

## **Applied Jewish Ethics (JS 318)**

Rev. 1-7-16

Professor: Dr. Jennifer Thompson

Course Day/Time: Completely online  
Virtual Office Hours: Tues. & Weds., 8:00-9:00 a.m.  
Virtual Office Hours Phone Number: 747-265-0229  
Email: [jthompson@csun.edu](mailto:jthompson@csun.edu)

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course applies Jewish teachings to contemporary social problems. Case studies may involve wealth and work, sexuality, food, war, the environment, and other topics. Students apply appropriate social scientific methods to collect data, analyze, evaluate, explain, and/or solve problems in social relations and human behavior.

### **Course Objectives:**

By the end of the course students should be able to:

1. show familiarity with primary Jewish texts from the ancient, medieval and modern eras, including those written by Jews of Ashkenazic and Sephardic descent;
2. demonstrate knowledge of the historical approach to the study of Jewish primary sources and show how ethical concerns change over time in response to political, economic, social, and environmental factors;
3. demonstrate knowledge of the sociological and socio-psychological approaches to Jewish ethical traditions and explain how social ethics are interdependent with other institutions in society, for example, religion, family, political and economic institutions.
4. apply sociological theory to multiple facets of their lives and in the various social institutions in which they participate; and
5. explain the ethical components of various Jewish cultural practices, values and beliefs.

All of these competencies will be demonstrated through participation in discussion and written assignments.

This course fulfills the General Education requirement in Social Sciences. Courses in this category enable students to understand how social scientists study social relations, human experiences and patterns of change over time. This course teaches you to analyze and explain the multiple perspectives found in the social sciences that underlie debates on important historical and contemporary issues. You will learn to apply appropriate social scientific methods to collect data, analyze, evaluate, explain, and/or solve problems in social relations and human behavior; and you will be able to demonstrate an understanding of how social problems impact individuals, communities and societies.

### **GE Social Sciences Student Learning Outcomes:**

Students will:

1. Explain how social scientists conduct the systematic study of social relations, human experiences and patterns of change over time.
2. Analyze and explain the multiple perspectives found in the social sciences that underlie debates on important historical and contemporary issues.
3. Apply appropriate social scientific methods to collect data, analyze, evaluate, explain and/or solve problems in social relations and human behavior.

4. Demonstrate an understanding of how social problems impact individuals, communities and societies.

This course is also Writing Intensive, meaning that it requires writing assignments totaling at least 2500 words. Students will develop their abilities to express themselves and the knowledge they have obtained through practicing various forms of writing within different disciplinary contexts. Writing intensive courses will build upon the skills gained in the Analytical Reading and Expository Writing section of Basic Skills. In each WI course, students will be required to complete writing assignments totaling a minimum of 2500 words.

By the end of the semester, students will be able to

1. Develop and clearly define their ideas through writing;
2. Ethically integrate sources of various kinds into their writing;
3. Compose texts through drafting, revising, and completing a finished product;
4. Express themselves through their writing by posing questions, making original claims, and coherently structuring complex ideas;
5. Revise their writing for greater cogency and clarity;
6. Utilize adopted communication modes and documentation styles of specific disciplines (MLA, APA, Chicago, CBE, etc) where appropriate.

### **This course is also part of the General Education path (GE path) Principles of Sustainability (PS)**

Sustainability is defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland Report, 1987). The goal of this pathway is to broadly expose students about the fundamental concepts of sustainability including economic, environmental, and social aspects. It is designed to supplement education in other disciplines and to provide knowledge of the considerations necessary to make decisions in a world where resources are limited. Courses in this path should address any aspect of sustainability such as theory and principles, practice or issues, and within any component of the course such as lectures, special lectures, hands on activities, assignments, homework, group presentations, etc.

### **This course meets two or more of the following PS GE path Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

1. Students will define sustainability and its connection to issues of social justice, the environment, and the economy at local, regional, and global levels.
2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of key concepts related to sustainability, such as climate change, ecological footprint, and planetary carrying capacity.
3. Students will connect how sustainability relates to their lives and/or values, and how their actions and others’ impact issues of sustainability at the individual, local, regional, and global levels.

To learn more about the curriculum of the sustainability minor:  
<http://www.csun.edu/sustainability/curriculum/minor-electives/>

To learn more about sustainability on campus or careers in sustainability:  
<http://www.csun.edu/sustainability/>

To learn more about GE Paths: <http://www.csun.edu/undergraduate-studies/ge-paths>

## LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

This class will provide you the following opportunities to meet its learning objectives.

1. You will have the opportunity to learn about the basic tenets of numerous ethical theories.
2. You will have the opportunity to read work by scholars on various topics, including Judaism, violence, wealth and work, and language.
3. You will have the opportunity to actively participate in discussion (i.e., offer insights, think about various scenarios, construct arguments, construct objections or support for positions using evidence).

## EVALUATING YOUR LEARNING

Grades provide feedback to students about how well they are meeting the learning objectives of a class. This means that grades are earned, not given; they are neither a reward nor a punishment, but rather measures of how well a student has learned and grown as a result of taking a particular class. I will determine the degree to which you have met my and your learning objectives for the class in the following ways.

### 1. INTRODUCTORY MODULES: 100 points

These modules help orient you to the course's requirements, enable you to get to know your classmates, and ensure that you know basic information about Judaism.

### 2. READING QUESTIONS: 300 points

Complete assigned questions on Moodle. You may collaborate with other students on these questions, but your answers must be in your own words. You will be asked to turn in your answers on Moodle.

### 3. PARTICIPATION IN SALONS (DISCUSSION FORUMS): 300 points

Your collaboration with other students in the salons is an integral part of your learning process. Salon contributions that answer the assigned question(s), add new ideas, and develop the discussion further will receive full credit.

### 4. MIDTERM SELF-EVALUATION: 75 points

This short essay is an opportunity for you to reflect on your performance in the course and plan your approach to the rest of the course.

### 5. ETHICAL WILL: 150 points

This assignment allows you to demonstrate and reflect on your ability to apply the ethical theories and method discussed in this course to particular situations.

### 6. FINAL SELF-EVALUATION: 75 points

This short essay is an opportunity for you to reflect on your performance in the course and plan your approach to future courses.

**1000 points total**

All learning opportunities can be accessed through the course Moodle site.

#### Grade scale

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	88-89
B	83-87
B-	80-82
C+	78-79
C	73-77
C-	70-72
D+	68-69
D	63-67
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Grades for all assignments will be recorded in the gradebook on Moodle. You may see your grades by clicking on “My Grades” on your Moodle page.

Grade appeals will be considered when:

- you wait at least 24 hours after you receive the grade;
- you contact me in writing to explain the reason for the appeal;
- you point to specific evidence in the assignment that you turned in that supports your argument (i.e., a mathematical error); and
- you submit your appeal before the next assignment is due.

#### Sources of Information

*Man’s Search for Meaning*, by Viktor Frankl, available at the Matador Bookstore, online booksellers, the Los Angeles Public Library, and the Oviatt Library reserve desk  
*Applied Ethics* eText, available on Moodle.  
Additional articles, linked on Moodle.

All writing and discussion assignments can be found on Moodle.

#### **TIMELINE FOR SCHOLARLY RESEARCH/INVESTIGATION INTO APPLIED ETHICS**

\*\*\* NOTE: This schedule may change during the semester \*\*\*

#### Week 1: What this course is, and basic terminology

**Sources:** Pluralism Project. “Judaism.” America’s Many Religions.

<http://www.pluralism.org/religion/judaism> (Read all pages through

Bibliography.)

Course syllabus

Plagiarism tutorials (see Moodle)

**Activities:** Watch introductory video

Self-introduction

Plagiarism quiz and pledge

Syllabus scavenger hunt

Orientation to Judaism quiz

### Week 2: Social media, language, and human dignity

**Sources:** Moses L. Pava, "Spirituality in (and out) of the classroom: a pragmatic approach." *Journal of Business Ethics* (2007) 73:287–299.

Jennifer Thompson, "What does it mean to learn ethics," Chapter 2, *Applied Ethics* eText, 2015.

Jon Ronson, "How one stupid tweet blew up Justine Sacco's life," *New York Times*.

Sam Biddle, "Justine Sacco is good at her job, and how I came to peace with her." *Gawker*, December 20, 2014.

Patt Morrison, "Privilege makes them do it—what a study of Internet trolls reveals," Los Angeles Times.

Bradley Campbell and Jason Manning, "Microaggression and changing moral cultures," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 9, 2015.

Trevor Foulk, "Rudeness is contagious," *Gizmodo*, July 28, 2015.

Daryl Cameron, Michael Inzlicht, and William A. Cunningham, "Empathy is actually a choice," *New York Times*, July 10, 2015.

Jewish Virtual Library, "Issues in Jewish Ethics: Speech and Lashon HaRah."

Monica Lewinsky, "The price of shame." TED talk. March 2015.

Rabbi Jill Maderer, "On public shaming, a compassion deficit, and Monica Lewinsky." *BlogRS*, The blog of Congregation Rodeph Shalom, April 10, 2015.

Alyssa Gray, "Jewish Ethics of Speech," in *Oxford Handbook of Jewish Ethics and Morality* (OPTIONAL)

**Activities:** Turn in reading question responses.

### Week 3:

**Sources:** Review last week's readings and Great Answers From Students document.

**Activities:** Contribute to salon (three discussions).

### Week 4: The meanings of choice and character

**Sources:** Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (entire)

*Applied Ethics* eText, selections TBA

Claussen, Geoffrey. "The American Jewish revival of Mussar." *The Hedgehog Review* 12.2 (2010): 63+.

Edith Brotman, *Mussar Yoga*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights. Foreword (p. ix-x), Introduction (p. 1-8), "How to practice Mussar yoga," (9-24).

Alan Morinis, *Everyday Holiness: The Jewish Spiritual Path of Mussar*. Boston: Trumpeter, 2007. P. 253-275; 295-297.

**Activities:** Turn in reading question responses. Do experiential Mussar activity.

### Week 5: The meanings of choice and character

**Sources:** Review last week's readings and Great Answers From Students document.

**Activities:** Contribute to salon (three discussions).

### Week 6: Climate change

**Sources:**

#### I. Climate Change Basics

*Last Week Tonight with John Oliver: Climate Change\**

\*Warning: there's some coarse language in this video clip.

National Academy of Sciences and The Royal Society, *Climate change: evidence and causes*.

Margaret E. Atwood, "It's not climate change—it's everything change." *Matter*.

## II. Obstacles to stopping climate change

Suzanne Goldenberg, "[Exxon knew of climate change in 1981, email says—but it funded deniers for 27 more years](#)," *The Guardian*, July 8, 2015.

Monte Morin, "[Americans use twice as much water as they think they do, study says](#)," *Los Angeles Times*, March 3, 2014.

## III. Ethics and Climate Change

Dennis Patrick O'Hara and Alan Abelson, "Ethical response to climate change." *Ethics and the Environment* 6:1 (2011), 25–50.

Arthur Green, "[Judaism and Creation Theology](#)." *Sh'ma: A Journal of Jewish Ideas*, June 1, 2008.

Jay Michaelson, "[Climate change is a sin. Here's how to repent for it](#)," *Religion Dispatches*, Jan. 15, 2014.

Elliot Dorff et al. "[A Rabbinic Letter on the Climate Crisis](#)." August 31, 2015.

Daniel Weber, "[Judaism and Science: Contemporary Approaches to Global Climate Change](#)." Canfei Nesharim: Sustainable Living Inspired by Torah.

**Activities:** Turn in reading question responses. Do experiential climate change reduction activity.

### Week 7: Climate change

**Sources:** Review last week's readings and Great Answers From Students document.

**Activities:** Contribute to salon (three discussions).

Midterm self-evaluation due March 13, 11:59 pm.

### Week 8: Violence

#### **Sources:**

Larry Ray, 2011. "[What is Violence?](#)" Chap. 1 of *Violence and Society*. Los Angeles: Sage. Focus on first few pages (through 11) and last few (22 through end).

Elisabeth Rosenthal, "[More guns = more killing](#)." *New York Times*, Jan. 5, 2013.

Andrew Solomon, "[Anatomy of a murder-suicide](#)." *New York Times*, Dec. 22, 2012.

Jay Dickey and Mark Rosenberg, "[We won't know the cause of gun violence until we look for it](#)." *Washington Post*, July 27, 2012.

Megan Murphy, "[What is it about men that they're committing these horrible massacres?](#)" *AlterNet*, December 18, 2012.

Rin Kelly, "[Do media vultures perpetuate mass shootings?](#)" *Salon*, Dec. 29, 2012.

David Cole, "[Who pays for the right to bear arms?](#)" *New York Times*, Jan. 1, 2013.

Mike Spies. "[When a bullet enters a body: gun violence as seen by a trauma surgeon](#)." *The Trace*. Sept. 21, 2015.

Brenda Gazzar, "[LAPD hosts first Jewish community forum in the San Fernando Valley](#)," *Los Angeles Daily News*, June 19, 2014.

Mark Katz, "[The Jewish view on weapons](#)," *Tablet*, Dec. 19, 2012.

Shlomo M. Brody. "[Halakhic perspectives on gun control](#)."

Aaron Alexander, "[Unnecessary danger: a reflection on guns, violence, and personal safety](#)." *Huffington Post*, Dec. 21, 2012.

**Activities:** Turn in reading question responses. Do experiential activity on peacemaking.

Week 9: Spring break! Continue with experiential activity on peacemaking.

### Week 10: Violence

**Sources:** Review last week's readings and Great Answers From Students document.

**Activities:** Contribute to salon (three discussions).

### Week 11: Ethical work

**Sources:** “[Ideal occupations: the Talmudic perspective](#)”

Rabbi David Wolpe, “[Loaded: Jews and Money](#)”

“[Shabbat: What is Shabbat?](#)”

“[Shabbat's Work Prohibitions](#)”

\*\*Rabbi Louis Jacobs, “[Work in Jewish Thought](#)”\*\* *optional*

Robert K. Greenleaf, “[The Servant as Leader](#)”

“[Why you hate work](#)”;

“[Who needs a boss?](#)”

“[A new business strategy: treating employees well](#)”

Parker J. Palmer, “[The Modern Violence of Overwork](#)”

Jordan Weissmann, “[This Study on Happiness Convinced a CEO to Pay All of His Employees at Least \\$70,000 a Year](#)”

Richard J. Light, “[How to Live Wisely](#)”

**Activities:** Turn in reading question responses. Do experiential activity about ethical work.

### Week 12: Ethical work

**Sources:** Review last week’s readings and Great Answers From Students document.

**Activities:** Contribute to salon (three discussions).

### Week 13: Temptation and whistleblowing

**Sources:**

Barry Leff, “[Whistleblowing: The Requirement to Report Employer Wrongdoing.](#)”

Jesselyn Radack, “[Whistleblowing in Washington.](#)” Reform Judaism Magazine Online. Spring 2006.

Susan Pulliam, “[How following orders can harm your career.](#)” CFO.com. October 3, 2003.

Jeremy Simon, “[Knowing when to blow the whistle.](#)” Texas Enterprise, June 10, 2013.

Kirsty Matthewson, “[Whistleblowing and bystander apathy: connecting ethics with social responsibility.](#)” CSR Wire, August 7, 2012.

Ewen MacAskill, “[Edward Snowden: how the spy story of the age leaked out.](#)” The Guardian, June 12, 2013.

Lorenzo Franceschi-Bicchierai, “[The 10 Biggest Revelations from Edward Snowden's Leaks.](#)” Mashable, June 5, 2014.

**Activities:** Turn in reading question responses. Do experiential activity about temptation and whistleblowing.

### Week 14: Temptation and whistleblowing

**Sources:** Review last week’s readings and Great Answers From Students document.

**Activities:** Contribute to salon (three discussions).

### Week 15: Ethical will

**Sources:** Miriam Schulman, “[A testament to ethics.](#)” Santa Clara University.

“[Ethical wills/legacy letters.](#)” Celebrations of Life.

Jack Riemer, “[Writing and reading ethical wills.](#)” MyJewishLearning.com.

Constance Gutke, “[The ethical will, an ancient concept, is revamped for the tech age.](#)” New York Times, Oct. 31, 2014.

**Activities:** Ethical will questions forum

Draft an ethical will. Share your ethical will for peer editing.

Your ethical will must be posted by Friday, May 6, 11:59 pm.

Give feedback on classmates' ethical wills by Sunday, May 8, 11:59 pm.

Week 16: Reflection and summing up

**Activities:** Revise your ethical will. Due May 11, 11:59 pm.

Final self-evaluation due Saturday, May 14, 11:59 pm.

Partial Credit Day: May 15. ONE late or missing assignment may be turned in for up to 50% credit by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, May 15.

**IN ORDER TO CREATE THE BEST POSSIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT,  
WE WILL ABIDE BY THE FOLLOWING POLICIES:**

*We will consistently work to improve our writing.*



- Writing submitted with capitalization errors, spelling errors, and/or incomplete sentences will be penalized. The highest possible grade for typed work in which any of these errors are present is B+. The highest possible grade for a written work containing a significant number of these errors is C+.
- Work must also include parenthetical citations for all sources used.

*We will turn in all work on time, in the assigned format.*

- Plan ahead. You will need to spend about 8.25 hours per week on this course to do well.
- Start early enough on your assignments that you can overcome any unforeseen difficulties well before deadline. Log in to the course several times per week so that you can keep up.
- Do not email your work to the professor unless specifically instructed to do so.
- When uploading your work to Moodle, follow these guidelines:
  - Turn in your work at least half an hour before the official deadline. Closer to the deadline, you run the risk of having problems and not getting your work turned in.
  - Take a screenshot each time you upload an assignment that shows that you were successful, just in case any technical problems arise later. (On a PC, take a screenshot by doing control-printscreens, then control-v into a Word document; on a Mac, command-shift-4, then frame the area you want saved; or use your phone or iPad to take a picture of the screen.) You do not need to turn in the screenshot unless the instructor asks for it, but it is a good idea to keep it until the course ends.
  - If you run into technical problems while submitting an assignment before its deadline, take one or more screenshots that show what the problem is and send them to the instructor immediately.
  - The Faculty Technology Department helps both faculty and students with Moodle-related questions. You can reach the staff there at 818-677-3443 on weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- In general, assignments cannot be made up after they are due. Assignments that are not turned in on time will receive zero credit. Moodle is the final arbiter if there are any questions about whether a submission was turned in on time.
- However, Partial Credit Day (May 15) offers you the opportunity to turn in ONE missed assignment for up to half credit.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.inboundmarketingagents.com/inbound-marketing-agents-blog/bid/258135/The-25-Best-Internet-Memes-of-All-Time>

*We will ask for help when we need it.*

- I am available by phone during the office hours listed on the first page of this syllabus. Take advantage of my office hours to let me know if you encounter difficulty in the class or if a personal crisis arises. I am glad to help you find ways to do well in the course when you plan ahead and try your best. Office hours are also the best way to clear up any material covered in class that you don't understand.
- You may also seek basic information from classmates through the Moodle "Got questions?" forum, and you may seek help with writing from the Learning Resource Center in the library.
- I am glad to accommodate students with disabilities who have registered with the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) office or the National Center on Deafness (NCOD). I will make the accommodations that these offices specify. The DRES office is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110 and can be reached at (818) 677-2684. NCOD is located on Bertrand Street in Jeanne Chisholm Hall and can be reached at (818) 677-2611.

*We will correspond professionally and regularly.*

- Write all correspondence in a professional manner. Emails must include a salutation (i.e., "Dear Dr. Thompson,"), a brief (2-3 sentence) message that begins with your primary reason for contacting the instructor, and be signed with your first and last name (e.g., James Smith). Use your CSUN email account. Do not include shorthand, slang, or unnecessary abbreviations (e.g. LOL, wassup?, plz). I recommend that you use this format when contacting all professionals at academic institutions.
- Ensure that your CSUN email account displays your full name. I cannot respond to emails from anonymous senders, e.g., "Me" or other such user names.
- When you email me, include the ticket number for your JS 318 section. (This is a five-digit number displayed next to the course name and number at the top of your Moodle page.)
- When you email me, I will try to respond to you within one business day.
- Check the syllabus and the course FAQ on Moodle before emailing me if your question is about an assignment or a policy. I might not reply to an email if it asks a question covered in the syllabus or the FAQ. If you have not heard back from me in one business day, it's likely that the information is covered there.
- Check Moodle frequently to view feedback on assignments, keep track of your grades, and find details about upcoming assignments.
- Check your CSUN email account at least daily to keep up with any announcements. I may email updates or clarifications to assignments.

*We will be honest.*

California State University, Northridge expects honesty and integrity from all members of its community. Students found guilty of cheating on assignments or examinations, plagiarism, or other academic dishonesty are subject to a failing grade in the course. Students may be suspended or dismissed from the University upon the recommendation of the Department Chair or the Dean of the student's college.

- Collaboration among students is strongly encouraged in the discussion forums for this course. However, students may not work together on reading questions or self-evaluations.
- Parenthetical citations are required in all work for this course unless the instructor states otherwise.

- If I suspect plagiarism on any assignment, I will immediately report it to the Office of Student Affairs, at which point the offense will become part of your permanent record at CSUN. The student will receive zero credit for the assignment for the first offense, and subsequent offenses may result in a grade of F for the course. Any student who commits academic dishonesty more than once during the semester will fail the course.
- It is your responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism; ignorance is not an excuse.
- See Oviatt Library's web page for information on plagiarism:  
<http://library.csun.edu/Guides/ResearchStrategies/AvoidingPlagiarism>
- You should also ask a librarian, your professor(s), and/or the staff at the Learning Resource Center if you are not 100% sure you understand what constitutes plagiarism. It's better to be safe than sorry.
- Sources should be cited using the Chicago/Turabian author-date style. For examples, see <http://library.williams.edu/citing/styles/chicago2.php>

## Additional resources

General resources on Jewish ethics:

Bradley Shavit Artson and Deborah Silver, eds., [Walking with justice: The ethical impulse in Judaism](#). Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies, American Jewish University.

Eugene B. Borowitz, "[Jewish Ethics: A Historical Overview](#)," Chapter 1 in *Exploring Jewish Ethics: Papers on Covenant Responsibility*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990, p. 17–25.

Aryeh Cohen. [Justice in the city: thinking about Judaism and social justice](#).

"[Ethics](#)." Jewish Virtual Library.

"[Ethical literature](#)." Jewish Virtual Library.

"[Introduction—Rabbinic Judaism](#)." Feminist Sexual Ethics Project, Brandeis University.

Environmental ethics:

Julia Watts Belser, "[Vulnerability & Rain](#): Engaging Environmental Ethics Through Rabbinic Narrative: A Response to Jonathan Wyn Schofer's *Confronting Vulnerability*."

Sexual ethics:

Gail Labovitz, "[A woman is acquired](#)': slavery and Jewish sexual ethics." *Sh'ma: a journal of Jewish ideas*, Oct. 1, 2008.

Ethics in action:

Sharon Otterman, "[A rabbi's departure](#) manifests a challenge for Jews in America." *New York Times*, Aug. 15, 2014.