

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

POLITICAL SCIENCE 430Y/2021Y

**COMPARATIVE TOPICS IN JEWISH AND NON-JEWISH  
POLITICAL THOUGHT**

WINTER SESSION 2019-2020

Professor C. Orwin (clifford.orwin@utoronto.ca)

Our theme this year will be the significance for political thought of the quest for the origins of human beings and human society. We will explore it through a careful reading of three cardinal works: *B'reshit* or Genesis, the first book of the Hebrew Bible and the foundation of the "Abrahamic" faiths; *De Rerum Natura* or *On the Nature of Things*, the great exposition of Epicurean philosophy by the Roman poet Titus Lucretius Carus (ca. 94-42 BCE); and Rousseau's *Discours sur les origines de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1752). Rousseau's work draws heavily on that of Lucretius and is a response to the Biblical account that offers an alternative to it. It may even be said to synthesize the two earlier works, although its borrowings from the Bible are primarily negative in character. We will spend the first semester on Genesis, the second one on the other two works. You are encouraged to read each work in the original language if you are capable of so doing.

**A WARNING: CLASS SESSIONS WILL BE GRUELING AS THEY WILL RUN FOR THREE AND A HALF HOURS. ALTHOUGH LISTED AS A 400-LEVEL COURSE, THIS COURSE IS A GRADUATE SEMINAR AND WILL BE CONDUCTED AT THE GRADUATE LEVEL.**

**OUR CLASS MOTTO IS THAT OF THE OREGON TRAIL: THE COWARDS NEVER STARTED, THE WEAK DIED ALONG THE WAY**

Assigned Editions (available at the University Textbook Store in the Koffler Student Centre).

Genesis, translated and with a commentary by Robert Alter. New York: W.W. Norton.

Lucretius. *On the Nature of Things*, translated by Walter Englert (Hackett/Focus Philosophical Library)

Rousseau. *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality among Men*. Translation TBA

**ASSIGNED SECONDARY READING ON GENESIS, ALSO AVAILABLE AT THE TEXTBOOK STORE**

Kass, Leon. *The Beginning of Wisdom. Reading Genesis*. New York: Free Press, 2003 (University of Chicago Press paperback, 2006).

Pangle, Thomas. *Political Philosophy and the God of Abraham*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling*. Trans. Alistair Hannay. Penguin, 1985.

**FURTHER ASSIGNED SECONDARY READINGS (AVAILABLE SOON AS A COURSE PACK AT THE PRINTING SHOP AT 180 BLOOR STREET WEST). CASSUTO AND STRAUSS ARE ALSO ON RESERVE AT ROBARTS LIBRARY.**

Burger, Ronna. "Male and Female Created He Them: Some Platonic Reflections on Genesis 1-3." in *The Nature of Woman and the Art of Politics*, edited by Eduardo Velasquez (Rowman and Littlefield, 2000). [PN56.5 .W64 N38 2000X](#)

Cassuto, Umberto. *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*. Translated from the Hebrew by Israel Abrahams. Two volumes. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University 1961-1964. **BS1235.3 .C313 V.1**

Fradkin, Hillel. "God's Politics: Lessons from the Beginning." *This World* 4 (1983): 86-104. **BL65 .P7 T48**

Strauss, Leo. "On the Interpretation of Genesis" (1957), and "Jerusalem and Athens" (1967), in *Jewish philosophy and the crisis of modernity: essays and lectures in modern Jewish thought*. Edited with an introduction by Kenneth Hart Green. Albany : State University of New York Press, 1997 (pp. 359-376, 377-408). **B5800 .S77 1997**

**FURTHER RECOMMENDED SECONDARY READINGS, ON TWO HOUR RESERVE IN THE SHORT TERM LOAN READING ROOM ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF ROBARTS LIBRARY.**

Abraham Ibn Ezra. *Commentary on the Creation*. Translated and annotated by Michael Linetsky. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1998. BS1235 .I36513 1998X

Averintsev, Sergei. "Ancient Greek 'Literature' and Near Eastern 'Writings': The Opposition and Encounter of Two Creative Principles." *Arion* 7.1: 1-39; 7.2: 1-26 (Spring/Summer 1999) PA 1 A72 vol 7

Cassuto, Umberto. *The documentary hypothesis and the composition of the Pentateuch; eight lectures*. Translated from the Hebrew by Israel Abrahams. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1961. BS1225 .C333

Dershowitz, Alan M. *The Genesis of justice: ten stories of biblical injustice that led to the Ten Commandments and modern law*. New York: Warner Books, 2000. BS1235.6 .J8 D47 2000X  
Dershowitz's lively reading of Genesis, based on his popular course at Harvard Law School.

Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book One and Book Two, 1-200, in *Works*, translated by H. St.J. Thackeray et al. Cambridge and London: Harvard U.P., 1926 [1998]. Vol. 4 PA4222 .A2 1926 V.4. A summary (and revision) of the text of Genesis composed in Greek (ca. 90 CE) by a Jewish reader versed in Hellenic philosophy. **AVAILABLE AS AN ELECTRONIC RESOURCE:**  
[Internet Archive, vol.4](#)

*Genesis rabbah : the Judaic commentary to the book of Genesis*. A new American translation by Jacob Neusner. 3 vols. Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, c1985. BM517 .M65 A3 1985 *Genesis rabbah* is the main Talmudic tract devoted to the interpretation of Genesis.

Kugel, James. *The ladder of Jacob. Ancient interpretations of the story of Jacob and his children*. Princeton: Princeton U.P., 2006. BS580 J3 K84 2006X

Leibowitz, Nehama. *Studies in the book of Genesis in the context of ancient and modern Jewish Bible commentary*. Translated and adapted from the Hebrew by Aryeh Newman. Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, Dept. for Torah Education and Culture 1972. BS1235.3 .L413 ROBA1  
An excellent compendium of Rabbinic sources.

Ramban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman). *Commentary on the Torah: Genesis*. Translated and annotated by Charles B. Clavel. New York: Shilo Publishing House, 1971. BS1225 .M66453 V.1

Sacks, Robert D. *A commentary on the book of Genesis*. Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1990. BS1235.3 .S25 1990 By a long time tutor at St. John's College in Annapolis.

Sarna, Nahum M. *Understanding Genesis*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1966. [BS1235.3 .S33](#)

Zornberg, Avivah Gottlieb. *Genesis: the beginning of desire*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1995. BS1235.3 .Z67 1995X Zornberg, observant but dynamic, is the matriarch of the New Wave of Israeli Biblical studies.

### ELECTRONIC RESOURCE

Lancaster, Irene. *Deconstructing the Bible: Abraham Ibn Ezra's introduction to the Torah*. London and New York : Routledgecurzon, 2003. INCLUDES A TRANSLATION OF IBN EZRA'S TEXT.

**RECOMMENDED READINGS FOR THE SECOND TERM WILL BE DISTRIBUTED IN DECEMBER.**

### COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND MARKING SCHEME

POL 430Y (the undergraduate course). Three essays, one of 1375 words due Friday, October 18, two of 2750 words each, due November 29 and March 15, a take-home exam (to be distributed the afternoon of Friday, March 20, due at 11 AM on Monday, March 23). The first essay will be worth 10% of the final mark, each of the following two will be worth 30%, the take-home exam will be worth 25%, and there will be 5% for participation.

POL 2021Y (the graduate course). Three essays, on topics of the student's own devising, due October 25, January 10, and April 13; a take-home exam (to be distributed the afternoon of Friday, March 20; due at 11 AM on Monday, March 23; each assignment worth a fourth of the final mark. Essays must not exceed 5000 words and will not be read beyond the 5000th word. (There will be a much lower word limit for the take-home exam.)

**PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR ESSAYS ELECTRONICALLY, THEREBY SPARING CANADA'S FORESTS.**

N.B. In the graduate course as in the undergraduate one, no extensions will be granted on written work except for good cause. In keeping with Nietzsche's theory of punishment, however, according to which every crime has its price and punishment was originally nothing more than an exaction of that price (cf. *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay), extensions will be readily available to those willing to purchase them. The price will be 3 points, plus 2 additional points per day beginning with the first, off your mark for that assignment. (If you are one day late you will lose 5 points; two days late, 7; etc., to a maximum of 15 points). This proviso does not apply to the take-home exam, which will not be accepted if late.

You are responsible for informing yourself of and abiding by the University's policies on plagiarism and other academic offenses. These are available at the Department of Political Science or from the instructor.

#### MR ORWIN'S OFFICE HOURS

Thursdays, 4:00-6:00, at Alumni Hall 323 (926-1300, ext. 3277), or by appointment.

#### SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS IN GENESIS

We will read the text of Genesis according to its traditional divisions, each named for the Hebrew word that begins it: the numeration corresponds to the standard chapter and verse divisions of the book. PLEASE NOTE THE READING ASSIGNMENT FOR THE FIRST CLASS SESSION, WHICH LIKE THE OTHERS LISTED EMBRACES NOT JUST THE TEXT BUT THE ASSIGNED COMMENTARIES.

SEPTEMBER 10: INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION; B'RESHIT (1.1 - 3.24)

SEPTEMBER 17: B'RESHIT (4.1 - 6.8)

SEPTEMBER 24: NOACH (6.9 - 11.32)

OCTOBER 1: LECH LECHA (12.1 - 17.27)

OCTOBER 8: YOM KIPPUR EVE, NO MEETING

OCTOBER 15: VAYYERA (18.1 - 22.24) (PLUS KIERKEGAARD)

OCTOBER 22: CHAYA SARAH (23.1- 25.18)

OCTOBER 29: TOLEDOT (25.19 - 28.9)

NOVEMBER 5: FALL READING WEEK; NO MEETING

NOVEMBER 12: VAYYETZE (28.10 - 32.3)

NOVEMBER 19: VAYYISHLACH (32.4 - 36.43)

NOVEMBER 26: VAYYESHEV (37.1 - 40.23)

DECEMBER 3: MIKKETZ (41.1 - 44.17)

DECEMBER 5 "MAKE-UP MONDAY" (ACTUALLY A THURSDAY): VAYYIGASH (44.18 - 47.27) AND VAYYECHI (47.28 - 50.26)