This course will examine the thought of R. Yehudah Loew of Prague through extensive readings in his writings. Topics covered will include: associative method, reasons for the commandments, creation, Divine attributes, miracles, determinism, anthropology, ethical system, and messianism. We will discuss the relationship of his thought to philosophy, kabbalah, and Renaissance thought. The course will conclude with an analysis of the influence of his writings on eighteenth and nineteenth century Jewish thought.

You may reach me by e-mail at abrill@ymail.yu.edu or Kavvanah@gmail.com

There will be a paper, and a final.

You will be responsible for handouts given in class, please be sure to receive copies.

The selections labeled as Reading: are mandatory for the final. All the required readings have numbers.
Those listed as Suggested: are optional.
We will adjust the reading list, as needed, based on class discussion.

Basics:
Please have available a set of Maharal's writings. You may use any edition.

For finding topics in Maharal, the following are helpful.
Avraham Kariv, Kitvei Maharal miPrag: Mivhar A useful topical arrangement but usually without citation to the source of the quote.
DBS CD-Rom has Maharal.

I. Background


Suggested: Readings:


B] Italy- Humanism, Averroism, Platonism, Kabbalah, and Hermeticism
Ovadyah Seferno, Azariah deRossi, Yehudah Abarbanel, and Yohanan Alemanno
Abraham de Balmas, Issac of Pisa, David ben Yehudah Messer Leon
Elijah Del Medigo - Yehudah Hayyat- Ibn Shraga (Rikanati, Maarekhet)

Moshe Idel, "Particularism and Universalism in Kabbalah 1480-1650"
in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy* ed. David Ruderman
Moshe Idel, "The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations of the Kabbalah in the Renaissance"
Moshe Idel, "Major Currents in Italian Kabbalah between 1560-1660"
both in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy* ed. David Ruderman

C] Poland
Required by the final
2] Jacob Elbaum, *Petihut veHistagrut* Chapters 1, 2; pages 11-54 skim
Chapters 5, 9, 10; 154-182, 286-355 read well

Suggested:
H.Z. Dimotrofsky, "al Derekh ha-Pilpul" *Salon Baron Jubilee Volume*

D] Hayyim Ben Betzalel and Yizhak Hayyot

Text:
*Sefer HaHayyim* sefer zekhiot 1-7; hayyim tovim 3; parnasah 6; selihah vemehilah 8, 9, 10; geulah 2 (Handout)
Yizhak Hayyut

Suggested:
Yerushalayim: Mosad ha-Rav Kuk, c1987.


II. Introduction to Maharal

A] Life and Works
Suggested:
A. Gottesdiener, *Ha-Ari she- be-hakhmei Prauge* The basis for most discussions of his life
Aaron Mauskopf, *The Religious Philosophy of the Maharal of Prague* A basic overview of his thought
A. David, *A Hebrew Chronicle from Prague 1615, 55-67*

**B) Education Theory**


Chapter 9 is available in English as "The Didactics of Rabbi Loew of Prague" in *Scripta Hierosolymitana*

Suggested:


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**III. A New era?**

A] Is Maharal Medieval or Modern? Andre Neher versus Rifka Schatz


B] Maharal as Early Modern

Ficino, Pico, and Calvin (handouts)

Readings:


Highly Suggested:

Suggested:
C. Butler, *Number Symbolism*
Vincent Hooper, *Medieval Number Symbolism*
William J. Bouwsma, *The Waning of the Renaissance*

IV. Mizvot: Symbolic, Structural, and Analog Thinking

Handout of Texts

9] Handout Package:
Avi Walfish, "Maharal's Symbolic System:Netiv Gemilut Hasadim" *Gesher*
Martin Buber, "The Beginning of the National Idea" *On Zion*

Suggested:

V. Torah

Text:
*Netivot Olam, Netiv Ha-Torah*
*Tiferet Israel, Introductions*

VI. Hiddenness

Text:
*Netivot Olam* Netiv HaAvodah- 1-6

VII. Philosophy- Rationalist or Kabbalah? Medieval, Renaissance Platonic or Nominalism?

Tamar Ross, The Miracle as an Added Dimension in the thought of the Maharal of Prague [Hebrew] *Daat* 17 (1986) 81-96

10] Byron Sherwin, *Mystical Theology and Social Dissent* chapters 6, 7 and 169-172 on the Nadler controversy [Use this book with caution!]

4
VIII. Anthropology: A Problematic Self, Returning to One's Original Self, Knowledge through Love and Humility

Text:
Netivot Olam halashon 1, 2, 4; zeniut 1, 4; perishut 1-3, tokhahah 1-3, lev tov 1, lezanut 1, 2; shem tov 1.


Suggested:

Idem, "Commentary to the Netiv Haemet" Sinai 77 (1975) 157-167


Ioan Couliano, Eros and Magic in the Renaissance
John Martin, "Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence: The Discovery of the individual in the Renaissance" AHR vol 102 (1997) 1308-1342

IX. History and Determinism


Suggested:
Gross, Benjamin, 1925-Yehi or: al Ner mitsvah le-Maharal mi-Prag.
X. Hermeneutics and Polemics


Suggested:

[and look at his home page www.chaver.com/articles/Intro.htm]


Suggested Background on 16th century Religious Debates

XI. Fellow Travelers R. Moshe Isserles, R. Mordekhai Jaffe, R. Matityahu Delikrut, R. Yom Tov Lipmann Heller, R. Ephraim Luntshitz, and David Ganz

Texts:
Torat HaOlah (selections)
Maaseh Hashem (selections)

Suggested:


XII. The ~130 year gap - The Baroque Era

XIII. Maharal In Belorussia and Volhynia

Texts:
R. Shneur Zalman, Tanya (selections)

XIV. Maharal in Poland

Texts:
R. Israel Hopstein of Koznitz (selections)
R. Yehudah Aryeh Leib of Gur (selections from Sefat Emet)
R. Zadok HaKohen of Lublin
R. Avraham Borenstein and R. Shmuel Borenstein (selections from Avnei Nezer and Shem Mishemuel)
Yudel Rosenberg

Suggested:

Avraham Benedict "Hagadat Maharal o Aggadat Maharal" Moriah 14 3-4 (1985) 102-113

XV. Maharal in Lita

A] Circle of the Vilna Gaon
B] End of the Nineteenth Century

16] Avi Sagi, Elu veElu 126-171

XVI. Epilogue
A] Rav Hutner, Pahad Yitzhak
B] Rav Eliyahu Dessler, Miktav MeEliyahu
C] Rav Zvi Yehudah Kook
D] Abraham Joshua Heschel
E] Rabbi Shmuel Alexandrov

Suggested:
Moshe Zvi Neriah, Mishnat HaMaharal be-Netivot Olamanu Barkai 3 (1986) 200-222