

# Philosophy of Secular Humanistic Judaism (SHJ 400)

June 2012

Faculty: Rabbi Adam Chalom

## Coursepacket and Syllabus

### Required Reading

- Louise M. Antony, ed. *Philosophers without Gods: Meditations on Atheism and the Secular Life* (K)
- Eva Goldfinger, *Basic Ideas of Secular Humanistic Judaism* (IISHJ)
- Christopher Hitchens, ed. *The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever* (K)
- Yaakov Malkin, *Judaism Without God? Judaism as Culture and Bible as Literature* (IISHJ, K)
- Sherwin Wine, *Staying Sane in a Crazy World* (IISHJ)
- Frequently Asked Questions: <http://www.lcshj.org/FAQHumanisticJudaism.html>

Even though we will not be reading the entire volume, some reading selections will be drawn from these titles, which you should own in any case:

- Kogel & Katz, eds. *Judaism in a Secular Age: An Anthology of Secular Humanistic Jewish Thought* (IISHJ)
- Cohn-Sherbok, Rowens, Cook, eds. *Life of Courage: Sherwin Wine and Humanistic Judaism* (IISHJ)

### Pre-course assignments – students must do BOTH

- 1) Watch ONE of the following movies and create 7 discussion questions you would use if running a program for Secular Humanistic Judaism based on a movie showing and/or discussion.
  - a. **The Invention of Lying** (2009)
  - b. **A Price Above Rubies** (1998)
  - c. **Happy Feet** (2006)
  - d. **The Golden Compass** (2007)
- 2) Write the 5 strongest arguments you can think of **in opposition to** the validity or viability of Secular Humanistic Judaism. Feel free to include data, citations, etc. Submit to the instructor, Rabbi Adam Chalom, at [achalom@iishj.org](mailto:achalom@iishj.org) at least **one week** before the course begins.

### For course fulfillment:

- 1) Choose EITHER **Sherwin Wine, *Judaism Beyond God* (hardcover 1995 edition)** OR **Daniel Friedman, *Jews Without Judaism: Conversations with an Unconventional Rabbi* (Prometheus Books, 2002)**. Read the book and write a 5-8 page assessment of the book (1 inch margin, 12 point font, double space). Do not write a detailed review, but rather a summary of the approach and an assessment of the book's strengths and weaknesses as a presentation of Secular Humanistic Judaism.
- 2) Choose any one of the "Philosophy on One Foot: Frequently Asked Questions" covered in the seminar (a complete list will be distributed at the end of the course) to write a 10-20 page detailed response (1 inch margins, 12 point font, double space), complete with data, citations, references, etc.

**Course assignments must be submitted by the end of April 2013 to receive course credit.**

# 1) Philosophy and Jewish Philosophy: An Introduction

## a. Coursepacket

Introductory essay and discussion questions .....	6
Judith Plaskow, <i>Standing Again at Sinai</i> , Introduction and Chapter 1 (selection) .....	7
Sherwin Wine, <i>Celebration: A Ceremonial and Philosophic Guide</i> (selections) .....	20

## b. Course texts

**Basic Ideas**, Section I – Introduction to Secular Humanistic Judaism

**Philosophers Without Gods**, “Introduction”, ch. 1, 2, 3

**Portable Atheist**, “Introduction”, Lucretius

**Staying Sane**, “Preamble”

Sherwin Wine, “Foreword” “Believing is Better than Non-Believing” and “Secular Humanistic Jewish Ideology” in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

Yehuda Bauer, “Introduction” in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

## c. Web-based readings

“What is Philosophy?” Watch <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfYw9OqD8YA> with Massimo Pigliucci (CUNY)

Encyclopedia Judaica (2008), article on “Philosophy, Jewish” –

[http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0016\\_0\\_15718.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0016_0_15718.html)

Immanuel Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” <http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html>

STUMP, ELEONORE (1998). “Religion, philosophy of.” In E. Craig (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

<http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/K113>

# 2) Reality and God

## a. Coursepacket

Introductory essay and discussion questions .....	23
---	----

Chet Mirman, “Does God Exist? Why It Doesn’t Matter” <i>Humanistic Judaism</i> Autumn 2011/Winter 2012 .....	24
--	----

## b. Course texts

**Basic Ideas**, ch. 2:1

**Philosophers Without Gods**, ch. 4, 7, 14, 19

**Portable Atheist**, Shelley, Sagan – “The God Hypothesis”

**Staying Sane**, ch. 1, 2, 3

Sidney Hook, “The Quest for Being” in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

## c. Web-based readings

Orthodox Jewish Amida Blessings –

[http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/867674/jewish/Translation.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/867674/jewish/Translation.htm)

1999 Pittsburgh Platform of Reform Judaism and commentary

<http://ccarnet.org/rabbis-speak/platforms/statement-principles-reform-judaism/>

<http://ccarnet.org/rabbis-speak/platforms/commentary-principles-reform-judaism/>

Bertrand Russell: “Faith of a Humanist” <http://files.meetup.com/12930/bertrand%20russell-why%20i%20am%20not%20a%20christian.pdf>

<http://files.meetup.com/12930/bertrand%20russell-why%20i%20am%20not%20a%20christian.pdf>

### 3) Nature of People

#### a. Coursepacket

Introductory essay and discussion questions .....	30
Jean-Paul Sartre, <i>Existentialism and Human Emotions</i> (selection).....	31

#### b. Course texts

**Basic Ideas**, ch. 2:2  
**Philosophers Without Gods**, ch. 5, 13  
**Portable Atheist**, Khayyam, Freud, Dawkins, Wenberg  
**Staying Sane**, ch. 4, 5  
Maslow, all in **Judaism in a Secular Age**  
Fromm, “Psychoanalysis and Religion” and “The Art of Loving” in **Judaism in a Secular Age**

#### c. Web-based texts

Genesis 1-4 – <http://ebible.org/web/> (any translation is fine)  
Pirke Avot - <http://www.shechem.org/torah/avot.html>

### 4) Truth and Integrity

#### a. Coursepacket

Introductory essay and discussion questions .....	34
Adam Chalom, “Our Quarterback, Our King” and “We Say What We Believe” .....	35

#### b. Course texts

**Basic Ideas**, ch. 2:4  
**Philosophers Without Gods**, ch. 6, 16  
**Portable Atheist**, Hume, Van Doren, Dennett “A Working Definition of Religion”, Rushdie, Grayling  
**Staying Sane**, “Reason”, ch. 6, 7  
Mitchell Silver, “Secularism” in **Life of Courage**

#### c. Web-based texts

Adam Chalom, “To Pray or Not to Pray”  
<http://www.interfaithfamily.com/spirituality/spirituality/To Pray or Not to Pray.shtml>

### 5) Ethics

#### a. Coursepacket

Introductory essay and discussion questions .....	39
John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> (selection) .....	40
Ayn Rand, <i>The Fountainhead</i> (selection) .....	43
Dan Friedman “Introduction to Humanistic Ethics” From HJ Winter/Spring 2009 “Living Our Values” .....	46
Adam Chalom: “Are there Jewish Values?” From HJ Winter/Spring 2009 “Living Our Values” .....	50
Joseph Chuman, “Ethical Foundations for Humanistic Jews” from <i>Humanistic Judaism</i> Winter 2005.....	53

#### b. Course texts

**Basic Ideas**, ch. 2:5, 2:6, 2:7, 5:2, 5:8  
**Philosophers Without Gods**, ch. 17, 18  
Buber, all in **Judaism in a Secular Age**

## Ethics (cont.)

### c. Web-based texts

Leviticus 18-19 – <http://ebible.org/web/> (any translation is fine)

Maimonides' list of the 613 Torah Commandments

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4566-commandments-the-613>

Maimonides' Ladder of Charity - <http://www.panix.com/~jjbaker/rmbmzdkh.html>

## 6) Politics and social Ethics

### a. Coursepacket

Introductory essay and discussion questions .....	58
American Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights .....	59
Karl Marx, "The Communist Manifesto" (selections) .....	62
Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (selections) .....	66

### b. Course texts

*Basic Ideas*, ch. 5:6, 5:7, 5:9

*Philosophers Without Gods*, ch. 12

*Portable Atheist*, Hobbes, Spinoza, Marx

Emma Goldman, "Was My Life Worth Living" in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

Ben Gurion, all in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

Isaiah Berlin, "the Pursuit of the Ideal" in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

Yehuda Bauer, "On Religion and Secularism" in *Life of Courage*

### c. Web-based texts

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, "Introductory" - <http://www.bartleby.com/130/1.html>

## 7) Aesthetics: Beauty, Spirituality and Emotion

### a. Coursepacket

George Santayana, <i>The Sense of Beauty</i> , "The Definition of Beauty" .....	69
Dan Friedman, "Art and Nature: Beauty and Spirituality" .....	70

### b. Course texts

*Basic Ideas*, ch. 2:3

*Staying Sane*, ch. 8 through 15

*Philosophers Without Gods*, ch. 10, 11

*Pocket Atheist*, Jilette

Dan Friedman, "Reason and Spirituality" in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

Yehuda Amichai, all in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

## 8) Jewish Identity

### a. Coursepacket

Introductory essay and discussion questions .....	78
Biblical and Rabbinic Sources – compiled .....	79
The Bund, "Decisions on the Nationality Question" .....	81

## Jewish Identity (cont.)

### b. Course texts

*Basic Ideas*, ch. 2:8, 5:1, 5:3, 5:5

*Judaism Without God?* “Part I – Judaism as Culture”

Appendix – IFSHJ Proclamations, *Judaism in a Secular Age*

Theodor Herzl, “The Jewish State” in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

Isaac Deutscher, “The Non-Jewish Jew” in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

Morris Schappes, “A Secular View of Jewish Life” in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

Egon Friedler, “New Yiddishkeit” in *Life of Courage*

Yaakov Malkin, “Secular Synagogue” in *Life of Courage*

### c. Web-based texts

Deuteronomy 26 – <http://ebible.org/web/> (any translation is fine)

Reform Statement and Responsum on Patrilineal Descent

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/patrilineal1.html>

<http://data.ccarnet.org/cgi-bin/respdisp.pl?file=38&year=carr>

## 9) Jewish History

### a. Coursepacket

Introductory essay and discussion questions ..... 83

### b. Course texts

*Basic Ideas*, ch. 3 (all)

*Pocket Atheist*, Harris, “Witch and Jew”

Yehuda Bauer, “The Holocaust, Religion and Jewish History” in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

Simon Dubnow, “Nationalism and History” in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

Zev Katz, all in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

Sherwin Wine, “The Meaning of Jewish History” in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

### c. Web-based texts

Joshua 24, Judges 2, II Kings 21 – <http://ebible.org/web/> (any translation is fine)

## 10) Past and Present

### a. Coursepacket

Introductory essay and discussion questions ..... 84

### b. Course texts

*Basic Ideas*, ch. 2:9

*Judaism Without God?* “Part II – The Bible as Literature”

Ahad Ha-Am, “People of the Book” and “Supremacy of Reason” in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

Hershl Hartman, “Using the Tradition” in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

Mordecai Kaplan, “Judaism as a Civilization” in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

Chaim Zhitlowsky, “Death and Rebirth” and “National Poetic Rebirth” in *Judaism in a Secular Age*

Adam Chalom, “To Destroy and to Build” in *Life of Courage*

Sherwin Wine, “Reflections” in *Life of Courage*

### c. Web-based texts

1885 Pittsburgh Platform of Reform Judaism - <http://ccarnet.org/rabbis-speak/platforms/declaration-principles/>