

Authority in Jewish Tradition
CJS490 H1F
Friday 10am – 12pm
Jackman Humanities Building 235

Instructor

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Office Hour: Monday 1pm – 2pm or by appointment

Description

Who has authority over whom? What, if anything, distinguishes legitimate authority from mere power? By what right, towards what end, and within what limits is that authority exercised? When, if ever, is coercive power legitimate? How should disagreements within a group or between groups be decided?

This course will examine how these classic questions about authority have been asked and answered within key texts in the Jewish intellectual tradition. Although the texts to be discussed will range from the Bible to works of contemporary political theory and theology, our principal concern will be determining whether and how the texts help us understand and respond to current issues rather than deciphering what the texts mean in their historical context.

Evaluation

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Participation	20%
3 Commentaries* (750-1000 words each) * <i>The first commentary is due Friday, October 11</i>	30%
Final Presentation	10%
Final Essay (2500-3000 words)	40%

Text

The weekly readings will come from *The Jewish Political Tradition: Volume 1: Authority*, edited by Michael Walzer, Menachem Lorberbaum, No'am Zohar, Yair Lorberbaum (Yale University Press, 2003). The book is available at the campus bookstore. You are expected to have it with you in every class.

Seminar Schedule

1. Introduction: Is there a Jewish political tradition? What's the problem of authority? And how are these questions related?
2. "Covenant: God's law and people's consent"
3. "Revelation: Torah and reason"
4. "Kings"
5. "Priests"
6. "Prophets"
7. "Rabbis and sages"
8. "Controversy and dissent"
9. "The good men of the town"
10. "The gentile state"
11. "The State of Israel"
12. Student Presentations