I. Description

Is reason a sovereign authority in the realms of morality and metaphysics? Led by the prominent philosopher Moshe Halbertal, we will explore this question through Biblical, Rabbinic, and Medieval Jewish texts.

In the realm of independent moral reasoning we will examine texts and traditions—mainly midrashic and Talmudic—that deal with two questions:

1. Is there recognition of independent moral obligation outside of revelation within Jewish tradition?

2. What is the role of value judgments in halakhic interpretation? Or to put it differently, in what way do values, integrated into the interpretive processes that are the heart of classical Jewish thought, impact the direction of Jewish law?

We will address as well the realm of beliefs and metaphysics, mainly examining the different ways in which Jewish philosophy located the role of reason in shaping and orienting faith. This issue will be dealt with by reading Maimonides’ *Guide*, and the controversy that evolved around Maimonides positions.
II. Course Calendar:

July 28th: The Place of Independent Ethical Consideration Derived from Reason and their Place within Revelation and Halakhah, part 1
9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Readings:
- Commentary of Nachmanides, Genesis 6:13
- Commentary of Nachmanides, Deuteronomy 6:18
- Pages 1-5 of the included Source Sheet (Section on “You Should Cut Off Her Hand”)

July 29th: The Place of Independent Ethical Consideration Derived from Reason and their Place within Revelation and Halakhah, part 2
9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Readings:
- Pages 6-15 from the included source sheet (the section on the wayward son)
- Pages 16-24 from the included source sheet

July 30th: The Place of Independent Ethical Consideration Derived from Reason and their Place within Revelation and Halakhah, part 3
9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Readings:
- Pages 16-24 from the included source sheet, continued

July 31st and August 1st: Revelation and Reason in Relation to Nature and Metaphysics
9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Readings:
- Guide of the Perplexed, Part One: Chapters 52-65 [English and Hebrew]
- Guide of the Perplexed, Part Three: Chapters 17-18 [English and Hebrew]
- Guide of the Perplexed, Part Two: Chapters 32-48 [English and Hebrew]
- Mishneh Torah Sefer ha-Mada: [English and Hebrew]
  - Hilkhot Yesodei Ha-Torah, Laws of the Foundations of the Torah: Chapters 1-4
  - Hilkhot Teshuva, Laws of Repentance: Chapters 8-10
III. Faculty Biographies

Core Instructor

**Moshe Halbertal**
Moshe Halbertal is the Gruss Professor at NYU Law School and Professor of Jewish Thought and Philosophy at the Hebrew University, and a fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute. He received his Ph.D. from the Hebrew University in 1989, and from 1988-1992 he was a fellow at the Society of Fellows at Harvard University. Halbertal served as a visiting Professor at Harvard Law School and the University of Pennsylvania Law School. He is the author of the books *Idolatry* (co-authored with Avishai Margalit) and *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning and Authority*, both published by Harvard University Press. He is also the author of *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Tradition and Its Philosophical Implications* (2007), *Between Torah and Wisdom: R. Menachem ha-Meiri and The Maimonidean Halakhists in Provence* (2000), and *Commentary Revolutions in the Making* (1997). His latest book, *Maimonides: Life and Thought* was released in November 2013.

Dean

**Daniel Mark**
Daniel Mark is an assistant professor of political science at Villanova University. Daniel also serves on the nine-member, bipartisan United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, to which he was appointed by Speaker of the US House of Representatives John Boehner. He teaches political theory, philosophy of law, American government, and politics and religion. At Villanova, he is a faculty associate of the Matthew J. Ryan Center for the Study of Free Institutions and the Public Good and the faculty adviser for the men’s club lacrosse team. In addition, he is informally affiliated with the Navy ROTC program. Daniel is also an assistant editor of *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy*. He holds a BA, MA, and PhD from the Department of Politics at Princeton University. There, he was affiliated with the Witherspoon Institute, the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions, the Program in Law and Public Affairs, and the Penn-Princeton Bioethics Forum. He wrote his dissertation under Professor Robert P. George on the subject of “Authority and Legal Obligation.” He works with the Tikvah Fund in New York and has taught at the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought at Yeshiva University. Before graduate school, he spent four years as a high school teacher. He also attended Yeshivat Har Etzion (Gush) in Israel.
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.