



Shalom Carmy

Spring 2021

YESHIVA COLLEGE  
BELIEF & RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT

Our primary concern in this course will be to examine certain issues and texts relating to the nature of belief, its place and significance in human thought in general, with special regard to religious commitment. We shall read texts, and call upon methods of thought, belonging to the disciplines of Western philosophy, intellectual history, theology, and literature (possibly cognitive psychology as well). Though unable to undertake a study of all the pertinent facets of thought, or even to exhaust one specific discipline, we shall, I hope, hit several of the high points of the subject and, if successful, learn something about the manner in which one may integrate various disciplines.

*Writing:* There will be frequent assignments (about 15-20 pages in all). I must insist on promptness in handing them in.

**I will try to arrange additional “office hours” via Zoom, most likely on Sundays late afternoon or Friday—once day gets longer.**

Journal articles, almost all books before 1900 available online or via our online holdings. Other texts are on reserve on 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of library.

**TENTATIVE OUTLINE:** (Additional texts and references will come.)

1. Gettier, Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?; Richard Foley, *When is True Belief Knowledge? 1-31 (e-book available through Pollack Library)*
2. Plato, passages from *Meno*.
3. Rambam: *Guide I*, 50; *Hil. Yesode haTorah* 1-2; Introduction to *Helek*. Carmy, “The Sovereignty of Dogma” in Levy & Carmy, *Legacy of Maimonides*.
4. Halbertal & Margalit, *Idolatry*, ch. 5, “The Wrong God” 137-62.
5. Descartes: *Meditations* #4;
6. Montaigne: *Essays*, “On Experience”
7. S. Shapin, *Social History of Truth* “The Argument Summarized” and chapter 5 (193-242).
8. Pascal: *Pensées* paragraphs 233-34; 267-77 (the “wager”; editions vary 9. Hume: *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* 2.
10. Kierkegaard: *Philosophical Fragments* and Robert Adams: *The Virtue of Faith* chs. 2-3.
11. John Henry Newman: *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* ch 5-6.
12. Ramban: Exodus 19:17; *Bet haLevi* to *Bo* (handout)
13. William James: *The Will to Believe* 1-31.
14. Harry Frankfurt, *On B—S. Bernard Williams, Truth and Truthfulness*.

Time permitting--

Wittgenstein: *On Certainty* (selections)

Graham Greene: *The End of the Affair*; Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*.

Carmy: “Dialectic, Doubt and a Self-Erasing Letter” (in Kaplan & Shatz, *R. Abraham Isaac Kook and Jewish Spirituality*)

Reformed Epistemology (Plantinga, Wolterstorff, Mavrodes *et al*), maybe Alston, *Perceiving God*. Possibly work on sincerity

(e.g. Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*).

*Availability:* M;T;W;R all day. 5th Floor Library and other haunts. I plan to eat lunch on Library ground floor:M,W 12:15-1:00 and T, Th 12:15-12:45 or so.

Feel free to reach me by phone 1-718-252-0496 (best time-- 10-12 P.M.) to discuss course material or any other constructive matters. As usual, let me express the shopworn yet phoenix-like belief that we can contribute to one another's growth as thinking religious individuals and perhaps to the future flourishing of a *Torah veHokhma* community. *e-mail:* [carmy@yu.edu](mailto:carmy@yu.edu)