**Philo**

**RELS 1130/JUDS 1695**

**CRN: 24019**

**Spring, 2014**

**Brown University**

Philo of Alexandria (also called Philo Judaeus) was a Jewish philosopher – arguably the first Jewish philosopher – who lived from ca. 20 BCE – 50 CE. A wealthy and well-educated Jew in Alexandria (Egypt), in most of his writings Philo sought both to explore the relationship between the Hebrew Bible (or, more accurately, the Hebrew Bible in its Greek translation) and Greek philosophy and to demonstrate that Jewish laws and practices are rational and beneficial. Late in his life, Philo also found himself embroiled in politics. His writings, preserved by the early Church, thus offer an extraordinary window into Jewish life outside of Palestine at the time of the early Roman Empire.

This course has no prerequisites (although familiarity with the Bible and early Jewish history would be helpful). Knowledge of Greek is not necessary, although an additional section can be formed to look at selections of the text in Greek if there is interest.

Please note also that Yale University will be convening a conference on “Philo’s Readers: Affinities, Reception, Transmission and Influence,” which will take place on March 30-April 1 ([www.philosreception.com](http://www.philosreception.com)). We have been invited to attend and will discuss the logistics in class.

**Objectives**

The primary goal of this course is to acquaint you with Philo’s corpus, and, by extension, issues in early Jewish history and Hellenistic philosophy. You will also develop skills in leading discussions and research in this area.

**Instructor**

Michael Satlow, Professor, Judaic Studies Program and Department of Religious Studies. My office is in the Program for Judaic Studies, 163 George St. My number is 863-3911, and my email is Michael\_Satlow@brown.edu. You can find more information on me at http://www.mlsatlow.com. My office hours are generally on Tuesday by appointment, but I am often able to meet with you at your convenience on other days as well. I strongly encourage you to visit me, even if you think that you have nothing to talk about!

**Texts**

Please purchase Adam Kamesar, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Philo,* abbreviated below as *CC.* Most of the other readings for the class will be available online. Readings marked with a \* are available through OCRA.

The best translation of Philo into English is still the Loeb Classical Library edition, which is on Reserve at the Rock. The translation of C.D. Yonge is not as good but is out of copyright and available for free online at [www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/](http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/).

**Requirements**

1. **Attendance and Participation** (10%). Please come to each class prepared. You may miss one class – excused or unexcused – without penalty. If you require more than one excused absence then you may have no unexcused absences.
2. **Reading Journal** (10%). For most classes I will ask you to write some brief responses, due on the day before class. These will be open for the class to read.
3. **Leading Class Discussion** (10%). Will be assigned one class (or half a class, perhaps as part of group) in which you will lead the discussion.
4. **Research Project** (70%). Your main task for the class is to prepare a final research paper on some aspect of Philo and his work. This will be about fifteen pages and due on May 18 (unless you are a graduating senior, in which case the due date is May 8). A project description and preliminary bibliography is due on February 6, and you will present a draft of your work during one of the last class meetings.
5. **Grading**. An A will be given for 90-100%; a B for 80-89%; a C for 70-70%, and an NC for anything under 70% An S with distinction will be given to students choosing the S/NC option who would earn an A.
6. **Policy on cheating**. Plagiarism and cheating, whether intentional or not, are very serious matters. Any infractions will result in failure of the class. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to consult me or the Academic Code.

**Schedule**

Below is our tentative schedule.

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| **January 23** | **Introduction** |
| **January 30** | **Background**What kind of world did Philo live in? How did his writings survive?Readings:1. Essays by D. Schwartz and J. Royse in *CC*
2. Satlow, “Between Athens and Jerusalem,” in *Creating Judaism*, pp. 96-114\*
3. J. Mélèze Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt,* pp. 161-190\*
4. T. Law, *When God Spoke Greek*, pp. 43-74\*
5. Selection of Jewish writings in Greek (on Canvas)
6. Philo, *Flaccus*
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| **February 6** | **Philo and History**How can Philo be used as a historical source?Readings:1. R. Kraemer, *Unreliable Witnesses*, pp. 57-116\*
2. A. Kerkeslager, “Agrippa I and the Judeans of Alexandria,” *Revue des Études Juives* 168(2009): 1-49\*
3. Philo, *On the Embassy to Gaius* and *The Contemplative Life*
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| **February 13** | **Philo and the Bible: Overview**How does Philo know and treat the Bible?Readings:1. Article by Kamesar in *CC*
2. M. Niehoff, “Philo’s Exposition in a Roman Context,” *StPhA* 23 (2011): 1-21\*
3. G. Sterling, “The Interpreter of Moses,” in *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism*, pp. 415-435\*
4. Philo, *The Preliminary Studies*. Pay most attention here to how Philo is treating the underlying biblical text.
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| **February 20** | **Allegory**What is “allegory” and how does Philo use it?Readings:1. M. Alexandre, Jr., “Rhetorical Hermeneutics in Philo’s Commentary of Scripture*,” Revista de Retórica de la Communicación* 1 (2001): 29-41\*
2. Radice chapter in *CC*
3. D. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria*, chapter 2\*
4. J. Dillon, “The Formal Structure of Philo’s Allegorical Exegesis,” in *Two Treatises of Philo of Alexandria*, 77-88\*
5. Philo*, Allegorical Interpretation* I-II
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| **February 27** | **Philo and Philosophy**How does Philo fit into his larger philosophical world?Readings:1. M. Bonazzi, “Towards Transcendence,” in F. Alesse, ed., *Philo of Alexandria and Post-Aristotelian Philosophy*, pp. 233-252\*
2. J. Dillon, “Philo and Hellenistic Platonism,” in Alesse, ed., *Philo of Alexandria*, pp. 223-252\*
3. D. Runia, “Was Philo a Middle Platonist?” *StPhA* 5 (1993): 112-140\*
4. G. Sterling, “Platonizing Moses: Philo and Middle Platonism,” *StPhA* 5 (1993): 96-111\*
5. C. Termini, “Philo’s Thought,” in *CC*
6. Philo, *On the Creation of the World* and *On Providence*
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| **March 6** | **Embodying the Law**On Philo’s notion of “the law”.Readings:1. H. Najman, “A Written Copy of the Law of Nature,” *StPhA* 15 (2003): 54-63\*
2. D. Winston, “Sage and Super Sage in Philo,” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells*, pp. 815-824\*
3. C. Lévy, “Philo’s Ethics,” in *CC*
4. Philo, *Life of Moses*
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| **March 13** | **Philo and Midrash**Does Philo practice “midrash”? What is his relationship to the writings of the rabbis?Readings:1. D. Winston, “Philo and Rabbinic Literature,” in *CC*
2. Y. Amir, “Authority and Interpretation in the Writings of Philo of Alexandria,” in M. Mulder, ed., *Mikra*, pp. 421-453\*
3. S. Fraade, “Hearing and Seeing at Sinai: Interpretive Trajectories,” in G. Brooks, et al., eds. *The Significance of Sinai*, pp. 247-268\*
4. I. Rosen-Zvi, “Joining the Club,” *StPhA* 17 (2005): 153-160\*
5. Philo, *On the Decalogue*
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| **March 20** | **Philo and the Commandments**What was Philo’s attitude toward Jewish law?Readings:1. L. Schiffman, “The Prohibition of Judicial Corruption,” in *Hesed ve-Emet*, pp. 155-178\*
2. N. Cohen, “The Jewish Dimension of Philo’s Judaism,” in *Journal of Jewish Studies* 38 (1987): 165-186\*
3. Philo, *Special Laws*, I-II
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| **March 27** | **Canceled: Spring Break** |
| **April 3** | **Philo’s Influence**What was Philo’s influence on later writers?Readings:1. G. Sterling, “’A Man of the Highest Repute,’” *StPhA* 25 (2013): 101-113\*
2. F. Siegert, “Philo and the New Testament,” in *CC*
3. D. Runia, “Philo and the Early Christian Fathers,” in *CC*
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| **April 10** | **Student Presentations** |
| **April 17** | **Conclusions and Student Presentations** |