Course Description
This seminar examines Zionism by focusing on the intersections of secular aspirations and theological notions embedded in the ideology and practice of the national Jewish mission. To this end, the seminar is designed, first, to explore the modern concept of 'political theology'. Second, in analyzing a range of selected primary and secondary sources, it will bring this concept to bear on an understanding of the Zionist secular adaptations of theological concepts, such as heresy, faith, inner-experience and redemption. Finally, the seminar will focus on how this type of 'political-theology' informed the national language, symbolism, literature, social institutions, and political imagination.

Grading (100%)
Attendance and active participation (including a 20 minutes oral presentation of one text, selected from the weekly reading assignment) 50%
A final paper of approximately 12-15 pages 50%

Attendance, preparation and active participation in class discussion
It is the students’ right to expect professional teaching, the timely return of work, helpful feedback, and responses to inquiries. It is my obligation to fulfill these expectations. It is my expectations that the students attend all classes, show up on time and to have read the assigned readings for each session. As a part of the participation score, each student is required to orally introduce one text, selected from the weekly reading assignment. The 20 minutes presentation should focus on the main arguments, questions and claims of the selected text.
Final paper

(1) Proposals for the final paper

Proposals should be about 1 page long and should be emailed to the instructor by April 15. The proposals should be comprised of a short summary of the chosen topic, which clearly identifies the subject matter, and the research question, and includes a provisional list of bibliographic items.

(2) Final paper

The final paper of 12-15 pages should be sent to the instructor by May 9. The paper should present a critical analysis of a text, or texts, chosen by the student. Students are free to follow their own interests and intellectual passions. Students may choose to write a research paper using primary sources, or to use the secondary source readings available in the list of recommended reading in the syllabus, or to draw from new secondary literature. The written paper needs to present a clear and original argument that is well informed by relevant sources and literature, and that demonstrates the knowledge and skills that the student has acquired in the course.

Academic Integrity

All contributions in this course will be original, and needs to represent a single submission, unless otherwise noted through explicit and appropriate citations. Academic dishonesty, including, submitting the same academic work for two classes without permission, obtaining unauthorized information, cheating, fabrication, falsification, plagiarism (the use of someone else’s work, words, or ideas as if they were your own) and misrepresentation, is strictly prohibited. Students are responsible for understanding and abiding by the Wesleyan University policies regarding academic integrity and student conduct.

Weekly Topics and Reading Assignments

Week 1 – Introduction: Why Theology?

Week 2 – Political-Theology


Week 3 - The Emergence of Zionism


Week 4 - A Return to History

Week 5 - Nature and Religion

Week 6 – Spiritualism and Religiosity

Week 7 – Heresy, Redemption and Messianism

Week 8 – Life vs. Spirit

Week 9 – The Secularization of Language

Week 10 – Judaism and Christianity
Week 11 – Torah, Exile & Land


Week 12 – Class Presentations

Week 13 – Community, Nativism, Masculinity

Film: *Children of the Sun* [Jerusalem, 2007]


Recommended Readings


