



Yeshiva University
THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL J. STRAUS CENTER
FOR TORAH AND WESTERN THOUGHT

Puritan New England: From Settlement to Salem

HIS 2202-361 (Honors) | CRN: 12047 | T, 6:45-9:15 | Belfer 515

Instructor: Dr. Yisroel Benporat (israel.benporat@yu.edu)

Drop-in Hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 2:00-3:00 PM, Belfer 507



Adam Willaerts, *The Departure of the Pilgrim Fathers from Delfshaven on their Way to America* (1620), Boston Museum of Fine Arts, <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/678528>

Course Description:

This course explores the rise and fall of Puritanism in England and America. Students will examine the origins and evolution of Puritanism and its transplantation to New England, focusing on theology, politics, and law. Other key topics include the English Civil Wars, cross-cultural contact, the Salem witchcraft trials, and historical memory. Readings draw from both primary sources and secondary scholarship. Co-sponsored by the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought, this course will also feature a field trip to Plymouth and guest lectures.

Learning Objectives:

- Develop a deep and broad understanding of the major themes and events that shaped the history of transatlantic Puritanism
- Hone key skills of historical analysis, including critical evaluation of competing viewpoints and conflicting evidence
- Craft clear writing that incorporates primary and secondary sources into an argument-driven analytical composition



Syllabus subject to change

Required Texts:

All required texts will be available in print on reserve at the library. Reserve books have a 2-hour loan period for in-library use only. All other course materials will be posted on Canvas or available online for free.

- Michael P. Winship, *Hot Protestants: A History of Puritanism in England and America* (Yale University Press, 2018). ISBN: 9780300255003.
 - ***Free eBook access available through YU Library.**
- **PNW** - David D. Hall, ed., *Puritans in the New World: A Critical Anthology* (Princeton University Press, 2004). ISBN: 9780691114095.
- **CCP** - John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge University Press, 2008). ISBN: 9780521678001.

Assignments and Grading:

- *Attendance and Participation:* **20%**
 - Read and reflect on the assigned materials prior to each class, as indicated in the course outline below. Come on time to each class in person and, drawing on your preparation, substantively contribute to classroom discussions with comments, questions, or connections to other readings while remaining respectful and attentive. Refrain from using electronic devices and exiting during the class.
- *Reflections:* **20%**
 - Toward the end of each unit, as indicated in the course outline below, write an open-ended informal reflection (**250-500 words**) on the readings and guest lecture/field trip when applicable. These will be graded on a pass-fail basis. There is no prescribed format for this writing, but a successful reflection will demonstrate critical thinking or intellectual engagement with the course materials and/or activities.
- *Midterm:* **20%**
 - 10-20 short-answer questions and/or 1-2 essay questions based on the readings and lectures. **Date: March 18**
- *Book Review:* **20%**
 - Select an academic monograph on Puritan New England **by February 11** for approval from the instructor. Write a scholarly book review (**1000-1500 words**) that elucidates the central arguments or insights of the work and its contribution to the relevant historiography. **Due Date: April 8**, followed by a 10-minute presentation about your book selection to the class on **April 22**.
- *Final Exam:* **20%**
 - 10-20 short-answer questions and/or 1-2 essay questions based on the readings and lectures. **Date: TBD**

Academic Integrity: The submission by a student of any examination, course assignment, or requirement is assumed to guarantee that the thoughts and expressions therein not expressly



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credited to another are the student's own. Evidence to the contrary will result in appropriate penalties as outlined here: <https://www.yu.edu/academic-integrity>.

Artificial Intelligence: This course follows Yeshiva University's [Academic Integrity Policy](#) on artificial intelligence. The use of generative artificial intelligence or any platform with generative artificial intelligence capabilities is prohibited in this course. The use of assistive artificial intelligence is also prohibited in this course. Examples of such prohibited assistive AI include but are not limited to Hemmingway, Quillbot, etc. If you are unsure if a platform is allowed, please inquire directly with the instructor. Please see <https://www.yu.edu/academic-integrity> for further information.

Special Accommodations: Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations should make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, wilfODS@yu.edu as soon as possible, preferably during the first week of class. The office is in the Belz Building (formerly Furst Hall), suite 412. Once you have been approved for accommodations, please submit your accommodation letter and discuss any specifics with me to ensure the successful implementation of your accommodations.

Writing Center: Free Help with Your Writing! The Wilf Writing Center offers individualized tutoring that can support your projects for this course. All writers need feedback, even strong ones. For more information, or to schedule an appointment, visit <https://www.yu.edu/wilf/writingcenter>.

Learning Success Center: Any undergraduate Sy Syms or Yeshiva College student interested in improving his study skills and academic performance is welcome and encouraged to visit the Learning Success Center office for academic support. A learning specialist helps you develop the reading, writing and study skills necessary for academic success. For more information, or to schedule an appointment, please email learningsuccesscenter@yu.edu.

Libraries: Need help with your research? The [Yeshiva University Libraries](#) offer individualized consultations that will help you locate and cite journal articles, books, and other credible sources for solid papers, presentations, and reports. Stop into the libraries or [make an appointment](#) with a librarian. You can also [email us](#) any time or contact us via [Live Chat](#). Librarians are always happy to help you!

Course Outline:

Unit I – Origins

- Week 1 **1/21** - Origins of English Puritanism, 1534-1558
- Winship, Introduction, chaps. 1-2; John Coffey and Paul C.H. Lim, "Introduction," in CCP
- Week 2 **1/28** - Elizabethan Puritanism, 1558-1603



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- **Library Instruction Session, 6:45-7:45 PM – meet in Pollack Library, Room 310; return to Belfer 515**
- Winship, chaps. 3-5; John Craig, “The growth of English Puritanism,” in CCP

Week 3 2/4 - Early Stuart Puritanism, 1603-1630

- Winship, chaps. 6-7; Tom Webster, “Early Stuart Puritanism,” in CCP; PNW, chap. 1, chap. 10
Reflection #1 due before class

Unit II – Evolution

Week 4 2/11 - New England, 1630-1642

- Winship, chaps. 8-9; Francis Bremer, “Variations on a Theme: Connecticut, New Haven, Rhode Island, and the Eastern Frontier,” in *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards* (University Press of New England, 1995), 73-85; PNW, chaps. 14-16, chap. 20
Book selection for review essay due

Week 5 2/18 - English Civil War and Interregnum, 1642-1660

- Winship, chaps. 10-12; John Morrill, “The Puritan Revolution,” in CCP; David R. Como, “Radical Puritanism, c. 1558-1660,” in CCP

Week 6 2/25 - New England, 1642-1660

- Winship, chaps. 13-15; PNW, chap. 22
Reflection #2 due before class

Unit III – Endings

Week 7 3/4 - Restoration Puritanism, 1660-1689

- Winship, chaps. 16-20; John Spurr, “Later Stuart Puritanism,” in CCP; PNW, chap. 19, chaps. 28-30
- **Class exercise, 8:00-9:15 PM:** Book reviews of Adrian Chastain Weimer, *A Constitutional Culture: New England and the Struggle Against Arbitrary Rule in the Restoration Empire* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023)

Week 8 3/18 – Decline and Fall of Puritanism

- **Midterm, 6:45-8:00 PM**
- Winship, chaps. 21-23; John M. Murrin, “Coming to Terms with the Salem Witch Trials,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 110, no. 2. (2000); PNW, chap. 13

Week 9 3/25 - Post-Puritan New England, 1692-1730

- David D. Hall, “New England, 1660-1730,” in CCP; Mark Peterson, “Theopolis Americana: Boston and the Protestant International,” in *The City-State of Boston:*



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The Rise and Fall of an Atlantic Power, 1630–1865 (Princeton University Press, 2019), 191-246

Reflection #3 due before class on 4/1

Unit IV – Themes

Week 10 **4/1** - Puritanism and Family

- Ann Hughes, “Puritanism and gender,” in CCP; Anne S. Brown and David D. Hall, “Family Strategies and Religious Practice: Baptism and the Lord’s Supper in Early New England,” in David D. Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton University Press, 1997), 41–68; PNW, chaps. 12, 17-18, 21

Week 11 **4/8** - Puritanism and Race

- Bremer, “Race Relations,” in *Puritan Experiment*, chap. 14; PNW, chaps. 23-25; Wendy Anne Warren, ““The cause of her grief”: the rape of a slave in early New England,” *The Journal of American History* 93, no. 4 (2007): 1031-1049; Samuel Sewall, *The Selling of Joseph: A Memorial* (1700)

Book reviews due

Week 12 **4/22** - Puritanism and Judaism

- **Student presentations, 6:45-8:00 PM**
- Eugene R. Fingerhut, “Were the Massachusetts Puritans Hebraic?” *The New England Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (1967): 521–31; Michael Hoberman, *New Israel / New England: Jews and Puritans in Early America* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 1-50

Week 13 **4/29 – Guest lecture: Dr. Michael Hoberman (Fitchburg State University)**

Week 14 ***Sunday, 5/4*** - Puritanism and Posterity

- **Field trip to Plymouth (no class on 5/6)**
- Peter Lake, “The Historiography of Puritanism,” in CCP; John Coffey, “Puritan Legacies,” in CCP; David D. Hall, “Epilogue: Legacies,” in *The Puritans: A Transatlantic History* (Princeton University Press, 2019), 342-354

Reflection #4 due 5/8

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 14th, 1:00-3:15 PM (classroom TBD)