

Syllabus GOV 382M (unique #38920) 2012
Maimonides' *Guide Of The Perplexed*
TTH 12:30pm-2:00pm Calhoun 22
(NOTE: No class April 19)

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Office Hours: Monday, 1:30-4:30 P. M.

TEXT to be studied:

The Guide of the Perplexed, Pines trans., Chicago, ISBN-10: 0226502309.

FORMAL REQUIREMENTS AND BASIS OF GRADING:

- 10-15 page interpretative paper on some portion of, or theme or problem in, *The Guide* and/or another work of Maimonides. Some suggested topics will be distributed. Due May 11 (40%).
- class participation (10%).
- Beginning second week (Jan 23), ten short assignments, one due by email before the first class of each of ten of the remaining weeks: 5 one-two page papers (500 words max.) interpreting a portion of the text that is to be discussed that week; AND 5 sets of three questions (each set 200 words max.) that would need to be answered to understand any portion of the text to be discussed that week (50%).

As an introduction to Maimonides, study before the first class the following few pages:

Excerpts from Maimonides' first work, *Treatise on the Art of Logic*, chaps. 3, 8, and esp. 14, in *Ethical Writings*, pp. 156-61 (see below). The key portion of chap. 14 (M's description of political science) is also available in *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (Cornell, 1963 and 2011).

—together with:

Leo Strauss, "Maimonides' Statement on Political Science," chap. 6 of *What is Political Philosophy?*, Free Press, 1959, 155-69.

_____, "Note on Maimonides' *Treatise on the Art of Logic*," in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*, Chicago, 1983, 208-9.

Also recommended, for M's own "map" to the traditional Jewish legal writings:

Maimonides' Introduction to the Talmud [actually, this is the Introduction to M's *Commentary on the Mishnah*], trans. Lampel, Judaica Press, 1975 and 1998.

Maimonides' statement of the thirteen cardinal principles of the Judaic faith, in his *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Introduction to Sanhedrin, Pereq Heleq, available in

—Twersky, ed., *A Maimonides Reader* (Behrman House 1972) pp. 417-23. [The whole of M.'s "introduction" is well worth reading, 402-23.]

—Available online at: <http://www.panix.com/~jjbaker/13yesodos.html>

—Also helpful for orientation to the tradition of Jewish legal writings is:

Everyman's Talmud, ed. Cohen. Schocken, 1975, esp. the introd., pp. xv-xxxvii.

—The Talmud in English is available online: <http://halakhah.com/>

Other relevant works of Maimonides:

The Book of Knowledge (first volume of M's *Misneh Torah* or codification of the law), trans. Hyamson. Feldheim 1974. The most important chapters (the first four) are better translated in Lerner, below. Illuminating is L. Strauss, "Notes on Maimonides' Book of Knowledge," in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*. Also Strauss's review of Hyamson's edition, in *Review of Religion* 4 (1939) 448-56.

Ethical Writings of Maimonides, trans. and ed. Weiss and Butterworth. Dover, 1983.

Ralph Lerner, *Maimonides' Empire of Light*. Chicago, 2000. Contains accurate translations of M's Epistle to Yemen and On Astrology, Treatise on Resurrection, and key chaps. of *The Book of Knowledge*—along with helpful introductions to these works, as well as discussion of *The Guide*.

Other selected useful secondary literature:

Kraemer, Joel L. *Maimonides: The Life and World of One of Civilization's Greatest Minds*. Chicago, 2008. (Good bedtime reading.)

Lerner, Ralph. "Maimonides." *History of Political Philosophy*. Ed. Strauss and Cropsey. Chicago, 2nd ed., 1987: 203-22.

———. "Maimonides' Letter on Astrology." *History of Religions* 8 (1968): 143-58.

———. "Maimonides' Treatise on Resurrection." *History of Religions* 23 (1983): 140-55.

———. "Maimonides' Governance of the Solitary." In *Perspectives on Maimonides*. Ed. Kraemer. Oxford, 1991: 33-46.

Strauss, Leo. "The Literary Character of the *Guide for the Perplexed*," in *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. Free Press, 1952.

———. "Note on Maimonides' Letter on Astrology." In *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*.

———. "Some Remarks on the Political Science of Maimonides and Farabi." *Interpretation* 18:1 (1990) 3-30.

———. *Philosophy and Law: Contributions to the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors*. Trans. Eve Adler. SUNY, 1995.

———. "The Place of the Doctrine of Providence According to Maimonides." *Review of Metaphysics* 57:3 (2004).

Twersky, Isadore. *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)*. Yale, 1980.

Chronology of the four most significant books of Maimonides (born about 1138, d. about 1204)

- 1) Around 1163: *Treatise on Logic*, in Arabic (the only painstaking translation of the entire work is: *Traité de logique*, trans. Brague, Desclée de Brouwer, 1996).
- 2) 1161-68: *Commentary on the Mishnah*, written in Judeo-Arabic (i. e., Arabic written with the Hebrew alphabet); six vols. corresponding to the six parts of the *Misnah*, (which is the core of the Talmudic writings, being the written version of the oral law, upon which the rest of the Talmud comments); this was somewhat revised during the rest of M's life, in light of and subordinated to the next item, *Misneh Torah*. —Esp. important are the Introduction to the entire work (for trans., see above); the Introduction to *Tractate Sanhedrin*, with the famous 13 principles of the law (see above); and *Eight Chapters* or Introd. to *Pirke Avot* (M.'s major treatise on ethics—in *Ethical Writings* above).
- 3) 1168-77: *Misneh Torah*, in Hebrew, 14 vols.—M's codification of the Jewish law.
- 4) 1185-91: *Guide of the Perplexed*, in Judeo-Arabic.