Shoolman Graduate School of Jewish Education
EDUC 683: Curriculum Design for Teaching God and Israel: The Space and Place of Curriculum in Jewish Education
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Skype Office Hours:
Given time zone differences, etc., I am not designating a fixed time for office hours. If you would like to meet virtually via Skype, please email and we can set up a time.

Course Scheduling:
Each week of coursework usually begins on Wednesday at 12:00 pm EDT and concludes the following Tuesday at 9pm EDT (w/exceptions for holidays). In order to provide you with more flexibility, sessions may be opened in advance of the date of study, although you will not be required to do the coursework until the listed date.

Course Description: The overarching enduring understanding for this course is that Jewish educational curricula, when intentionally and effectively designed, can serve as a guide to help students encounter and wrestle with complex ideas such as God and Israel. In order to uncover this enduring understanding, this course will explore both theoretical frameworks of curriculum development as well as pedagogic applications of how the subject matter of God and Israel can be taught in liberal Jewish settings. Throughout the course students will work through the various stages necessary to construct a curriculum focused on questions related to either God or Israel and will end the semester with a finished product that can be implemented in a learning setting.

Essential Course Questions (to be explored throughout the semester):
- What is the role of curriculum in shaping the space and place of Jewish education?
- How can UbD be used as a framework for developing curricula that help learners wrestle and develop relationships with core concepts in the corpus of Jewish learning, such as God and Israel?
- How does prioritizing the process of uncoverage within Jewish education impact the curriculum and how students and teachers experience the process of Jewish education?
- How do I, as an educator, relate with, influence, and impact the curriculum in the settings in which I teach?

Learning Outcomes:
As we explore the above-stated essential questions throughout the course, learners will develop the following core competencies and abilities:
- Apply constructivist education approach to the Jewish setting
- Relate theory to practice in their own and others' educational settings
- Better understand the nature of teaching and learning and application to Jewish educational settings
- Apply general educational theories to the Jewish setting
- Understand the nature of teaching and learning and application to Jewish education settings
- Hone the ability to communicate Judaic content in an educational setting
- Explore the major Jewish educational theories as a means to refine a personal vision of Jewish Education
- Broaden reading in education theory, practice, and leadership theory and practice, both general and Jewish
- Demonstrate reflective thinking about practice in Jewish Education
- Become a reflective practitioner about learning and how to learn
- Refine technology skills and broaden range of capabilities
- Be able to reflect on personal learning style
- Develop a professional and entrepreneurial persona for working in Jewish Education

Required Texts:
- The majority of readings for the course will be available on-line or will be posted on Schoology.

Activities & Assessment:
- Activities - On a weekly basis there will be three main components of our learning together:
  - Readings: both required reading and often optional additional readings
  - Materials to scaffold the learning: online lectures, background materials, guiding questions, brief texts or book excerpts to frame our discussion, etc.
  - Core activities: these are activities that will help synthesize the readings, demonstrate understanding of core ideas, engage learners in dialogue, introduce learners to new technologies, link theory to practice, and provide opportunities for reflection.
- Assessment - There will be three types of coursework upon which students will be evaluated:
  - Posts/Ongoing Evidence of Understanding (40% of grade): These will be the primary form of weekly participation. They include exercises, reflections on readings, on-line activities, pair/group work, and general discussions.
  - Performance Tasks (40% of grade): These assignments are designed to present learners with complex challenges through which sophisticated evidence of understanding of the big ideas covered in this course can be demonstrated. There will be three main performance tasks over the course of the semester:
    - Reflections on a Big Idea (10%)
    - Mapping the Logic of Backward Design (5%)
    - Designing a Curriculum about Makom (25%)
  - Overall Participation and Active Contributions (20% of grade) – This is a measure of effort and ongoing active participation in the class discussions, asking pertinent questions about readings, sharing reflections, contributing new ideas to the class dialogue, and overall contribution to the learning process beyond the parameters of weekly assigned learning activities. This measure also includes an assessment of the level of participation demonstrated in the small group curriculum development teams in which work will be done throughout Unit 3 of the course.

Course Accommodations for Disabilities:
- Hebrew College is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in programs. Accordingly, if a student has a documented disability, and as a result, needs a reasonable accommodation to attend, participate or complete course requirements, then he or she should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. For further information, see the Student Handbook at http://hebrewcollege.edu/sites/default/files/student_handbook.pdf.
- If you require course accommodations because of a documented disability or an emergency medical condition, please email your instructor as soon as possible. We are happy to work with you on any issues you have to ensure that you can participate fully in the class and complete the course requirements. Please do not wait until the assignments are due for a retroactive accommodation, but discuss the situation with your instructor before you experience difficulty.

UNIT 1 – DEFINING THE SPACE OF OUR LEARNING

Session 1 – Introducing the Overarching Concepts of Makom and Curriculum – 9/8

Enduring Understanding: Complex ideas that can be studied from multiple perspectives, such as God, Israel, and even curriculum, require a process of uncoverage to be understood and internalized.

Essential Questions:
- How can the boundaries and defined space of an abstract concept be drawn in a way that is both expansive and contained?
- How can curriculum serve as a tool for helping learners encounter and wrestle with abstract concepts?
- How do the ways in which we have learned about God and Israel in various settings impact our approach to teaching these complex subjects?

Readings:
Evidence of Understanding: Learners will be asked to design and share a collage featuring images that reflect their present understanding of and relationship with the concepts of God, Israel, and curriculum.

Session 2 – The Field of Curriculum Design 9/17

Enduring Understanding: The evolution of the concept of curriculum over the course of the 20th century and into the 21st century has significantly impacted the educational experiences of children in both Jewish and secular settings.

Essential Questions:
- What are the primary schools of thought that have informed curriculum design over the past century?
- How have trends in general education impacted the structure and delivery of education in the American Jewish community over the past century?
- How do current approaches to curriculum, both in Jewish and secular settings, reflect the historical experiences from which they evolved?
- How do the ways in which we have encountered curriculum as learners in various settings impact our approach to it as educators?

Readings:

Optional Readings:

Evidence of Understanding: Learners will demonstrate their understanding of how various approaches to curriculum have evolved by sharing examples of how these educational schools have influenced their own experiences as students.

UNIT 2: UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN: A FRAMEWORK FOR UNCOVERING MAKOM

Session 3 - Entering the Space of Backward Design – 10/1

Enduring Understanding: Curriculum design, as Wiggins and McTighe note, should resemble travel planning in that it should help learners explore the key cultural and historical elements of a destination rather than just take them on a purposeless tour.

Essential Questions:
- What does it mean to think of curriculum design as one would think of the process of travel planning?
- How does the UbD approach of “backward design” compare with other approaches to curriculum development with which you may be familiar?
- What are some of the key factors that may undermine the effective use of UbD and how can educators aim to avoid them?

Readings:

Optional Readings:

Evidence of Understanding: Learners will be asked to enter the realm of UbD by generating semantic maps of ideas related to God and Israel and beginning the process of narrowing down the big idea they want to explore through their curriculum project.

Performance Task #1: Reflections on a Big Idea - Due 10/20: As the first step in developing their curriculum project, students will be asked to write a reflection paper in which they present the “big idea” they have selected as the focus for their curriculum project. This big idea can be selected from among those brainstormed as part of the semantic maps developed for Session 3. The reflection paper will encompass the reason why the particular big idea was selected, personal associations with the topic, and an exploration of any relevant background information.
Session 4 – What is Understanding? – 10/15

**Enduring Understanding:** Despite the tendency to use “know” and “understand” interchangeably, there is a qualitative difference between knowing and understanding that has implications for the nature of curriculum design and the process of education.

**Essential Questions:**
- What is the difference between knowing and understanding?
- How can misunderstanding help educators gain clarity regarding what it means to understand?
- How can focusing on big ideas promote the development of understanding?
- How do the six facet of understanding outlined in UbD help enrich and clarify understanding as an aim of the process of education?

**Readings:**

**Optional Readings:**

**Evidence of Understanding:** Learners will demonstrate their understanding of what it means to uncover understandings by analyzing how the ideas of UbD apply to the approach to teaching tefillah presented in Katz’s chapter.

**Check-in Conversation:** During the week of 10/20, each student will have a scheduled, individual phone or Skype check-in with the instructor to discuss the class to date, address any questions or concerns, review feedback about the curricular big idea selected in the first performance task, and further explore the types of learning experiences that would best support optimal growth and learning through the remainder of the course.

Session 5 – Crafting Essential Questions & Enduring Understandings- 10/29

**Enduring Understanding:** The crafting of essential questions and enduring understandings at the beginning of the curriculum design process helps educators set priorities and stay focused on specific aims in their teaching.

**Essential Questions:**
- What makes an essential question “essential”? What are the key characteristics of essential questions?
- What makes an enduring understanding “enduring”? What are the key characteristics of enduring understandings?
- How do essential questions and enduring understandings dynamically interact with one another to achieve the aim of stage 1 of UbD, which is to identify desired results?

**Readings:**

**Optional Readings:**

**Evidence of Understanding:** Learners will demonstrate their understanding of enduring understanding and essential questions by crafting examples based on the approaches to the Israel experience featured in Katz and Liptz’s article.

Session 6 – Evidence of Understanding & Assessment – 11/5

**Enduring Understanding:** Assessing for understanding requires multi-dimensional evaluations that draw out the reasons for students’ responses and engage learners in authentic applications of what they have learned.

**Essential Questions:**
- What are the guiding principles behind determining acceptable evidence of understanding within stage 2 of UbD?
- How can the six facets of understanding help frame criteria to be used as acceptable evidence of understanding?
- What is the role of formative and summative assessment within the framework of UbD?
- How is it possible to assess abstract measures such as affective outcomes and dispositions, which are common aims in Jewish educational settings?

**Readings:**
Essential regarding Enduring Understanding:

Session 8 final curriculum project due as the Final Performance Task at the end of the semester. Students will be assigned so that students will work with peers who are exploring a similar big idea in small working groups of curriculum design teams in order to share ideas and receive peer feedback concerning their curriculum design work. Optimally, the groups will be assigned so that students will work with peers who are exploring a similar big idea and will be able to share resources in addition to providing feedback. All of the learning activities for Unit 3 are designed to become pieces of the final curriculum project due as the Final Performance Task at the end of the semester.

UNIT 3: THE BIG PICTURE – MAKOMI – THE PLACE OF CURRICULUM IN MY TEACHING

Curriculum Design Teams: Throughout Unit 3, students will be assigned to small working groups of curriculum design teams in order to share ideas and receive peer feedback concerning their curriculum design work. Optimally, the groups will be assigned so that students will work with peers who are exploring a similar big idea and will be able to share resources in addition to providing feedback. All of the learning activities for Unit 3 are designed to become pieces of the final curriculum project due as the Final Performance Task at the end of the semester.

Session 8 – Curricular Design Process – 11/19

Enduring Understanding: As curriculum is developed, its expansive nature becomes increasingly evident and questions regarding the place of a particular curriculum within a broader educational trajectory can, and should, be addressed.

Essential Questions:

- What features of curriculum design, as informed by UbD, make it an iterative process?
- How can scope and sequence be applied to a curriculum focused on uncovering understandings?
- When designing a curriculum, how can consideration be given to where my curriculum fits into the broader trajectory of students’ learning?

Readings:


Evidence of Understanding: Learners will analyze one of the various lesson plans presented to distill teaching techniques that reflect elements of the WHERETO framework and support uncoverage of topic of God.

Performance Task #2: Mapping the Logic of Backward Design – Due 11/21. At the close of Unit 2 learners will be asked to submit a logic map laying out the key elements of the backward design process for their curriculum project. The logic map is used throughout UbD as a means of aligning the progression of the stages of backward design and a template learners can progressively fill out throughout the course of Unit 2.
Optional Readings:

Evidence of Understanding: Learners will map out a draft scope and sequence for their curriculum project and receive and share feedback with peers concerning this step in the curriculum design process.

Session 9: The Teacher’s Place in Relation to the Curriculum – 12/3

Enduring Understanding: Curriculum is ideally designed in a flexible manner that enables teachers to learn from it, connect to it, integrate their voices into it, and adapt it for their particular students and setting.

Essential Questions:
- What is the role of the teacher when facilitating the encounter between the curriculum and students?
- What are some of the common misuses of curriculum by teachers and how can they be avoided?
- How can a curriculum rationale help frame the role of the teacher and assist the teacher in unpacking the curriculum?

Readings:

Optional Readings:

Evidence of Understanding: Learners will develop a rationale for their curriculum project that addresses both their personal connection to the curriculum and the envisioned role of the teacher within its implementation.

Session 10: Disequilibrium in the Curriculum Design Process – 12/10

Enduring Understanding: Although curriculum is a course to be run, the ride is not always smooth, and significant learning can take place from encountering moments of disequilibrium along the way.

Essential Questions:
- What are some potential potholes that might be encountered in the process of developing a curriculum and how can they be addressed?
- What is the value of intentionally seeking to bring disequilibrium to your students as they encounter complex subjects such as God and Israel?
- How can an experience of perturbation lead to reorganization of ideas and deepened learning for both teachers and students?

Readings:

Optional Readings:

Evidence of Understanding: Learners will revisit the collages they created in the first session of the course and add additional images, as appropriate, to reflect ways in which their understandings of God, Israel, and curriculum may have evolved through the learning and potential perturbation encountered over the course of the semester.

Final Performance Task: Designing a Curriculum about Makom – Due 12/17: For the final performance task learners will be asked to synthesize their learning by presenting a complete curricular unit focused on an enduring understanding related to Makom. This final performance task will culminate the curriculum design process that progressed throughout the semester. The final curriculum should encompass an overview of a curriculum of 6+ sessions with detailed information about a minimum of 3 learning activities. The completed curriculum project should also include a rationale, general explanation of where it falls within the scope and sequence or spiral of learning, and other reflections and annotations, as appropriate.