



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Hermann Cohen's thought: Ethics Reason Judaism - 14735

Last update 04-09-2016

HU Credits: 4

Degree/Cycle: 2nd degree (Master)

Responsible Department: jewish thought

Academic year: 0

Semester: Yearly

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Professor Benjamin Pollock

Coordinator Email: benjamin.pollock@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: by appointment

Teaching Staff:

Prof Benjamin Pollock

Course/Module description:

Hermann Cohen is considered one of the most important Jewish philosophers of the modern period. In the last decades of the 19th Century, as professor of philosophy at the University of Marburg, Cohen was the central figure in the movement of return to Kant's thought in German philosophy. At the same time, Cohen himself returned to the ethical views of the Biblical prophets, and discovered there an ethical model that complemented the rational ethics of Kant. In this seminar, we will study in-depth the Jewish philosophy of Hermann Cohen: its sources in Kant's philosophy, its expressions in Cohen's interpretations of the rabbis and of Maimonides, and - in particular - in his last and most famous book, *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism*. Reading Cohen's writings will also demand that we grapple with important questions that arise in them: what is the connection - if one exists at all - between (Jewish) religion and ethics? To what extent can we demand from Judaism that it articulate itself in coherent philosophical terms? Does religion contribute to our lives in ways that cannot be captured through rational thought?

Course/Module aims:

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

- read and analyze a complex and deep philosophical text, in order to understand it both as a whole and in its particular arguments
- to evaluate philosophical claims about religion and ethics
- to weigh responsibly and seriously the role of philosophy in Jewish life

Attendance requirements(%):

50

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: class text reading; periodic lectures

Course/Module Content:

See Hebrew list

Required Reading:

see Hebrew reading list

Additional Reading Material:

Course/Module evaluation:

End of year written/oral examination 0 %

Presentation 10 %

Participation in Tutorials 25 %

Project work 65 %

Assignments 0 %

Reports 0 %

Research project 0 %

Quizzes 0 %

Other 0 %

Additional information:

** every student will be expected to present a summary of the weekly reading (with some questions) once over the course of the year (10% of final grade)*

** the grade for participation (25%) includes a number of reading exercises over the course (e.g., summarizing arguments, raising questions)*