



Yeshiva University
THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL STRAUS
CENTER FOR TORAH AND WESTERN THOUGHT

The Wisdom of Solomon: Love, Learning, Leadership
(Chochmat Shlomo BIBL 4935H)
Fall 2022

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Hours: By appt on Calendy

Course Meeting Info:
CRN 85247, T/TH
11:50 am – 1:05 pm
Location: 245 Lex, 818

Course Description

At the tender age of twelve, Solomon ascends the throne and is invited by G-d to make a request. Noting his inexperience, the young king asks for “an understanding heart to judge thy people” and in return is granted *chochma* (1 Kings 3:5-11). While *chochma* in the Hebrew Bible and Jewish thought has a variety of meanings, in the life and literary legacy of Solomon, wisdom is linked to love, learning, and leadership. During Solomon’s forty-year reign, Israel enjoyed a golden era of wealth, peace, and political power which fostered the building of the Beit HaMikdash, a project of enormous civic and spiritual proportions. And yet, despite unparalleled knowledge and success, by the end of Solomon’s reign, idolatry was on the rise and the Israelite monarchy was beginning to fall. So how are we to understand the writings of King Solomon? How was he able to turn struggle into song, longing into leadership, and suffering into sagacity? This course will survey the three sapiential texts of Tanach that Solomon composed throughout his lifetime: *Shir HaShirim*, *Mishlei*, and *Kohelet*. Using classical meforshim and midrashim, students will access the profundity of biblical parables, proverbs, meditations, and manifestos, and their centrality in Torah and importance in cultivating relationships with oneself, others, and Hashem. In accordance with the mission of the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought, we will also trace how far and wide Solomon’s wisdom has carried across epochs, from Egyptian princesses to Renaissance poets to US Presidents, aiming to emulate his good governance and find solace in his social/moral vision.

Course Objectives

- Students will gain an understanding of the unique literary features/genres of the writings attributed to Solomon as well as their theological import in Jewish thought and practice.
- Students will gain an appreciation of the larger influence of the writings of Solomon on Western literature and culture.

Jewish Studies Mission Statement

The study of Bible, Tanakh, is the study of the Divine Word of God that provides a foundation for our identity as Bnai Yisrael and our relationship with God. The stories and laws in Tanakh answer the following questions:

- Who are we as individual people?
- Who are we as a nation?

- What does it mean that we are a chosen nation?
- What is our mission as Am Yisrael?
- What are the laws that we are required to do? What are the Covenants that we are a part of? what are the responsibilities and the privileges that come with being members of the Chosen People.
- We are supposed to model ourselves in the Image of God; what does that mean and how do we fulfil that mission?
- Why are these stories relevant to me as an individual? As a woman? What can we learn from the success and failures of the Biblical characters that is relevant to our lives today?

The classes have a dual purpose. They focus on answering the big questions that should bring us closer to God. In addition, they focus on analysis of the text using a multitude of methods that include classical exegesis and literary techniques. The goal is for the student to be able to answer why these texts connect to me as an individual and as a Jewish woman and to enable the student to become an independent learner.

Course Materials

Shir HaShirim, *Mishlei*, and *Kohelet* are easily accessible online. Recommended links will be posted on Canvas. Secondary assigned readings will also be available on Canvas weekly.

Course Requirements

Attendance/Participation: 10%
 Multimedia Project & Presentation: 25%
 Midterm: 30%
 Final: 35%

Expectations

Although **attendance and participation** count for 10% of your grade in the course, active and collective engagement is essential for a successful learning experience. Understandably, life happens, and should you need to miss class you are responsible for making up what you miss by obtaining any materials and notes generated in your absence. Up to three unexcused absences are allowed, but after that you must have documentation (i.e., medical emergency), to avoid your participation grade being lowered by one letter grade. In the event of an emergency of some kind, I will do my best to support your continued progress in our class. Of course, attendance and participation are not the same thing. Students are expected to come to class prepared, having read and reflected on the assigned materials, and explicitly draw on that preparation to propel conversations by posing and responding to questions and stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas. Participation will make our sessions more productive and will ensure that you develop a "habit" of thinking and communicating creatively and critically at an educated level. For scheduled remote classes on Zoom, keep your camera on to make our learning environment as rich and engaging as possible (and not be marked absent).

In addition to completing reading assignments in advance and actively participating in discussions, students will work in pairs on **multimedia project and presentation** (25%) on a specific proverb from *Mishlei*. Guidelines will be shared in class, and some class time will be allotted toward your preparation.

A **midterm** assignment (30%) and **final** (35%) will conclude the semester. More information will be provided in class.

Lastly, we all need to tend carefully to keeping lines of communication open. I will work to challenge you as much as I can without overwhelming you. To support your progress throughout the course, I plan to check in throughout the semester, not only to make sure you're keeping up with the reading and writing but to make sure that you are doing well. And when you're not, to help you find the support you need. Patience— with oneself and with others— is critical for a successful learning experience.

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to uphold the highest levels of academic integrity according to the policy of our university, summarized in the YU academic integrity statement available on the YU website. Academic dishonesty is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at Yeshiva University. Cheating, forgery, dishonest conduct, and plagiarism erode YU's educational, research, and social roles. They devalue the learning experience and its legitimacy not only for the perpetrators but for the entire community. All students are expected to familiarize themselves with YU's [Academic Integrity Statement](#) and abide by it. Since plagiarism is a serious transgression of ethics, any instances of plagiarism will be pursued through the appropriate disciplinary channels and may include receiving a failing grade for the assignment or class. Since this course will require research work and the use of secondary material, you must be aware of your intellectual obligations and take care to document your work diligently. We will discuss academic integrity (and how and why to avoid plagiarism) in class. If you ever have any doubts or questions, please ask.

Academic Support

Academic support is available to you if you are having any difficulties that could include the following but are not limited to these: understanding assignments, navigating research papers, issues with time management of your schedule and your life, or general college adjustment. You are welcome to make an appointment with Dr. Beth Hait. To make an appointment, go to yu2.mywconline.com. Click on the arrow next to "Academic Advisement" and scroll down to "Student Academic Support."

Special Accommodations

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations should make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, rkohn1@yu.edu, during the first week of class. The office is located in 215 Lexington Ave, Suite 505. Once you have been approved for accommodations, please submit your accommodation letter and discuss any specifics with me to ensure the successful implementation of those accommodations.

Library Support

Get all the support you need with research for your courses. The **Yeshiva University Libraries** (library.yu.edu) offer individualized consultations that will help you locate and cite journal articles, books, and other credible sources for solid papers, presentations, and reports. Skilled information-seekers succeed academically and in the workplace. Prepare for the future by contacting the library at [https://library.yu.edu/ask the library](https://library.yu.edu/ask_the_library) You can [schedule an appointment](#), [email](#) a librarian, or [Live Chat](#) for assistance.

The Beren Writing Center at Stern

The Beren Campus Writing Center (located in 714 in Lex 215) offers free, confidential tutoring that can support your writing for this course. Find out more and make an appointment [here](https://www.yu.edu/writing-centers/beren) (<https://www.yu.edu/writing-centers/beren>). I highly recommend booking well in advance.

Out of Class Assistance

I am happy to meet with you to discuss your progress in the course and address any individual questions/concerns you might have. You are always welcome to email me to set up an appointment.

Schedule of Classes

This schedule is a "living" document that will be modified as schedule needs dictate throughout the semester. All readings and due dates will be available on Canvas and any alterations will be posted and announced in class.

Dates	Course Materials
Week 0 Thursday 8/25	Course Introduction - Solomon in I Kings and Rabbinical Literature
Week 1 Tuesday 8/30 & Thursday 9/1	<i>Shir Hashirim</i> , Chapters 1 – 3 - A Rose Among the Thorns
Week 2 Tuesday 9/6 & Thursday 9/8	<i>Shir Hashirim</i> , Chapters 4 - 6 - Beshert and Betrayal
Week 3 Tuesday 9/13 & Thursday 9/15	<i>Shir Hashirim</i> , Chapter 7 – 8 - Beauty, Metaphor, and Solomon's Vineyard Guest Lecture with Rabbi Meir Soloveichik
Week 4 Tuesday 9/20 & Thursday 9/22	<i>Mishlei</i> , Chapters 1 – 2 - Introduction to <i>Mishlei</i> ; proverbs as a genre - The Beginning of Knowledge and the 'End' of Learning
<i>Rosh Hashana – No Classes 9/27 & 9/29 (MW schedule)</i>	
Week 5 Thursday 10/6 (Remote)	<i>Mishlei</i> , Chapters 3, 6, 10, 23 - Musar and the Craft of Character
<i>Sukkot – No Classes 10/7 – 10/19</i>	
Week 6 Thursday 10/20	<i>Mishlei</i> , Chapters 4-5, 14 - Woman Wisdom, Faith, and (In)idelity
Week 7 Tuesday 10/25 & Thursday 10/27	<i>Mishlei</i> , Chapters 12, 15, 18, 21 - The Power/Peril of Speech Morgan Library Visit: Solomon manuscripts

<p>Week 8 Tuesday 11/1 & Thursday 11/3</p>	<p><i>Mishlei</i>, Chapters 16, 20, 25, 29 - Lessons in Leadership <i>Mishlei</i>, Chapters 13, 19, 22 - On Poverty, Prosperity, and Work Ethic</p>
<p>Week 9 Tuesday 11/8 & Thursday 11/10</p>	<p><i>Mishlei</i>, Chapters 26 - 27, 30 - Knowledge of the Natural World <i>Mishlei</i>, Chapter 31 - Aishet Chayil</p>
<p>Week 10 Tuesday 11/15 & Thursday 11/17</p>	<p>Midterm Introduction to Kohelet, Chapters 1-2 - Lightness, Darkness, and Greatness</p>
<p>Week 11 Tuesday 11/22 (<i>No Class 11/24</i>)</p>	<p>Kohelet Chapter 3 - Transience, Permanence, and Substance</p>
<p>Week 12 Tuesday 11/29 & Thursday 12/1</p>	<p>Kohelet Chapter 7 - Good, Better, and Best Practices</p>
<p>Week 13 Tuesday 12/6 & 12/8</p>	<p>Kohelet, Chapter 12 - Faith and Failure</p>
<p>Week 14 Tuesday 12/13 & Thursday 12/15</p>	<p>Student Presentations</p>
<p>Week 15 Tuesday 12/20 & Thursday 12/22</p>	<p>Student Presentations Conclusion</p>
<p>Final Exam</p>	<p>TBA</p>