COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To deepen understanding of, and exposure to, experiential modes of online teaching and learning in a variety of Jewish settings
2. To maximize Jewish educational experiences by using technology as a tool
3. To understand the potential impact of mentors and peer-directed learning in online and in person settings
4. To explore the uses (and challenges) of role-play and games in Jewish learning
5. To hone critical thinking and reorientation skills to maximize experiential teaching and learning

STRUCTURE AND EXPECTATIONS OF THE COURSE:

This unique course consists of theoretical and practical elements, as outlined below, which will be interwoven in student reflection and assessments throughout the semester. The Jewish Court of All Time online simulation, our laboratory for the semester, will be complemented by assigned readings and discussions around experiential learning, online learning and the uses of technology, simulation and role play in teaching.

Participation in JCAT:
The Jewish Court of All Time (JCAT) engages Jewish day school middle school students across the United States in an online historical simulation during the fall semester. Graduate students act as mentors within the simulation, helping to encourage productive dialogue, facilitate learning outcomes, and acting as
leaders within the role play. Since JCAT will serve as the laboratory for this course, Hebrew College students will engage deeply in the simulation as one of the central course requirements. Hebrew College students will fulfill the mentor requirements (choosing and researching one's character, presenting evidence, engaging other characters in dialogue, reporting on students' progress, etc.). As the instructor, I will also participate in the role play to advise you in your online mentoring work and to have my finger on the pulse of the JCAT laboratory for our continuous learning and reflection on Schoology. Participation in JCAT will be a semester-long expectation.

Reflection Forums (Student-Initiated):
A significant part of this course will focus on your active participation, as mentors, in the Jewish Court of All Time, and also the collective reflection and work on that experience. You'll find, therefore, that there will be fewer assigned readings, and you will bring much of the 'text' with which we are working from the online game itself to debrief and deconstruct within our reflection forums. Separate from our unit-based discussion forums to explore readings and assigned topics, reflection forums will be ongoing and driven by the issues, grassroots in nature. Each student will choose one week to act as the catalyst for the reflection forum - posing questions, bringing excerpts from the online game, and moderating the discussion to ensure full and productive participation. Though one student will be responsible to get things started, all students will bring their real-time experiences within JCAT to bear on the reflection forum each week. This experience practices the skill of teaching and engaging students online (or in any setting) and models student-led modes of learning. I will act as the initial catalyst/moderator for the first reflection forum, and will also be active in the reflections throughout the semester. Students should experiment with technology tools (blogs, Voicethread, word clouds, etc.) to enhance the reflections, and I will be a partner in this as well. Overall, the reflection forums will enable the group to expand beyond the expected/predictable issues of the course, to those that develop within the JCAT laboratory, as they participate in the game and as mentors.

One-on-Ones:
Students will schedule at least one Skype conversation with me during the course of the semester, ideally before they lead a reflection session, so that we can work together on how best to structure their forum. Conversations will also focus on experiences of the class, the learner's needs and general check-in. I am also always available to students by appointment, or on days when I am on campus, for any needs they may have to connect outside of the framework of the course.

Assigned Readings:
As outlined below, assigned readings will frame and complement the experience of mentoring within JCAT, allowing students to apply their learning within other environments and toward other learning outcomes. The readings will also act as the framework for our discussion forums, where I will pose central questions.
about experiential education, online learning, educational games and simulations and mentoring. The assigned readings will attempt to mirror academically what students are experiencing practically in the JCAT laboratory. As mentioned above, readings will be lighter due to the online mentoring expectations but will remain a core component of the course.

Discussion Forum and Exercises (Instructor-Initiated):
The instructor-initiated discussions and exercises will encourage students to consider assigned scholarly articles in light of JCAT and their own 'home' teaching settings. Further, they will push students to anticipate challenges of online and other modes of experiential learning, as well as benefits of integrating these modes into a multitude of settings. Note due dates on Schoology for individual discussions within a given unit.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE:

UNIT 1, 9/8 - 9/17: INTRODUCTIONS AND PLAY – GAME FOR THEM TO ENGAGE IN
The first week plus of the course will serve as an introduction to one another, the course and to the Jewish Court of All Time (JCAT) program. We will begin to understand the somewhat complex, multi-layered construction of this course, which includes participation in JCAT, reflection thereon, and readings and discussions of the larger context of experiential education. Further, as we introduce ourselves, we will explore the impact mentors have had on our life and work, and begin to consider how we might most effectively play that role in our JCAT experience.

Readings for Unit 1:
• JCAT Materials (available on Schoology in JCAT Resources folder), including JCAT case, sample resumes and Teacher Handbook, 2014. Skim handbook

Discussions for Unit 1:
• Discussion: Exploring and understanding the JCAT case and structure
• Reflection: Mentoring and Myself

UNIT 2, 9/18 - 10/1: EXPERIENTIAL TEACHING AND LEARNING
This unit examines the evolution and potential of experiential education in Jewish settings. To what extent did the naming of Experiential Jewish Education, and early scholarship on the topic, impact the field and practice. In particular, the unit will grapple with the common trend of placing experiential strategies outside of the context of formal settings.

Readings for Unit 2: Berrin, ed. "Informal Education (Complete Issue)," Sh'ma, 2001

Discussions for Unit 2:
• Discussion: Naming and Defining Experiential Education
• Discussion: Experiential Learning and the 21st Century Learner
• Reflection: What makes reflection productive and useful? Setting norms.
• Reflection: Elements of Character Choice; Peer Review of Character Resume

Assignments for Unit 2:
• Character Resume, Rough and Final Drafts
UNIT 3, 10/2 - 10/15: SERIOUS GAMES, SERIOUS PLAYERS/LEARNERS
As we begin our 'laboratory' work of mentoring middle school students in their JCAT experiences, we will begin to probe the theory and practice of utilizing games to achieve particular learning outcomes.


Discussions for Unit 3:
- Discussion:
- Exercise: Identifying JCAT Mentors; Characteristics and Online Behaviors
- Reflection: Student-initiated based on current JCAT work

Assignments for Unit 3:
- Begin logging into and participating in JCAT Simulation; Utilize troubleshooting section of Reflection forum to help one another get started

UNIT 4, 10/16 - 10/29: LEARNING OUTCOMES IN EXPERIENTIAL SETTINGS
Experiential learning has often been sidelined as 'content-light,' though as research and the field grow, educators have begun to make a case for meaningful experiential education. To expand on the pioneer thinkers from Unit 2, we will look at a current study of education in several experiential settings and responses thereto. Our reading will explore whether learning outcomes are being met, both within our JCAT lab and in other experiential work around the Jewish educational landscape.

Readings for Unit 4: Cousens, "Mapping Goals in Experiential Education" (2014).

Discussions for Unit 4:
- Discussion: Intentionality and Learning Outcomes
- Discussion: Is EJE "content light?" (Sales eJP article)
- Reflection: Student-initiated based on current JCAT work

Assignments for Unit 4:
- Game Concept (details in final assignment below - due 10/22 on designated Schoology discussion board)
- Draft mentee progress reports (Final drafts due 11/11)

UNIT 5, 10/30 - 11/5: TECHNOLOGY AS A TOOL IN JEWISH EDUCATION
As the JCAT Laboratory gives a sense of how 21st century learning can be expanded beyond in-person hours, this unit will probe the benefits, challenges and glitches of online learning. How can technology be maximized toward specific learning outcomes, overcoming the draw of online tools for their own sake, yet engaging with students 'where they're at?'

Readings for Unit 5:
- Matas, Webinar video (link available on Schoology), 2014.

Discussions for Unit 5:
- Discussion: Technology: Means to an end or end itself?
- Discussion: Technology tools in diverse settings
- Reflection: Student-initiated based on current JCAT work
UNIT 6, 11/6 - 11/19: SIMULATION AND ROLE-PLAY, ONLINE AND IN 'CLASS'
This unit will challenge the group to further consider what role simulations do and should play in a variety of Jewish educational setting, probing again the question of content and designing experiential learning. Depending on class composition, we will break into groups of different types of educators, allowing students to explore these questions within a group working with similar ages or in a similar context. Where appropriate, students will investigate whether learning history (particularly painful or controversial history) may be uniquely suited to this strategy.

Reading for Unit 6:

Discussions for Unit 6:
- Discussion: Assessment in game-based learning
- Discussion: Teaching history through simulation and games
- Reflection: Student-initiated based on current JCAT work

Assignments for Unit 6:
- Final progress reports to mentees (11/11)

UNIT 7, 11/20 - 12/3: JCAT AS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (?)
As the JCAT simulation winds down, we will consider how or whether the language, philosophy and strategies of experiential education can be applied to the Jewish Court of All Time. Students will apply theory to practice, as they bring together the big ideas of EJE into dialogue with findings from the JCAT laboratory.

Discussions for Unit 7:
- Discussion: Theory and Practice of Experiential Education, via JCAT
- Reflection: Student-initiated based on current JCAT work

UNIT 8 - 12/4 - 12/10: APPLYING LESSONS LEARNED BEYOND JCAT
Though the laboratory and reflective aspects of this course have been very focused on a particular educational setting, this final unit will focus on applying JCAT's lessons-learned beyond day schools, beyond middle schoolers, and beyond the teaching of history. In terms of mentoring, technology, experiential strategies and simulations/games, how should the JCAT experience influence us more universally?

Discussions for Unit 8:
- Discussion: Universalizing the JCAT experience
- Reflection: Student-initiated based on current JCAT work (reflection forum will remain active beyond 12/10)
FINAL PROJECT:

Design a 'serious game.' Considering your learners' needs and your desired learning outcomes for the coming year/summer/session, fully design a game which will fit all characteristics of a serious game (as described in our readings and expanded by our discussions). In an introductory narrative, articulate your learning outcomes, the ways in which this game will help you to achieve those outcomes and challenges anticipated. Please also describe how/whether you believe this game is experiential in nature, referring to readings and concepts discussed during the course. Throughout your game design, use footnotes to annotate how your readings, experiences and discussions this semester have impacted choices made in designing the game. Ideally, run all or part of the game with your students (or alternately, with a group of educators), make appropriate changes and tweaks, and summarize that experience in a concluding narrative. Discuss whether the game helped you to accomplish your desired learning, how and why you made particular changes, and also how your final version would better suit your teaching environment.

FINAL PROJECT DEADLINES:
- **GAME CONCEPT**, due via designated Schoology discussion board on **October 22nd**
  Share one-two paragraphs with your classmates to describe your initial game concept and to benefit from your shared expertise
- **GAME DRAFT**, to be shared with peer reviewer and instructor by **November 19th**
- **FULL GAME**, due via Schoology DropBox by **December 17th**