

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**  
**DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION**

**RLG 433S            MAIMONIDES AND HIS MODERN INTERPRETERS            2012-13**  
**RLG 3622S**  
**POL 421S**

Kenneth Hart Green

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The course offers an introduction to Moses Maimonides' seminal work of Jewish philosophy, The Guide of the Perplexed. Through close textual study, a broad range of topics will be considered, such as: divine attributes; the question of biblical interpretation and its proper method; dialectical theology and the status of imagination; proofs for the existence of God; creation versus eternity of the world; prophecy and revelation; providence, theodicy, and the problem of evil; divine law; the search for wisdom and the character of human perfection. Thus, we will delve into some of the basic themes of Jewish philosophical theology and religion as they are treated by Maimonides. In addition, readings in some of the leading modern interpreters of Maimonides' Guide will be examined.

**Prerequisite:**

Permission of the professor. I would like to discuss with all prospective members of the class what their previous studies have been concentrated on, so as to ensure that they are (more or less) appropriately prepared for this advanced course.

**Primary Texts:**

**MOSES MAIMONIDES, THE GUIDE OF THE PERPLEXED**. Translated with an Introduction by Shlomo Pines, and with an Introductory Essay by Leo Strauss (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

**NOTE:** The paper edition is in two volumes.

**LEO STRAUSS, PERSECUTION AND THE ART OF WRITING** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

**Main Requirements:**

- (1) Class presentations
- (2) Two papers (first shorter, second longer)

Requirements will be adjusted for graduates and undergraduates: graduate students are required to submit papers of 8-10 pp. on the first paper, and 12-14 pp. on the second paper. What the papers will focus on is discussed in what follows.

**First Paper:**

**Due Date:** Wednesday, February 13, 2013

**Length:** 6-8 pages (typed and double-spaced)

**Topic:** Write an analysis of one of the main themes in the chapters of the Guide on which you will be doing your presentation. Be sure to bring to light as clearly and as succinctly as possible the gist of Maimonides' leading argument in those chapters. Also, try to fit the chapters into an overview of the purpose of the Guide as you understand it.

**Second Paper:**

Due Date: Wednesday, April 3, 2013

Length: 8-10 pages (typed and double-spaced)

Topic: **EITHER:**

Write a critical interpretive essay on,  
Leo Strauss, "The Literary Character of  
The Guide of the Perplexed," in  
Persecution and the Art of Writing, pp. 38-94.

**OR:**

Write a critical interpretive essay on one work by  
some other modern interpreter of Maimonides' Guide,  
such as: S. Pines, J. Guttman, I. Twersky, M. Fox,  
L. Roth, R. Lerner, M. Kellner, K. Seeskin, I. Ivry,  
L. Kravitz, J. Stern, W.Z. Harvey, J. Faur, etc.  
The scholar and the essay or book written on should be  
discussed with, and approved by, the professor.

**Course Work Value:**

First Paper = 30%;  
Second Paper = 40%;  
Participation = 30%.

The penalty for lateness in submission of assignments is **5%**  
deducted per day that the work is late (unless this later date  
for submission has been previously authorized by the professor).

**List of Readings:**

1/1.Introduction = what type of book is the Guide?

2/1.1-7 = the form of man/created in the image of God

3a/1.14, 17, 26 = the two types of language in the Torah

3b/1.10, 42, 44 = equivocal, derivative, and amphibolous terms

4/1.31-35 = science and its moral difficulties

5/1.46, 50-60 = negative theology (what is true knowledge?)

6a/1.68-70, 72 = God, intellect, and the universe

6b/1.71 = a history of philosophy and theology

7/2.1-12 = proofs for the existence of God and the angels

8/2.13, 15-16, 23-25 = creation versus eternity

9/2.32, 36-40, 45, 48 = prophetology: what is a prophet?

10/3.1-7 = ma'aseh merkavah/the account of the chariot

11/3.8-14 = evil, suffering, and theodicy

12a/3.17-24 = divine providence properly defined

12b/3.15, 34 (1.73[209-12]) = possibility, imagination, omnipotence

13a/3.27-28 (2.40) = what is a divine law?

13b/3.29, 32, 34 = anthropology of law & human individuals

14/3.51-54 = how to achieve human perfection