

BOSTON COLLEGE
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY DEPARTMENTS

Po 669/Th 414 Politics and Religion in the Middle Ages: Mainonides

Professors Fortin and Bruell
Spring 1988

All required reading assignments are in the Guide for the Perplexed, (trans. S. Pines, U. of Chicago Press) which we will read in its entirety. The division of the text into weekly assignments has been done as sensibly as possible within the limits of scheduling constraints, but it is bound to be somewhat arbitrary and students are advised to consult and contrast the outline of the text offered at the beginning of the first introductory essay. Within each weekly assignment, chapters differ considerably from one another both in length and difficulty and in significance. Students are urged to review the whole assignment but to concentrate their attention on the chapters within it which appear to be most significant and at the same time most accessible. It is essential to compile notes on the reading so as to be able to compare, in accord with Mainonides' instructions on how to read his book, different utterances of his on the same topic appearing in different parts of the work.

The writing assignment for graduate students is a paper of 10-15 pages, a summary and analysis of a chapter or group of chapters not yet treated in class, due on the day the chapter(s) in question are to be discussed: for undergraduates, the assignment is a 5 page paper of the same sort and a final examination.

1/21 Ep. Ded. and Intro. to Part I (pp/3-20)
1/28 I chs. 1-34 (21-79)

2/4 I 35-54 (79-128)
2/11 I 55-70 (128-175)
2/18 I 71-76 (175-231)
2/25 II Intro-13 (235-285)

3/10 II 14-25 (285-330)
3/17 II 26-35 (330-369)
3/24 II 36-48 (369-412)
3/31 III Intro-15 (415-461)

4/7 III 16-24 (461-502)
4/14 III 25-35 (502-538)
4/21 III 36-50 (539-617)
4/28 III 51-54 (618-638)

The main focus of the course will be the interpretation of the text of the Guide as well as the discussion of the questions which it raises against the general background of political and religious thought of the Middle Ages, Christian as well as Jewish and Islamic. The two introductory essays are recommended secondary sources. In addition, the following may be found helpful in approaching the Guide and coming to grips with the general questions which it raises.

R. Brague, "Leo Strauss et Maimonide" in Maimonides and Philosophy, ed. Pines and Yovel, 1986, pp. 246-268

E. Fortin, "St. Thomas Aquinas" in History of Political Philosophy, ed. Strauss and Cropsey

, Dissidence et philosophie au moyen age, chs. 1-3

P. Lerner, "Maimonides" in History of Pol. Philosophy, ed. Strauss and Cropsey

, "Maimonides' Letter on Astrology" in History of Religions, v. 8 1968, pp. 143-158

, "Maimonides' Treatise on Resurrection" in ibid., v. 23 1983, pp. 140-155

M. Nahdi, "Alfarabi" in History of Pol. Philosophy, ed. Strauss and Cropsey

, "Alfarabi Against Philoponus" in Journal of Near Eastern Studies, v. 26, n. 4 1967, pp. 233-260

A. L. Motzkin, "On the Interpretation of Maimonides" in The Independent Journal of Philosophy, v. II 1978 pp. 39-46

G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, 1961, First Lecture

L. Strauss, Philosophy and Law, Essays Toward the Understanding of Maimonides and His Predecessors, trans. Baumann, 1987

, Persecution and the Art of Writing, 1952, especially "The Literary Character of the Guide for the Perplexed" as well as "Introduction" and "The Law of Reason in the Kuzari"

, Spinoza's Critique of Religion, 1965, esp. "Preface to the English Translation" (reprinted in Liberalism Ancient and Modern, 1968, pp. 224-259)

, Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy, 1983, "Notes on Maimonides' Book of Knowledge," "Note on Maimonides' Letter on Astrology," "Note on Maimonides' Treatise on the Art of Logic," "Jerusalem and Athens: Some Preliminary Reflections"

, What is Political Philosophy, 1959 Maimonides' Statement on Political Science

, "On Abravanel's Philosophical Tendency and Political Teaching" in Isaac Abravanel, ed. Trend and Loewe, 1937, pp. 95-129

Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook, ed. Lerner and Mahdi, 1963, "Introduction," and "Haimonides' "Logic" and "Letter on Astrology"

Ethical Writings of Haimonides, ed. R. Weiss and C. Putterworth, 1975 (Dover)

- 1. 10-11 (17-18)
- 2. 12-13 (19-20)
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