HI 407: BIBLICAL ORIGINS OF DEMOCRATIC CULTURE
PROF. LANDES

Office: 226 Bay State Road #507
Office Hrs: Tuesday 10:30-12, Th 12-1:30 and appt.
Phone: 353-2558; 617-504-7837

Mugar 205
T 3:30-6:30
email: rlandes@bu.edu

Most histories of political thought and practice begin with the Greeks, Plato and Aristotle, *a fortiori*, in looking for the origins of democracy. But democracy consists of more than just the political institutions of elective office and representation. On the contrary, it is undergirded and made possible by the larger culture of what Karl Popper called an “open society.” Equality before the law, respect for manual laborers, freedom of speech and widespread education are all foundational features of successful democracies. Looking at these underlying elements highlights the parallel (in some cases more profound) contributions to democratic culture in the West of both Jewish scripture and Judeo-Christian thought. This course explores these issues, both in their original articulation in biblical and rabbinic circles, and in their introduction into Christian political discourse during “the age of print.” The course then gauges the contribution of these demotic religious impulses to the establishment of modern democracies and considers challenges that face democratic culture in the 21st century.

READING: Reading assignments vary; students will lose a great deal by not keeping up with the reading. Reading Assignments are subject to change. Check your email regularly.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: This is a seminar. Students are expected to participate consistently. (If you have problems – shy, intimidated – please speak with me in office hours.) Students are expected to lead at least one discussion during the semester.

CYBERSPACE: Since cyberspace is to 2000 as printing was to 1500, this medium is intensely apocalyptic at its present stage; it proliferates the most intense articulations of millennial desire from the paranoia of conspiracy and hate mongering to the blissfull images of planetary renewal. Most students are expected to maintain a presence in cyberspace and contact the rest of the class about their discoveries.

REQUIREMENTS:
1) a bibliographical essay on a given topic [20%] DUE MARCH 1
2) a research essay [40%] DUE APRIL 17
3) participation in seminar discussion [40%]

Late work without an extension granted previously will be graded down a degree for every day it is late (e.g., from A to A-, etc.). I expect you to work alone unless you clear a collaborative project with me. Students are expected to know and understand the CAS Conduct Code. Copies available in CAS 105.

*Purchase the following books at the University Book Store or at Amazon:*
Richard Landes, *Heaven on Earth*
Phillip Salzman, *Culture and Conflict*
Eli Sagan, *Honey and the Hemlock*
Joshua Berman, *Created Equal*
Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic*
Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*
Part I: Tribal Honor-Shame Cultures and the Politics of Civilizations

I. January 17: *Honor-shame culture: tribal and imperial*

II. January 24: *Civil Politics and Guilt-Integrity*

Part II: Religions of Honor and Honorable Religiosity

III. January 31: *Biblical Narrative: Demotic Religiosity and the Challenge to Honor*

IV. February 7: *Biblical Legislation, Constitution, and the Problem of Kingship*

V. February 14: *Judaism without Sovereignty*
Readings: Isaiah, 1-4, 59-66; Micah, Daniel 7-12; Berachot, 4:1*; Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, chs. 4-6; Mendel, *Vision and Violence* chap. 1; Fisch, *Rational Rabbis*; Freeman, *The Heavenly Kingdom*.

VI. February 21: NO CLASS

VII. February 28: *Christianity: From Demotic Millennialism to Imperial Religiosity*

VIII. March 7: *Islam: From Eschatology to Millennial Dar al Islam*

Part III: Demotic Religiosity and Western Civic Polities

IX. March 14: Spring Recess, NO CLASSES

X. March 21: *Medieval Paradoxes: Peace of God, Holy War, Inquisition and Dissent*
Documents from the Peace of God and Apostolic heresies*; Crusader Documents*; John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*; Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor Pacis*; Landes,

XI. March 28: **Printing and Demotic Religiosity**

XII. April 3: **Political Hebraism, 1550-1700**

XIII. April 10: **Demotic Millennialism and the English “Public Sphere,” 1640-1660**

XIV. April 17: **The Enlightenment as Secularization of Demotic Religiosity**

XV. April 24: **Religious Dimensions of American Revolution**

XVI. May 2
Tuesday: **Threats to Democracy**