I. Description

From the eighteenth century onward, modern Jewish thinkers have been concerned with the question of whether or not Judaism can fit into the modern category of religion. After all, Judaism has historically been a religion of law, and hence of practice. Adherence to religious law, which is in some measure public in nature, does not seem to fit into the category of faith or belief, which by definition is individual and private. In this advanced institute we will see that the clash between the modern category of religion and Judaism as it has been traditionally practiced gives rise to many of the creative tensions in modern Jewish thought as well as to the question of whether Judaism and Jewishness are matters of religion, culture, or nationality.

Led by Princeton professor and modern Jewish intellectual Leora Batnitzky, we will ask the challenging big questions: How and why did Moses Mendelssohn invent the idea of Jewish religion? How does the subsequent development of Reform, Orthodox, and Conservative Judaism relate to Mendelssohn’s invention? How have Zionist thinkers reacted to the introduction of a Jewish religion? How does the American regime mold the contours of a Jewish religion in the United States? Does Haredi Judaism represent a rejection of Judaism’s religious dimension?

The writings of Mendelssohn, Karl Marx, Theodor Herzl, Ahad Ha’am, Mordecai Kaplan, Joseph Soloveitchik, and others, will allow us to consider how Jewish arguments about religion anticipate contemporary debates about religion and state, tolerance and pluralism, and religion’s place in the public square.
II. Course Calendar:

July 28th: Modernity and the Jewish Question
9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Reading:

July 29th: An Answer to the Problem—Judaism as Religion
9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Reading:

July 30th: The Rejection of the Answer: Judaism as Nationalism
9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Readings:
- Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State*
- Ahad Ha’am, “Slavery in Freedom” from *Selected Essays by Ahad Ha’am*, translated by Leon Simon (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1912), pp. 171-194. [Hebrew Included]

July 31st: Is America Different?
9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Readings:

August 1st: Is Judaism a Religion?
9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Reading:

**Note: Professor Batnitzky will distribute additional readings in class meetings.**
III. Faculty Biographies:

Core Instructor

Leora Batnitzky
Leora Batnitzky is Perelman Professor of Religion and Chair of the Department of Religion at Princeton University as well as the Director of Princeton’s Tikvah Project on Jewish Thought. She is the author of *Idolatry and Representation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig Reconsidered* (Princeton, 2000), *Leo Strauss and Emmanuel Levinas: Philosophy and the Politics of Revelation* (Cambridge, 2006), and *How Judaism Became a Religion: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought* (Princeton). Her current project focuses on the conceptual and historical relations between modern religious thought (Jewish and Christian) and modern legal theory (analytic and Continental).

Dean

Alan Rubenstein
Alan Rubenstein was educated in Liberal Arts at St. John’s College in Annapolis, MD and also at Georgetown University. He was a senior consultant for the President’s Council on Bioethics and currently serves as Hanson Scholar of Ethics at Carleton College in Northfield, MN. At Carleton, he teaches ethical thought through close reading of great literature of the West – in particular, Plato, Hebrew Bible, and Shakespeare. He has served, for Tikvah, as Co-Director of the program *Jewish Thought and Enduring Human Questions* and as Co-Convener of a working group on the life and thought of philosopher Hans Jonas. He is married and father of three children.
IV. Our Mutual Commitment

Our pledge to you is that the program will be excellent and that the teachers are, in every case, among the best people in the world teaching the subjects they are teaching. Your pledge to us is that you will invest yourselves in the texts and the seminars, and do the work to the fullest extent of your talents. You have put your everyday work on hold to join us, so we know you come to us with great interest and commitment. We will insist that you continue that commitment—a commitment to attending each and every session, a commitment to coming to class on time, a commitment to doing all the readings—throughout the duration of the Institute. If anyone fails to honor his or her commitment, he or she will be dismissed from the seminar.