

Community High School for Judaic Studies



Merkaz



2016

2017

Course Catalogue



~COURSE DIVISIONS~

DIVISION A: TEXT AND THOUGHT

DIVISION B: CONTEMPORARY TOPICS

DIVISION C: HISTORY AND SOCIETY

DIVISION D: THE ARTS AND LITERATURE

DIVISION R: SENIOR SEMINAR

PLEASE NOTE:

- STUDENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO SELECT A BALANCE OF COURSES OVER THE FOUR YEARS FROM DIVISIONS A, B, C, AND D.
- Course Divisions Are Included For Each Class With The Course Number. For example, D3540 is a course that satisfies the "D" requirement.
- Courses are listed by Division and are in no particular order.
- Seniors are required to take a Senior Seminar, Division R.

MERKAZ WANTS YOU TO CONTINUE YOUR JEWISH STUDIES

If Tuesday nights don't work for you, we have other options. Independent studies, community service projects, and online classes are just a few of the ways we can make this work together.

If you have band, dance, a sport or an overwhelming schedule don't discount participating. We have made it work for so many students over the years. Let's have a conversation and together we can find something interesting to you and keep you on a track to graduation with your class.

~DIVISION A ~ TEXT AND THOUGHT~

JEWISH PEOPLE'S COURT

Course # A3900

Grade: 9 – 11 ONLY

Faculty: Rabbi Marcelo Kormis

Fall 6:55

New!

The Bet Din, or Jewish Court, has been an integral part of the long and important history of the development of Jewish law and ethics. It continues to function, even in the modern world. Explore how the Jewish legal system operates, the traditional sources from which the ethics of the Jewish people are derived. See a Jewish people's court in action in modern everyday situations. Decide cases for yourself. You be the judge.

EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT JUDAISM BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK

Course # A4100

Grade: 9 – 12

Faculty: Rabbi Shlame Landa

Spring 8:00

New!

Why do we say Mazal Tov? Why do we say that the Jews are the Chosen people? And why is this not racism? Why do we place stones on a headstone? Why are heart valves from a pig kosher? Why are eggs pareve yet the chicken who makes them are meat? Why is milk dairy and yet the cow that it comes from is meat? Come ready to argue, debate, and ask!

SUPERHEROES – AN INTRODUCTION

Course # A4011

Grade: 9 – 12

Faculty: Rabbi Chagie Rubin

Fall 6:55 OR Fall 8:00

Superheroes movies for the past years continue to dominate Hollywood with their stories. The Jewish influence found in these films cannot be overstated. In *Batman*, *The Avatar of Justice*, we learn about vigilantism, revenge vs. justice and risking your life to save others. We learn from *Spiderman*, "that with great powers comes great responsibilities". And with *X-men*, that violence is not the solution to bigotry and hatred. Students will choose the films, watch, analyze, question and debate issues relating to it.

SUPERHEROES – THE SAGA CONTINUES

Course # A4550

Grade: 9 – 12

Faculty: Rabbi Chagie Rubin

Spring 8:00

New!

The challenges of a superhero never end. Do they ever retire? Will evil finally disappear from mankind and we will have no need for them. Will superheroes accept and respect other superheroes who are doing the same job? In the latest offerings from Hollywood, e.g. Superman Verses Batman, Daredevil and the upcoming Captain America-Civil War, these questions among others will be addressed. Join us for an exciting continuation of a popular course at Merkaz .

KABBALAH: A JEWISH SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Course # A7060

Grade: 10 – 12 ONLY

Faculty: Justin C. Beck

Fall 8:00

Did you know that Kabbalah study was traditionally restricted to people over 40? Get a preview into the exploration of spirituality, Kabbalah, and mysticism considering lifelong questions including: What am I doing here? What is the meaning of life? How do I overcome circumstances? What does it mean to be Jewish? How can I make my life more meaningful and fulfilled? What happens after death? This course will provide a Jewish perspective on spirituality, and will guide how you perceive and experience the world with greater meaning, happiness, and well-being.

KABBALAH II: THE JEWISH SPIRITUAL JOURNEY CONTINUES

Course # A7790

Grade: 10 – 12 ONLY

Faculty: Justin C. Beck

Spring 6:55

The discovery process of the concealed world, on both the outer and inner dimension, is ongoing. Join this course as we journey together in new areas of spirituality and go deeper into subjects such as: the purpose of creation, my role in it, how did I get here and where am I going, why do things happen – both good and bad, how is it that I am Jewish, what's up with relationships – family and friends, the truth, trust, and love, and so much more. They don't teach this stuff in high school and not in college either. Take advantage of this opportunity to grow personally and impact the world.

(Pre-requisite: Kabbalah I Class)

DID HOLLYWOOD GET IT RIGHT?

Course # A4410

Grade: 9 – 12

Faculty: Rabbi Chagie Rubin

Spring 6:55

New!

The Bible Comes To The Big Screen!" The New Yorker," a popular weekly magazine recently pointed out an amazing statistic: "the bible is not only the best-selling book of all time it is the best-selling book of the year every single year. So it's no wonder that Hollywood has made efforts of bringing these stories to the big screen. In this course we will select and examine the accuracy and honesty in the Hollywood version from past movies such as, Cecil B DeMille's classic blockbuster "The Ten Commandments, Darren Aronofsky \$130 million Version of Noah, and the Ridley Scott production "Exodus of God and Kings among others.

~DIVISION B: CONTEMPORARY TOPICS~

BUILDING COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS FOR LIFE

Course # B4007

Grade: 9 – 12

Faculty: Marjorie Schulman

Fall 8:00

Each of us has the potential to become a good listener, an effective leader, a problem solver, and someone who can make a difference. Explore your own style of communication and leadership styles, and learn decision-making skills. Discover your emerging identity and what is important to you for living your life with confidence, courage, and respect.

JEWISH NOT SO TRIVIAL PERSUIT

Course # B3250

Grade: 9 – 11 ONLY

Faculty: Ricka Breiner

Spring 8:00

New!

Gain an overview of general Jewish knowledge in a fun way. Through questions, answers and board games find out how much there is to learn. Also, in the style of both "Jeopardy" and sages, learn that a good question is frequently more important than a good answer.

YOGA AND JEWISH MEDITATION

Course # B4012

Grade: 9-12

Faculty: Niema Hirsch

Fall 6:55 OR Spring 6:55

New!

Hebrew Mantras, Yoga postures and breathing will calm you after a busy day. Learn the wisdom of Jewish meditation as taught by our modern rabbis. Yoga and meditation can awaken your soul and offer an alternative to siddur based rituals. Immerse yourself in something different and relax.

COLLEGE BOUND FOR JUNIORS

Course # B8260

Grade: 11 ONLY

Faculty: Sheryl Santiago/Amy Rich

Spring 8:00

The college selection and admissions process can sometimes be a stressful and most often challenging process. Through this popular Merkaz course, learn how to more effectively organize and participate in this process. Special attention will be paid to factors which Jewish applicants should consider when exploring, evaluating and choosing their schools. Merkaz participation is an important feature to include in your application along with other tips provided in this class to help you stand out!

DOING THE RIGHT THING

Course # B4060

Grade: 9 – 12

Faculty: Rabbi Marcelo Kormis

Spring: 6:55

How do you know when you are doing the right thing? What influences your decisions to behave in ethical ways? What are your beliefs and values about right and wrong, good and evil, and do your actions usually reflect what is important to you? How do you respond to conflicting beliefs or desires? It's not always easy! In this class, we will explore and discuss such topics as lying and deception, political and economic ethics, war and peace, sexual and gender ethics, and biomedical ethics. Learn from your peers, Jewish ethics and text, and philosophy.

I JEW – IS THERE AN APP FOR THAT?

Course # B7200

Grade: 10 – 12 ONLY

Faculty: Ira Wise

Spring 6:55

New!

We will not be turning off our iPhones and Androids for this class. Can we find God in Instagram or Snapchat? Can Facebook teach us how to be ethical? Can we make technology help us to be MORE Jewishly connected, knowledgeable and fulfilled? Or will it just lead to being enslaved by our computer overlords? We WILL explore how we can use apps to find ... enlightenment? You do not need to bring your own device, but you may if you want to!

JEWS IN THE NEWS

Course # B3290

Grade: 9 – 11 ONLY

Faculty: Ricka Breiner

Fall 8:00

How do the happenings in the Middle East affect you? What happened at the White House this week? Who's who in the Jewish world? These and many more questions will be answered each week as we take an in-depth look at the world around us. Analyze current events from a variety of sources including both Jewish and non-Jewish newspapers, magazines, and other media. Discuss and debate the morals, ethics, and legality of issues from a Jewish perspective.

INSPIRING STORIES OF HOPE AND SURVIVAL

Course # B4130

Faculty: Carole Rubin

Grade: 9 – 12

Fall 6:55

What enables people to triumph over life's challenges and unexpected situations? This is an amazing opportunity to meet and hear inspirational and life-changing stories of resilience, perseverance, optimism, and hope. Get a personal and inside view of people who have been confronted with difficult challenges in their lives including loss, illness, adversity, and tragedy. How did they cope during the most difficult times? What role did their faith play? Do miracles really happen? Come and hear for yourself!

BETTER TOGETHER*

Course # B4890

Faculty: Marjorie Schulman

New!

Grade: 9 – 12

Fall 6:55

In this intergenerational program become sensitized to the challenges and strengths of the elderly and what Judaism has to teach us about our relationships with them. Share your life and experiences with seniors and as they share their lives and experiences with you. Through guest speakers and visits to Jewish Senior Services in their new home, develop intergenerational relationships.

*This program is in partnership with the Jewish Senior Services in the new building at 4200 Park Ave. It will also give students a lot of flexibility to earn additional credits and work independently. Better Together can also be designed as an Independent Study.

WHAT DO YOU STAND FOR?

Course # B4570

Faculty: Laura Pappas

Grade: 9 – 12

Fall 8:00

Consider a variety of contemporary issues that are challenging our society and the world around us. Topics might include: Are there any moral and ethical issues with stem cell research? Is abortion murder? What is the difference between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas? What would a Palestinian state look like? What would Israel look like? What do you think about the same-sex marriage laws passed? What should a millionaire give to charity? Students will be encouraged to discuss the morals, ethics, and legality of issues from a Jewish perspective. In this dynamic class, have fun while learning to clarify, formulate, and articulate your opinions. Seize your opportunity to *TAKE A STAND!*

J-DATE AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA

Course # B9201
Grade: 11 – 12 ONLY

Faculty: Marjorie Schulman
Spring 6:55

New!

Times have changed. Isn't it time Merkaz caught up? Who are you online? How do you present yourself in social media for the world to see? How do you create a profile that is honest, safe, and a reflection of the real you? What are you looking for when you date in college and beyond? How does your being Jewish affect these choices?

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Course # B4080
Grade: 9 – 12

Faculty: Carole Rubin
Spring 6:55

Get "up close and personal" with a different guest each week. This is a unique opportunity to meet with outstanding speakers who will share their journey and its connections to Jewish life. In this interactive course you will reflect upon various issues and aspects of Jewish life, community relations and life-changing events. Discussion topics may include intermarriage, Save the Children, anti-Semitism, organ donation, Jews-by-choice, and interfaith relations among others. These stories are bound to amaze, surprise, move, and impress you!

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE TRAINING

Course # B3300
Grade: 9 – 11 ONLY

Faculty: Miriam Landa
Fall 8:00

New!

Throughout the semester students will learn about various disabilities, appropriate conduct when interacting with individuals with special needs, and the huge impact they can have on others. These skills will be taught through activities and discussions by specialists, parents, and (optional) hands on volunteer time at Friendship Circle events.

ELECTION REFLECTION

Course # B4320
Grade: 9 – 12

Faculty: Doron Kathein
Fall 6:55 OR Fall 8:00

New!

Compare the American and Israeli election and government systems. How can two democracies function so differently? Examine this year's political process through a Jewish lens. Apply Jewish values to this current American election process. Pursue questions like does this election have any impact on Israel? Should Jews vote for a candidate just because he is Jewish?

~DIVISION C: HISTORY AND SOCIETY~

BUILDING A LIVING BRIDGE WITH ISRAELI TEENS

Course # C3100

Faculty: Emissaries

Grade: 9 – 11 ONLY

Fall 6:55

Meet our Young Emissaries from Israel and learn about their experiences growing up in our homeland. How does their school time and free time compare with yours? How do Israeli youth prepare themselves for the army, while American teens are preparing for college? Learn about the joys and challenges of being an Israeli teen, the diversity of Israeli society, its history, culture, and accomplishments, and enjoy some hummus and Israeli snacks while you're there! (May be repeated for credit)

START UP NATION

Course # C3850

Faculty: Doron Kathein

Grade: 9 – 11 ONLY

Spring 8:00

New!

"START-UP NATION addresses the trillion dollar question: How is it that Israel-- a country of 7.1 million, only 60 years old, surrounded by enemies, in a constant state of war since its founding, with no natural resources -- produces more start-up companies than large, peaceful, and stable nations like Japan, China, India, Korea, Canada and the UK?" As America reboots its own economy and can-do spirit, there's never been a better time to look at Israel, this remarkable and resilient nation, for some impressive, surprising clues.

FAMOUS AND INFAMOUS JEWS

Course #C4840

Faculty: Laura Pappas

Grade: 9 – 12

Fall 6:55

Thanks to Adam Sandler, we all know who in show business celebrates Hanukkah. But there is a longer list of Jews who qualify for the *Hall of Fame* or the *Hall of Shame*. This course will provide an opportunity to learn about infamous Jewish gangsters, and more modern-day crooks. We will contrast them to our Jewish heroes, including Jews who took the movies to new heights, others who won the Nobel Prize, and philanthropists who might send you to Israel for a FREE 10-day trip! Be prepared to be amazed by the breadth of accomplishments and destruction wrought by our kinsmen and to explore why Jewish ethics are more important now than ever!

OUR STORIES

Course # C4260

Grade: 9 – 12

Faculty: Agnes Vertes

Fall 8:00

New!

Through first person testimony hear real stories of faith, resistance and resilience. Over the years Merkaz students have done story boards of Holocaust survivors in our community. Read their stories out loud, meet those who still survive. Become one of their story tellers because their stories must live on after them. Taught by a faculty member who herself is a Holocaust survivor.

GENEOLOGY THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Course # C4420

Grade: 9 – 12

Faculty: Andy Weinstein

Spring 8:00

New!

What do you really know about your grandparents and great grandparents? Your family tree projects from elementary school could use a little landscaping work. What would you really like to know? Ask before it's too late! How did you meet your spouse? What song did you like to dance to? When did you first vote? Who did you vote for? Did you ever experience anti-Semitism? How did you handle it? Did they serve in the military? What do they remember about the Civil Rights Movement in the US. Start the conversation. Learn about ship manifests and Ellis Island records. Use this course as an excuse to get closer. Bring your phone....you'll be using it as you research your family history!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT ~ COOKING FOR PEACE

Course # C9400

Grade: 12 ONLY

Faculty: Lisa Becker / Dana Aponte

Fall 6:55 AND Fall 8:00

"An enemy is one whose story we have not heard."

Did you know that behind every recipe there is a story? In this cooking class, learn the stories and recipes of Jews and Palestinians who belong to a Dialogue group that promotes relationship building and peace. They address the ongoing Middle East conflict by learning about one another and sharing their recipes. In this course, you will hear personal accounts, learn about the quest for peace, celebrate the efforts and activities that promote peace, while enjoying the delicious homemade recipes your class prepares. Special guest speakers and film clips will be included, along with thought-provoking discussion and conversation.

This is a 2 period class.

CONFIRMATION CLASS FOR CONGREGATION B'NAI ISRAEL

Course # C5000

Grade: 10 ONLY

Faculty: Rabbi James Prosnit

Fall 6:55 AND Spring 8:00

Confirmation class for B'nai Israel students is a 2-semester course.

REAL ENCOUNTERS WITH WORLD RELIGIONS

Course # C4020

Faculty: Laura Pappas

Grade: 9 – 12

Spring 8:00

Peace, respect, and positive relationships begin with knowledge and understanding of one another. This course will provide a comparative view of the world's major religions including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Expand and clarify what you already know about Judaism, and compare and contrast the similarities and differences between Judaism and other religions. Gain insight into the history, traditions, and basic tenets of each religion through activities, discussion, and meetings with invited guest speakers from our interfaith community.

HEBREW FOR TRAVEL

Course # C4995

Faculty: Emissaries

Grade: 9 – 12

Spring 6:55

New!

Thinking of traveling to Israel in the future? Take a look at a variety of programs from BBYO and Young Judaeh to Birthright. Learn Hebrew from our Young Emissaries to allow you to function comfortably when you go.

~DIVISION D: ARTS AND LITERATURE~

ART AND THE LAND OF ISRAEL: INSPIRATIONS FROM THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

Course # D4450

Faculty: Lisa Greenberg

Grade: 9 – 12

Fall 6:55

New!

In this multimedia art workshop you will be creating your own art based on inspirations from the Land of Israel. We will look at the art and artists of both the new and old Israel. Discover how and why the visual arts add to the formulation of a national identity.

NAME THAT TUNE

Course # D4600

Faculty: Justin C. Beck

Grade: 9 – 12

Spring 8:00

New!

Explore the Jewish influence in the music arena. Look at and listen to Jewish composers, musicians, writers and vocalists. The effect is far reaching and includes all kinds of genres including jingles, jazz, classical, Christmas, country, hip-hop, blues, reggae, lullabies, techno, rap, klezmer, and R&B to name a few. The class will include music and film clips, guest performers and sing a long (if you want).

A CHILD'S STORY

Course # D4825

Grade: 9 – 12

Faculty: Laura Pappas

Spring 6:55

New!

Jewish picture books and other short works based on folk tales, midrashim, and Hassidic stories are worth reading as an adult. Using your creative skills and lots of discussion, we will explore some of the many meanings and lessons of the texts and illustrations. Find out about PJ Library and the revolution in Jewish children's books. Try your hand at writing or illustrating one. A valuable course for babysitters, camp counselors, etc.

A TASTE OF JEWISH COOKING

Course # D9360

Grade: 11 - 12 ONLY

Faculty: Lisa Becker / Dana Aponte

Spring 6:55 OR Spring 8:00

Having lived all over the world, Jews are the originators of "Fusion" cooking, a style that reflects the combination of many different cultures. In addition to many time-honored Ashkenazi favorites, students will have an opportunity to try their hands at some traditional and non-traditional recipes from Sephardic and Middle Eastern to North African dishes. Learn what holiday favorites are enjoyed by Jews in Israel and the Diaspora. The course also includes an examination of the laws of Kashrut. And best of all, you'll have the opportunity to eat what you cook!

50 JEWISH ARTISTS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Course # D4590

Grade: 9 – 12

Faculty: Lisa Greenberg

Spring 6:55

New!

Discuss and emulate the artwork of famous Jewish artists you may know like Chagall, Rothko, and Modigliani. How about others you may not have heard of like Spero, Karavan, Naaman and Louis. Create your own original works using a variety of art media: paint, soft pastels, india ink, water color, and more. Be inspired and create!

PHOTOGRAPHY THROUGH A JEWISH LENS

Course # D4815

Grade: 9 – 12

Faculty: Regina Madwed

Fall 8:00

New!

Look at Jewish ritual objects, Jewish communal life and education and Jewish food in a way like never before. Using a camera, get up close and personal. Zoom in and zoom out. It's a whole new way of looking at things. Bring your camera or use your phone!

~DIVISION R: SENIOR SEMINAR~

CHOICES YOU WILL FACE ON THE COLLEGE CAMPUS (Senior Seminar)

Course # R1134

Faculty: Rabbi Colin Brodie

Grade: 12 ONLY

Fall 8:00 OR Spring 8:00

What does it mean to be a responsible Jew? What are the guiding principles for making responsible choices and taking responsible actions? As you prepare to go off to college, this course will help you clarify your beliefs, examine various social and political perspectives, and explore issues of diversity and choices on the college campus. Participate in dynamic discussions and activities that will help prepare you for a "*response-able*" future.

Be A Part Of It !