



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Hope: Human Odyssey to Political Existentialism - 56151

Last update 19-08-2025

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)

Responsible Department: Political Science

Academic year: 0

Semester: 2nd Semester

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: E. Safra

Course/Module Coordinator: Tom Alfia

Coordinator Email: tom.alfia@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: By appointment

Teaching Staff:

Course/Module description:

This is an online course, studied independently at one's own pace on edX platform.

The course aims to explore: What sets us apart, and bring us together, as humans – and what the socio-political implications may be. HOPE -- Human Odyssey to Political Existentialism -- is a unique journey into the human condition and its politics.

The course was developed by Princeton University in collaboration with Tel Aviv University.

The course is taught in English with Hebrew subtitles. Course assignments and final exam can be submitted in English or Hebrew.

Course/Module aims:

In this course we cover a dozen themes – our distinctively human features: human/nature, identity & authenticity, freedom, reflection, happiness, death & dread, meaning, morality, truth & trust, God & religion, alienation & love, and finally – hope. We explore each of these through both a personal, and a political lens.

HOPE is a richly interdisciplinary course: anchored in political science and philosophy, it also draws on history, sociology, psychology, economy, and even biology – synthesizing theoretical insights with empirical findings, both vintage and novel. HOPE shows that science and art can create a wonderful synergy when studying – indeed foregrounding – our humanity.

HOPE includes online talks, interviews, and student discussions; it introduces a host of fascinating questions to probe alone, and together.

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

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

Recognize the tenets, thinkers, and concepts of existentialism.

Indicate the traits that distinguish humans from other animals.

Explain the meanings of identity and authenticity, and how they impact societies.

Spell out the link between liberty, freedom, and reflection.

Evaluate types of happiness and the point of pursuing it – privately and publicly.

Critique the workings of death dread, and the politics of fear.

Analyze how people seek personal meaning and political legitimacy.

Assess various theories of truth and trust, and their current crises.

*Explain how our moral sense, and social contracts, have emerged and evolved.
Evaluate the key roles of God/s and religion in human civilization.
Illustrate the interplay of love and alienation, and the use of both in politics.
Explore what, and how much, we may hope for.*

Attendance requirements(%):

0

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: HOPE is an online course, studied independently in one's own pace. It includes on-line lectures, assignments and student forum discussions.

Course/Module Content:

*Lesson 1: Nature/ Humanity
Lesson 2: Identity and Authenticity
Lesson 3: Freedom and Liberty
Lesson 4: Reflection
Lesson 5: Happiness
Lesson 6: Fear and death dread
Lesson 7: Meaning
Lesson 8: Truth and Trust
Lesson 9: Morality
Lesson 10: God and Religion
Lesson 11: Alienation and Love
Lesson 12: Hope*

Required Reading:

The course draws on myriad academic books and articles. If you wish to engage further with the source material, please explore the complete bibliography of HOPE on edX website which offers both thematic and general readings.

Additional Reading Material:

Grading Scheme:

*Computerized Exam - Personal Computer % 80
Submission assignments during the semester: Exercises / Essays / Audits / Reports / Forum / Simulation / others 20 %*

Additional information:

For the course website and a short introductory video click here:

https://www.edx.org/learn/social-science/tel-aviv-university-hope-what-makes-us-human-2?index&eq;product&queryID&eq;35ba561a7345626518c54cc6593e0ddf&position&eq;3&linked_from&eq;autocomplete&c&eq;autocomplete