BEING JEWISH
ACCORDING TO SOME FRANCOPHONE PHILOSOPHERS

Introduction (2 classes)

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), Anti-Semite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate (approx. 2 weeks)
- CO 10: entire reading is an endeavor to understand antisemitism
- CO 12: the endeavor functions by applying ethical ideas regarding good faith/bad faith to the topic of antisemitism; Sartre argues that antisemitism is an example of bad faith or denial of the human freedom to choose (CO 10, 1 week; CO 12, 1 week)

Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), “Being Jewish” and “The Temptation of Temptation” (approx. 2 weeks)
- CO 10 & 12: “Being Jewish” explains, against the antisemite, what Judaism uniquely has to offer the world and argues, against Sartre’s ethics of choice, that being Jewish is not a matter of choice but of ethical response to being called on or chosen; “The Temptation of Temptation” explains Talmudic understandings of such ethical response (the Talmud is the second most important sacred text for Jews and once was almost completely physically destroyed by European Christians as being heretical) (CO 10: 1 week; CO 12: 1 week)

Joann Sfar (1971- ), The Rabbi’s Cat (approx. 1 week)
- CO 10: The Rabbi’s Cat, by one of France’s leading graphic novelists, treats Jewish life in Algeria and Algerian Jewish migration to France, and shows different aspects of marginalization of North African Jewish people and cultures by the more dominant European Jewish people and cultures (1/2 week)
- CO 12: The Rabbi’s Cat treats ethical issues regarding religion including religious hypocrisy, sexual repression, and irrationality; it also treats the Jewish ethical idea of inclusive, multivocal textual readings of religious text (1/2 week)

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), “A Testimony Given...” and Monolingualism of the Other, or the Prosthesis of Origin (approx. 2 weeks)
- CO 10: “A Testimony Given...” treats the balance of particularity and universality within Judaism, specifically how a group retains its particular group identity while still aiming at universal ideals; Monolingualism of the Other treats the marginalization of Algerian Jews by the colonial French (1 week)
- CO 12: both texts treat the question of how universal ethical ideals are upheld—or not upheld—by groups with particular identities and interests (1 week)
Hélène Cixous (1937), “My Algeriance, in other words: to depart not to arrive from Algeria,” and *Reveries of the Wild Woman* (approx. 2 weeks)
   CO 10: both works treat the marginalization of Jews in Algeria prior to and during the revolution (personal and legal discrimination, appropriation of Jewish-owned property, etc.) as well as sexism in France (1 week)
   CO 12: both works treat the relation between universal ethical ideals and attachments to particular places and groups (1 week)

Edmond Jabès (1912-1991), “From the Desert...” and *The Book of Questions I* (approx. 2 weeks)
   CO 10 & 12: both books treat the relation between Judaism and the ethical practice of inclusive, plurivocal interpretation of text as well as between Judaism and the ethical concept of hope (CO 10: 1 week; CO 12: 1 week).

Jean-Paul Sartre and Benny Lévy (1945-2003), *Hope Now* (approx. 2 weeks)
   CO 10 & 12: these interviews between an aging and blind Sartre and his young assistant, Lévy, treat Lévy’s idea that Judaism is centrally connected to messianism and Sartre’s interest in a version of that idea to provide a concept of hope for existentialist ethics after the fall of communism (CO 10: 1 week; CO 12: 1 week).

Conclusion (1 class)

**COURSE TOPICS:** being Jewish, varieties of Jewish identity, and antisemitism as treated by some francophone thinkers

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** through their reading, students will become acquainted with the ideas of some influential francophone thinkers on what it is to be Jewish, on the variety of types of Jewish identity, and on antisemitism; in class discussions and papers, students will learn to interpret, analyze, explain, compare and assess those views

“Being Jewish” satisfies Course Objective 10, Diversity and Equity, and Course Objective 12, Ethics, of the Silver Core Curriculum:

**CO10: Diversity and Equity.** Students will demonstrate an understanding of diversity through courses that focus on topics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, physical ability, language, and/or social class with an emphasis on the analysis of equity. Students will apply and evaluate approaches or modes of inquiry used to analyze diversity and equity and the social barriers to these goals.

In general, “Jewish Thought and Philosophy” treats the philosophy and thought of a minority culture and religion—one significantly marginalized and excluded from social and political participation in various periods of history and from various canonical discussions and study (apart from treatment in its role as predecessor to other religions). The course will have variable focus, depending on the specific topic treated by different instructors from different fields, but all topics will pertain to the thought of a minority culture and religion (diversity) that has been marginalized and excluded (equity) and sometimes will in addition discuss the nature of that marginalization and exclusion itself (equity) as well as marginalization and exclusion within Jewish life,
Different instantiations of “Jewish Thought and Philosophy” will treat different ethical issues pertinent to Jewish thought, philosophy, life, culture, politics and religion. Some of those treated will include: the nature of the ethical itself; the religious, political or cultural basis of general ethical principles; just and unjust treatment of others; the ethics of cultural or religious identity; the ethics of exclusion or inclusion; the relation of ethics to politics; the relation of ethics to law; the relation of ethics to religion; the ethics of openness to difference; etc.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:
Students will be able to:
1. interpret, explain and compare ideas on the course topics, and analyze issues and problems found in course texts and discussions
2. state, explain and provide evidence for a thesis about a course text or about an issue regarding course topics
3. distinguish better or worse reasoning in a course discussion or text
4. indicate how a view found in a course text or discussion might have concrete implications or make a difference in theory or practice
5. utilize philosophic approaches to interpret, analyze, explain, compare and assess ideas about what is distinctive about being Jewish, about the variety of types of Jewish identity, and about the nature of antisemitism (CO10, Diversity and Equity)
6. interpret, explain, analyze, compare and assess ethical ideas and principles expressed in or overlooked by discussions of what it is to be Jewish, varieties of Jewish identity, and the nature of antisemitism (CO12, Ethics)

COURSE TEXTS:
Jean-Paul Sartre, Anti-Semite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate (George J. Becker, trans.), Schocken Books


-------, “The Temptation of Temptation” (in Nine Talmudic Readings, Annette Aronowicz, trans.), Indiana University Press (online)

Joann Sfar, The Rabbi’s Cat (Alexis Siegel and Anjali Singh, trans.) (Pantheon)

Jacques Derrida, “A Testimony Given...” (in Elisabeth Weber, Questioning Judaism), Stanford University Press (online)

-------, Monolingualism of the Other, or the Prosthesis of Origin (Patrick Mensah, trans), Stanford University Press
Hélène Cixous (1937), “My Algeriance, in other words: to depart not to arrive from Algeria” (in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts*, Eric Prenowitz, trans.), Routledge (online)

--------, *Reveries of the Wild Woman* (Beverly Bie Brahic, trans.), Northwestern University Press

Edmond Jabès, “From the Desert....” (in *From the Desert to the Book: Dialogues with Marcel Cohen*, Pierre Joris, trans.), Station Hill (online)

--------, *The Book of Questions*, Volume 1 (Rosemarie Waldrop, trans.), Wesleyan University Press


**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Readings as assigned
Participation in class discussions
Class attendance
Four papers (six or seven pages) (assigned 2/6, 2/27, 3/20, 4/10)
Optional fifth paper (six or seven pages) (due the last day of class)

**ATTENDANCE:** Much of the important work in this course goes on in class. Students are expected to be in attendance except in cases of illness, emergency or religious holiday, to be present for the entire seventy-five minute period and not to make appointments that conflict with class sessions. Graded assignments are based, in part, on class discussion. As a result, it is to your disadvantage to miss class.

Attendance is required and will be taken at the beginning of each class session. Students may miss three classes without penalty. Five points will be subtracted from the final grade for the fourth class missed and two points for each class missed after that. Exceptions will be made in the case of illness, emergency or religious holiday. A written excuse must be provided for exceptions to be made.

If you miss class, contact one of your fellow students to find out what we did in your absence and to get notes on the class you missed. Once you have done that, you may wish to talk to the instructor about what you missed.

**PAPERS:** The papers will be essays (not research papers). They will be six or seven pages long. You need use no books other than the course texts in order to write the papers.

In an essay, you state a thesis, explain it and argue for it. The basic structure of an essay is: an introduction in which you state your thesis, the body of the essay in which you explain and argue for your thesis, the conclusion in which you summarize or highlight what you have done in the essay.
Essays will be typed or word-processed, double-spaced, in 10- or 12-point type. They will have a title and a title page. They will be in finished form and without errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation. All quotations will be accompanied by a reference in parentheses. Long quotations will be block indented. Essays will be evaluated on the following basis:

1. Do you have the parts mentioned above (introduction, body, conclusion)?
2. Do you fulfill the functions mentioned above (state thesis, explain it, argue for it, summarize or highlight)?
3. Is the thesis you are writing about an interesting and important one?
4. Does your explanation of the thesis show that it is an interesting and important one? Does your explanation make the basic concepts and terms in your essay clear to the reader?
5. Are your arguments clear and convincing to the reader?
6. Do you use specific examples from the text you are writing about to make your arguments stronger? Do you use direct quotations from the text you are writing about to make your arguments stronger?
7. Does your conclusion add something to the essay as a whole?
8. Is the essay typed (double-spaced)? Does it include a title and a title page? Is it in finished form and without errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation? Are all quotations accompanied by a reference in parentheses?

REFERENCES: Quotations in the text should end with quotation marks followed by a reference in parentheses followed by a period.

EVALUATION: Grades will be based on the papers weighted equally (1/4 each). Excellent class participation may raise your grade somewhat over the mathematical average, at the discretion of the instructor.

Any student who has completed each of the assigned papers may complete the optional fifth paper. The grade on it will replace the student’s lowest grade (supposing that the grade on the optional paper is higher than the lowest grade).

Late papers will lose a letter grade (ten points) for each class session they are late. Exceptions will be made only in the case of serious illness, emergency, or religious holiday. A written excuse must be provided for exceptions to be made.

There will be no extra credit work. The student will be held responsible for knowing what goes on in class.

The grading scale is: 94-100, A; 90-93 A-; 87-89 B+; 84-86 B; 80-83 B-; 77-79 C+; 74-76 C; 70-73 C-; 67-69 D+; 64-66 D; 60-63 D-; below 60, F.

It is the instructor’s policy that cheating, plagiarism or submission of written work for this course which was submitted in another course merits a course grade of F.

COURSE LINKS: The course outline and class assignments can be accessed by visiting <www.unr.edu/~achten/BJS14CO.html>. They can also be accessed by visiting my homepage:
<www.unr.edu/~achten/homepage.html>. My homepage can also be accessed through the Department of Philosophy website <www.unr.edu/philosophy> or by means of a search engine such as Google: <www.google.com> (search for: “Deborah Achtenberg” homepage).

**USE OF THE INTERNET:** Use of the internet for research purposes can be appropriate. However, students should use their own ideas in their papers. In addition, they should be aware that papers plagiarized from internet sources can easily be detected through the use of a search engine such as Google.

**PLAGIARISM:** Plagiarism is a serious offense. You plagiarize when you use someone else’s words or ideas without attribution. When you do this, you are putting forward someone else’s work as if it were your own.

Changing a few words in a phrase or sentence is not enough to avoid plagiarism. (1) Instead, when you utilize someone else’s exact phrases, put them in quotation marks and cite in parentheses the person whose words you have used. (2) It is fine to paraphrase someone, but when you do, you must say so. You can make it clear by saying “As Sartre says...” or “According to Lévy...”. (3) Finally, do not utilize even short phrases from another person’s work without a citation. If you follow these guidelines, you will find it is easy to use sources in your own writing without being academically dishonest.

**INTERNET RESOURCES:** Some on-line reference books of use to students include (you may need UNR access for some of these sites; visit the UNR library Off-campus Access page to learn how to gain access):

*Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
The on-line edition of Routledge's encyclopedia of philosophy.

*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
Another good on-line encyclopedia of philosophy, this one from Stanford University.

Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper
In addition to suggestions I will make in class, you may find this webpage from Jim Pryor at NYU's Department of Philosophy helpful.

*Webster's Unabridged Dictionary*

*Oxford English Dictionary*
The electronic version of the OED with the latest new and revised entries.

WordReference.com
An on-line French, Italian and Spanish translation dictionary provided by Michael Kellogg.
German-English Dictionary
An on-line German translation dictionary provided by the Chemnitz Technical University and Frank Richter.

Liddell, Scott, Jones Lexicon
Perseus's on-line version of the Liddell, Scott, Jones lexicon (dictionary) of ancient Greek. (To look up a transliterated Greek word--such as logos or physis--type the word in the Find space, click on the Submit Query button, then double-click on Middle Liddell which will take you to definitions found in the middle-sized Liddell, Scott, Jones Lexicon.)

Words

CLASS FORMAT: This class will be a combination of lecture and discussion. Discussions generally will have a focus rather than being general discussion or debate. Students will be expected to respond to questions asking them to reflect on the texts and the issues raised, to speculate in a thoughtful way when not sure, and in general to participate in discussion.

Class discussions will refer to the course texts. Students will need to bring the course texts to class if they are to benefit from lectures and discussions.

**Web surfing and sending or reading e-mail or text messages during class are not allowed.** In addition, please refrain from carrying on extensive side conversations during class discussion and from eating during class. Also, please silence cell phones before class.

STUDYING: Many students will find that they do better work in this course if they study together with other students.

REQUIRED STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: "Cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and penalties can include canceling a student's enrollment without a grade, giving an F for the course or for the assignment. For more details, see the University of Nevada, Reno, General Catalog."

REQUIRED STATEMENT ON DISABILITY POLICY: “Any student with a disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building, Suite 101) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.”

REQUIRED STATEMENT ON AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDING: “Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may be given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.”
REQUIRED STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC SUCCESS SERVICES: If you wish to improve in this course, your first resource is your instructor. After that, and with the guidance of your instructor, you may wish to utilize, at no cost, the resources of the Tutoring Center (784-6801 or www.unr.edu/tutoring-center) or the University Writing Center (784-6030 or http://www.unr.edu/writing-center).

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My office hours are 2:30 - 3:30 p.m., Tuesday, and noon to 1:00 p.m., Wednesday, or by appointment (Cain Hall 108E). Please feel free to come by to discuss the course topics or your progress in the course. I look forward to meeting with you for such discussions, and I have plenty of time to meet with you. Please contact me as much as possible in person or by phone so that I can get to know you better!

Please note that I do advising in person, not by e-mail. If my office hours are inconvenient for you, I am happy to meet with you at some other time. If you wish to make an appointment to see me at another time, call 784-6742 (my office), see me before or after class, or drop by my office and see if I am there. If you try to get in touch with me and cannot, leave a voice mail message or a note with your phone number so that I can call you.

Please do not send e-mail messages informing me that you will not be attending class or asking me what we did in class. Please use e-mail sparingly, primarily in unusual or emergency circumstances: <achten@unr.edu>. I want to get to know you, and the best way for that to happen in the short time we have together is for us to meet in person.