History of
Secular Humanistic Judaism – I and II

SHJ 501 – SHJ 502

May 2010

Syllabus

International Institute
for Secular Humanistic Judaism

Faculty: Rabbi Adam Chalom, Ph.D.

Course Description

How did Jewish life become so diverse today? Who were the first Jews to connect with Jewish culture independent of religion? And how did they lead to Secular Humanistic Judaism? These courses are a review of the major personalities who laid the foundation of a Secular Humanistic Judaism during the past three hundred years.

Required Texts

- Hecht, Jennifer Michael. Doubt: A History- The Great Doubters and Their Legacy of Innovation from Socrates and Jesus to Thomas Jefferson and Emily Dickinson.
- Kogel & Katz, eds. Judaism in a Secular Age: An Anthology of Secular Humanistic Jewish Thought. Available from IISHJ.
- Levy, Karen ed. The Early Modern European Roots of Secular Humanistic Judaism. Available from IISHJ
- Malkin, Yaakov. Epicurus and Apikorsim: The Influence of the Greek Epicurus and Jewish Apikorsim on Judaism. Available from IISHJ.
- Muraskin, Bennett. Humanist Readings in Jewish Folklore. Available from IISHJ.
- Coursepack I and Coursepack II – prepared by IISHJ, distributed in PDF format
Assignments

1) **Pre-Class**: Choose your two favorite contributors to *Judaism in a Secular Age: an Anthology of Secular Humanistic Jewish Thought* and prepare a 10 minute discussion on each contributor.

2) **SHJ 501 Paper**: Students should complete one 10-20 page paper (12 point font, double-spaced, 1 inch margins) on a topic to be determined in consultation with the instructor, related to material covered in SHJ 501 (units 1 through 10 below).

3) **SHJ 502 Paper**: Students should complete one 10-20 page paper (12 point font, double-spaced, 1 inch margins) on a topic to be determined in consultation with the instructor, related to material covered in SHJ 502 (units 11 through 20 below).

Readings

**SHJ 501 – History of Secular Humanistic Judaism I**

1. **What are “Roots”?**

2. **Roots of Secular Humanistic Judaism in “Jewish Tradition”**
   - Gitelman ed., *Religion or Ethnicity*, pp5-37
   - Biblical Books: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes

3. **The Apikoros and “Folk Tradition”**
   - Malkin, *Epicurus and Apikorsim*, all
   - Muraskin, *Humanist Readings*, all
   - Coursepack: Rabbinic Sources on the Apikoros and Aher/Elisha ben Avuyah
4. **Jewish Philosophy and Medieval/Renaissance Judaism**


**Coursepack:** Philo, “On the Creation” 1-3; Selections of Medieval Spanish Jewish Poetry and Immanuel of Rome.

5. **Spinoza**

Gitelman ed., *Religion or Ethnicity*, pp38-66

Kogel & Katz eds., *Judaism in a Secular Age*, entry on “Spinoza”


**Coursepack:** Excommunication of Baruch Spinoza

6. **Enlightenment/Haskala**

Hecht, *Doubt: A History*, Ch. 7-8


Locke, John. *Two Treatises of Government* (London, 1688), sections 149-151 (in Chapter XIII) – available online at [http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext05/trgov10.txt](http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext05/trgov10.txt) - search the page for “Sec. 149” to find it quickly.


7. **Emancipation and the Reform Movement**

Cousens ed., *Beyond Tradition*, pp21-62

Gitelman ed., *Religion or Ethnicity*, pp104-130

**Coursepack:** “A Jewish Program of Russification;” Summary of Rabbinical Conferences; Pittsburgh Platforms of Reform Judaism: 1885 and 1999.
8. **Wissenschaft des Jutentums and modern Jewish Studies**  
   [http://books.google.com/books?id=zMfwAsJrFV8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=%22the+golden+tradition%22&cd=2#v=onepage&q=&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=zMfwAsJrFV8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=%22the+golden+tradition%22&cd=2#v=onepage&q=&f=false)  

9. **Yiddishists and Jewish Socialists**  
   Cousens ed., *Beyond Tradition*, pp83-104  
   Levy ed., *Roots of Secular Humanistic Judaism*, pp47-61  
   [http://books.google.com/books?id=zMfwAsJrFV8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=%22the+golden+tradition%22&cd=2#v=onepage&q=&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=zMfwAsJrFV8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=%22the+golden+tradition%22&cd=2#v=onepage&q=&f=false)  
   Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question” – available at  
   Coursepack: Selected Socialist Yiddish Poets; Rosa Luxembourg, “No Room in My Heart for Jewish Suffering”.

10. **Jewish Nationalism: Yiddishism, Cultural Autonomy, Modern Jewish Literature**  
    Kogel & Katz eds., *Judaism in a Secular Age*, pp53-95  
    Coursepack: The Bund, “Decisions on the Nationality Question”.

11. **Cosmopolitanism and Universalism**  
    Cousens ed., *Beyond Tradition*, p119-142  
    Gitelman ed., *Religion or Ethnicity*, pp90-103  
    Kogel & Katz eds., *Judaism in a Secular Age*, pp143-218  
    Coursepack: Felix Adler, “Challenge of Ethical Culture”

12. **Reconstructionism and “Jewish Civilization”**  
    Cousens ed., *Beyond Tradition*, pp63-82  
    Kogel & Katz eds., *Judaism in a Secular Age*, pp32-40

13. **Zionism pre-1948**  
    Kogel & Katz eds., *Judaism in a Secular Age*, pp11-27, 100-142  
    Coursepack: Avraham Shlonsky, “Amal {Toil}”

14. **Zionism/Israel post-1948**  
    Cousens, ed. *Beyond Tradition*, pp105-118  
    Gitelman ed., *Religion or Ethnicity*, pp147-170, 221-238  
    Kogel & Katz eds., *Judaism in a Secular Age*, pp299-364  
    Coursepack: Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel, Selected Israeli poetry.

15. **Secular Jewish Identities in Europe and America**  
    Kogel & Katz eds., *Judaism in a Secular Age*, pp282-298  
16. **Modern Jewish Thought**
Kogel & Katz eds., *Judaism in a Secular Age*, pp28-31

17. **Humanist Philosophy: Ancient and Modern**
Hecht, *Doubt: A History*, Introduction, Chapters 1, 3-6.

18. **Humanist Philosophy: Ancient and Modern**
Hecht, *Doubt: A History*, Chapters 9-10
Coursepack: John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (selections) ; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (selections); Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead* (selection); Jean Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions* (selections); Robert Ingersoll, quotations; Humanist Manifestos (1933, 2003); Fred Edwords, “What is Humanism”.

19. **Building a Movement: Secular Jewishness**
Kogel & Katz, *Judaism in a Secular Age*, pp260-281

20. **Building a Movement: Humanistic Judaism**
Cousens ed., *Beyond Tradition*, pp153-184
Gitelman ed., *Religion or Ethnicity*, pp286-302
Kogel & Katz eds., *Judaism in a Secular Age*, pp221-259