

Spirituality & Social Justice: Martin Luther King, Jr. & Abraham Joshua Heschel

Spring 2007 Semester
Wednesdays, 5:00-7:00 pm
Room 102-103, HC

Instructors:

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Teaching Assistant:

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Course Description:

In this semester-length course, the lives and writings of King and Heschel are critically examined, exploring areas of commonality and difference. How did these men read the sacred texts of their traditions? Who were their teachers and spiritual guides? How did they enter public life? What was their understanding of the relationship between religion and American democracy? Where do King and Heschel fit within the history of Western religion and social activism?

Required Reading (all available in the ANTS bookstore):

-Abraham Joshua Heschel, edited by Susannah Heschel, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity (MGSA)*

-Abraham Joshua Heschel, edited by Fritz Rothchild, *Between God and Man (BGM)*

-James Washington, editor, *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.*

-Vincent Harding, *The Inconvenient Hero*

Recommended Reading:

-Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man*

-James Cone, *Martin & Malcolm, & America: A Dream or a Nightmare*

Assignments:

Students taking this course for credit are required to submit 4 response papers, each 1,000 words, on the following dates: **February 21, March 21, April 18, and May 9**; paper topics will be discussed in class.

Course Schedule & Reading Assignments:

I. January 31 – Kirk Jones (KJ) & Or Rose (ONR)

-Unsung Heroes: Early Influences on Martin Luther King, Jr. – KJ

-Heschel & Hasidism: Spiritual Roots – ONR

Readings:

-AJH, “Hasidism as a New Approach to Torah, *MGSA*, pp. 33-39.

-Edward K. Kaplan, “Readiness Before God: Abraham Joshua Heschel in Europe,” *Conservative Judaism*, L, #2-3, 1998, pp. 22-35.

-Arthur Green, “Abraham Joshua Heschel: Recasting Hasidism for Moderns, *Tikkun*, Jan/Feb, 1999, pp. 1-11.

II. February 7 – KJ –An Overview of the Life & Contributions of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Readings:

-Vincent Harding, *The Inconvenient Hero*, Introduction and Chapters 1-4.

-Lawrence Jones, “The Black Churches in Historical Perspectives,” *The Crisis*, November 1982, pp.402-406.

-Lewis Baldwin, “Martin Luther King, Jr., The Black Church, and the Black Messianic Vision,” *The Journal of the I.T.C.*, pp.93 -108.

-David Garrow, “Martin Luther King, Jr.,” *World Book Online Reference Center*, 2007.

III. February 14 – ONR – God in Search of Man I: Heschel’s Theology

Readings:

-AJH, “Jewish Theology,” *MGSA*, pp. 154-163.

-AJH, “Part I: Ways to His Presence,” *BGM*, pp. 35-87.

-Edward Kaplan, “Abraham Joshua Heschel,” *Interpreters of Judaism in the Late Twentieth Century*, pp. 132-150.

-Neil Gillman, “Epistemological Tensions in Heschel’s Thought,” *Conservative Judaism*, L, #2-3, 1998, pp. 77-83.

IV. February 21 – KJ – Nonviolence or Nonexistence?

Readings:

-*A Testament of Hope*, Selections 1-13.

V. February 28 – ONR – God in Search of Man II: Heschel's Theology

Readings:

-AJH, "Part II: The God of the Prophets," *BGM*, pp. 91-126.

-AJH, "Part III: Man & His Needs," *BGM*, pp. 129-151.

-Eliezer Berkowitz, "Dr. A.J. Heschel's Theology of Pathos," *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Thought*, 6, Spring-Summer 1964, pp. 67-104.

-John C. Merkle, "Heschel's Theology of Pathos," *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Exploring His Life and Thought*, pp. 66-83.

VI. March 7 – KJ – "A Single Garment of Destiny": We Are All Tied Together

Readings:

-*A Testament of Hope*, Selections 14-32

VII. March 14 – ONR – Faith Enacted: Jewish Observance

Readings:

-AJH, "Toward an Understanding of Halacha," *MGSA*, pp. 127-145.

-AJH, "Part IV: Religious Observance," *BGM*, pp. 129-151.

-James Hyman, "Meaningfulness, the Ineffable, and the Commandments," *Conservative Judaism*, L, #2-3, 1998, pp. 84-99.

-Arnold Eisen, "Re-Reading Heschel on the Commandments," *Modern Judaism* 9, #1, 1989, pp.1-33.

VIII. March 21 – KJ – Religious Institutions and Social Change

Readings:

-James Washington, *A Testament of Hope*, Selections 50, 53, 54, and 55.

IX. March 28 – ONR – In the Footsteps of the Prophets: Civil Rights

Readings:

-AJH, “Religion and Race,” *The Insecurity of Freedom*, pp. 85-99.

-AJH, “Part III: Toward A Just Society,” *MGSA*, pp. 232.

-AJH, “Part V: The Meaning of this Hour,” *BGM*, pp. 233-258.

-Susannah Heschel, “Theological Affinities in the Writings of Abraham Joshua Heschel and Martin Luther King, Jr.,” *Conservative Judaism*, L, #2-3, pp. 126-143.

-Edward K. Kaplan, “Prophetic Radicalism: Sacred Humanism & Social Action,” *Holiness in Words: Abraham Joshua Heschel’s Poetics of Piety*, pp. 100-113.

April 4 – Passover/Easter Break – No Class

***Martin Luther King, Jr. Slain 39 Years Ago in Memphis, Tennessee**

X. April 11 - KJ & ONR

-A Time to Break Silence – KJ

-Clergy & Laity Concerned about Vietnam – ONR

Readings:

KJ - *A Testament of Hope*, Selections 40, 42, 43.

ONR – AJH – “The Moral Outrage of Vietnam,” *Vietnam, Crisis of Conscience*, pp. 48-61.

ONR - Michael E. Staub, “Protect and Keep: Vietnam, Israel, and the Politics of Theology,” *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Liberalism in Post-War America*, pp. 112-152.

XI. April 18 – ONR – Faith & Interfaith Relations

Readings:

-AJH, “Part IV: No Religion is an Island,” *MGSA*, pp. 235-302.

-Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “Confrontation,” *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Thought*, 6:2, 1964, pp. 5-29.

-Reuven Kimmelman, “Rabbis Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Abraham Joshua Heschel on Jewish-Christian Relations,” *The Edah Journal* 4:2, 2004, pp. 1-21.

-Eva Fleischner, “Heschel’s Significance for Jewish-Christian Relations,” *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Exploring His Life and Thought*, pp. 142-164.

XII. April 25 – KJ – Preaching and Teaching in the Public Square

Readings:

-*A Testament of Hope*, Selection 36.

-Frederick Downing, “Martin Luther King, Jr. As a Public Theologian,” *Theology Today*.

-Kirk Byron Jones, “Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Dancing Spirit,” unpublished.

XIII. May 2 – ONR – Heschel’s Legacy Today

-A Screening of Carl Stern’s Interview with Dr. Heschel (pp. 395-412 in *MGSA*)

-A Conversation with Heschel’s Students: Rabbi Arthur Green & Dr. Edward Kaplan

XIV. May 9 – KJ – Letter from Birmingham Jail

Readings:

-*A Testament of Hope*, Selection 46

XV. May 16 – KJ & ONR – Closing Thoughts & Dinner (HC Cafeteria)

Readings:

-*The Inconvenient Hero*, Chapter 5 and Epilogue

-AJH, “Death as Homecoming,” *MGSA*, pp. 366-377
