b>	<b>Analysis</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Writing</b>
<b>A</b> (90-100%)	Shows a thorough understanding of the question. Addresses all aspects of the question completely.	Analyses, evaluates, compares and/or contrasts issues and events with depth.	Incorporates pertinent and detailed information from both class discussions and assigned readings.	Presents all information clearly and concisely, in an organized manner.
<b>B</b> (80-89%)	Presents a general understanding of the question. Completely addresses most aspects of the question or address all aspects incompletely.	Analyses or evaluates issues and events, but not in any depth.	Includes relevant facts, examples and details but does not support all aspects of the task evenly.	Presents information fairly and evenly and may have minor organization problems.
<b>C</b> (70-79%)	Shows a limited understanding of the question. Does not address most aspects of the question.	Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events beyond stating accurate, relevant facts.	Includes relevant facts, examples and details, but omits concrete examples, includes inaccurate information and/or does not support all aspects of the task.	Lacks focus, somewhat interfering with comprehension.
<b>D</b> (60-69%)	Fails fully to answer the specific central question.	Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events beyond stating vague, irrelevant, and/or inaccurate facts.	Does not incorporate information from pertinent class discussion and/or assigned readings.	Organizational problems prevent comprehension.
<b>E</b> (<60%)	Does not answer the specific central question.	Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events.	Does not adduce any evidence.	Incomprehensible organization and prose.

## Writing Rubric

	<b>Thesis and Argumentation</b>	<b>Use of Sources</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Grammar, mechanics and style</b>
<b>A</b> (90-100%)	Thesis is clear, specific, and presents a thoughtful, critical, engaging, and creative interpretation. Argument fully supports the thesis both logically and thoroughly.	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are well incorporated, utilized, and contextualized throughout.	Clear organization. Introduction provides adequate background information and ends with a thesis. Details are in logical order. Conclusion is strong and states the point of the paper.	No errors.
<b>B</b> (80-89%)	Thesis is clear and specific, but not as critical or original. Shows insight and attention to the text under consideration. May have gaps in argument's logic.	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are incorporated but not contextualized significantly.	Clear organization. Introduction clearly states thesis, but does not provide as much background information. Details are in logical order, but may be more difficult to follow. Conclusion is recognizable and ties up almost all loose ends.	A few errors.
<b>C</b> (70-79%)	Thesis is present but not clear or specific, demonstrating a lack of critical engagement to the text. Argument is weak, missing important details or making logical leaps with little support.	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are mostly incorporated but are not properly contextualized.	Significant lapses in organization. Introduction states thesis but does not adequately provide background information. Some details not in logical or expected order that results in a distracting read. Conclusion is recognizable but does not tie up all loose ends.	Some errors.
<b>D</b> (60-69%)	Thesis is vague and/or confused. Demonstrates a failure to understand the text. Argument lacks any logical flow and does not utilize any source material.	Primary and/or secondary texts are almost wholly absent.	Poor, hard-to-follow organization. There is no clear introduction of the main topic or thesis. There is no clear conclusion, and the paper just ends. Little or no employment of logical body paragraphs.	Many errors.
<b>E</b> (<60%)	There is neither a thesis nor any argument.	Primary and/or secondary texts are wholly absent.	The paper is wholly disorganized, lacking an introduction, conclusion or any logical coherence.	Scores of errors.

## V. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

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At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the Quest the General Education student learning outcomes for Humanities (H).

Humanities (H) Humanities courses must afford students the ability to think critically through the mastering of subjects concerned with human culture, especially literature, history, art, music, and philosophy, and must include selections from the Western canon.

Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the relevant factors that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

**Content:** *Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline(s).*

- Identify, describe, and explain the methodologies used across the disciplines of medieval and early modern Jewish thought to examine essential ideas about faith and reason (Quest 1, H). **Assessment:** analytical essays, reading responses, final exam.
- Identify, describe, and explain key ideas and questions about faith and reason (Quest 1, H). **Assessment:** analytical essays, reading responses, final exam.

**Critical Thinking:** *Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the discipline(s).*

- Analyze the relationship of faith and reason from ancient world to present (Quest 1, H). **Assessment:** active class participation, analytical essays, reading responses.
- Analyze and evaluate debates about whether faith and reason are in harmony or conflict, using close reading, critical analysis, class discussion, and personal reflection. (Quest 1, H). **Assessment:** analytical essays, reading responses.

**Communication:** *Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).*

- Develop and present clear and effective written and oral work that demonstrates critical engagement with course texts (Quest 1, H). **Assessment:** analytical essays, reading responses.
- Communicate well-supported ideas and arguments effectively within class discussion and debates, with clear oral presentation and written work articulating students' personal experiences and reflections on faith and reason (Quest 1, H). **Assessment:** active class participation, analytical essays.

**Connection:** *Students connect course content with meaningful critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond.*

- Connect course content with students' intellectual, personal, and professional lives at UF and beyond. (Quest 1). **Assessment:** experiential learning component.
- Reflect on students' own and others' experience with thinking about the practical consequences of their religious beliefs, in class discussion and written work (Quest 1). **Assessment:** class discussion and participation.

## VI. Quest Learning Experiences

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### 1. Details of Experiential Learning Component

During this semester, the class will participate in a public lecture on campus from a guest faculty member. Students will be asked to complete a short reading beforehand and to prepare questions to ask the speaker. By Friday, on the 10th week of class at 11:59pm, students will submit a minimum 200-word analysis assignment that responds to the central themes of the reading and lecture.

### 2. Details of Self-Reflection Component

Self-reflection is a central component in two assignments in this course: the reading responses and the essays (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>). This is indicated in the description of graded work section of this syllabus with an (R). In these opportunities for self-reflection offered by specific activities throughout the course, students will reflect on the broader implications of the faith and reasoning by considering the impact to themselves and/or to a wider community.



## VII. Required Policies

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### Attendance Policy

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found [here](#).

### Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

### UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available [here](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via [this link](#). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at [GatorEvals Public Data](#).