The DU-CU 2018 Week of Jewish Philosophy

Religion & Messianism
3 events with visiting scholar
Prof. Martin Kavka
Wednesday & Thursday, April 25 & 26, 2018

Wednesday, April 25, 2018 • 4:30-6:30pm
Walter Benjamin’s Messianic Conception of History
Faculty & Graduate Seminar @ University of Denver
Space is limited; Location & readings made available upon RSVP to cjs@du.edu

We customarily think of the Messiah as someone who brings perfection to the world, whether it be the political sovereignty of the Davidic king, or the redeeming presence of the messiah to come in the future. One of the twentieth century’s most intriguing thinkers, Walter Benjamin (1892–1940), argued that this usual notion of the Messiah made little sense, and that instead we should think of the messianic as associated with the passing away from the world, and therefore with a kind of nihilism. This seminar will take up this argument through a close reading of Benjamin’s short “Theological-Political Fragment” (1921).

Thursday, April 26, 2018 • 11:30-1:00pm
Is Messianic Hope Worthwhile? The Case of Jacob Taubes
Seminar + Lunch @ CU Boulder; 2nd floor Eaton Humanities - HUMN 250
Space is limited; RSVP to CUJewishStudies@colorado.edu

One needs only to go to a news website—any news website—to tap into hope for something better. In the language of the Jewish and Christian traditions, this hope has often been expressed as a hope for redemption, as a specifically messianic hope. The mid-twentieth century saw a debate about whether such hope was worthwhile, with the influential historian of Jewish mysticism Gershom Scholem (1897–1982) arguing for a cautious embrace of messianism as a historical force, and his erstwhile friend Jacob Taubes (1923–1987), one of the post-Holocaust era’s most controversial and notorious rabbis, arguing against this attitude. This seminar will assess Taubes’s response to Scholem, and its implicit charge that Judaism should be more like Christianity.

Thursday, April 26, 2017 • 7:00-9:00pm
Five Theses on Jewish & Christian Messianism
Lecture & Panel Conversation @ DU; Panelists TBA
Space is limited; Location & readings made available upon RSVP to cjs@du.edu

"Christians believe that the Messiah has already come, while Jews do not." This is supposedly the difference between Judaism and Christianity. In this lecture, Professor Martin Kavka will argue against this kind of treatment of the Jewish and Christian traditions, as if they were ready-made things handed down from minister to congregation, or from parent to child. This does not mean that they are the same, or that Jewish-Christian dialogue is easy. Rather, he will suggest that the Jewish and Christian traditions are manifold enough for Jews and Christians to appropriate their pasts in various ways, downplaying those differences or magnifying them as needed. Professor Kavka will join an interdisciplinary panel of CU and DU faculty to reflect on the past, present, and future of conversations between the Jewish and Christian traditions.

Martin Kavka is Professor of Religion at Florida State University, where he teaches courses in Jewish studies and the philosophy of religion. He is the author of *Jewish Messianism and the History of Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press), which was awarded the first Jordan Schnitzer Book Award in Philosophy and Jewish Thought by the Association for Jewish Studies (2008), and the co-editor of five books, including *Judaism, Liberalism, and Political Theology* (Indiana University Press), as well as the co-editor of the *Journal of Religious Ethics*.

Please RSVP today!
Presented by CU’s Program in Jewish Studies & DU’s Center for Judaic Studies; Co-Sponsored by the DU-Iliff Joint Doctoral Program in the Study of Religion, DU’s Department of Philosophy, and the Zicherman- Sztrulovits Memorial Endowed Fund