

# Society of Jewish Ethics 2017 Annual Meeting

January 5-8, 2017

New Orleans, Louisiana

## Schedule Draft

### Thursday, January 5, 2017

7:30am-10:00pm                      **Conference Desk Open**    *2nd Floor*

8:30am-1:30pm                      **Whitney Plantation Tour**    *Offsite*

*Meet bus at Canal Street hotel entrance by 8:15am*

11:00am-1:00pm                      **Lunch and Tour at Café Reconcile**    *Offsite*

**1631 Oretha C Haley Blvd, New Orleans**

*Meet UberX vehicles at hotel's valet garage at 10:50am*

4:00-9:00pm                      **Exhibits Open**    *Acadia*

7:30-9pm                      **Bioethics Panel: Joint SCE-SSME-SJE**    *Galerie 3*

**Topic: Public Health in Times of Crisis: Ethical Perspectives**

**Moderator:** Alyssa Henning, Luther College

**Panelists:** Laurie Zoloth, Northwestern University

**Aana Vigen**, Loyola University Chicago

**Abdulaziz Sachedina**, George Mason University

**Abstract:** *The Jewish Bioethics group will host a discussion about public health issues in mixed-income cities with significant health disparities. Featuring experts in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim ethics, this conversation will consider structural injustice and bias in public health. This panel will be grounded in the particular nuances of diverse populations in New Orleans, but we will raise issues relevant within many cities across America.*

**Discussant:** LuAnn E. White, Tulane University

### Friday, January 6, 2017

**7:00am-6:00pm**                      **Conference Desk Open**                      2nd Floor

**7:15-8:45am**                      **Breakfast with an Author**                      Bissonet

Buffet opens at 7:15; Discussion 7:45-8:45

(Pre-registration/payment is required.)

**7:45-8:45am**                      **Journal of Jewish Ethics Board Meeting**                      Studio 3

**8:00am-7:15pm**                      **Exhibits Open**                      Acadia

**9-10:30 am**                      **Concurrent Session I**                      Galerie 4

**Topic: Resisting Structural Violence and Embodied Responsibility: Jewish Ethics and Plant-Based Diets**

**Convener:** Lisa Hoelle, Emory University

**Presenter: Jacob Ari Labendz**, Penn State University

**Title:** "An Embodied Jewish Practice: Veganism and Cultural Judaism"

**Abstract:** *I explore the potential of Jewish veganism to function as an embodied practice of ethical and ethnic self-construction for secular, cultural, and non-nationalist Jews. After identifying a crisis facing these populations, I draw upon theorists from Abraham Joshua Heschel to Saba Mahmood, my own experiences, and the similarity of kashrut and veganism to explain how this might work. Time permitting, I will also share thoughts on the ethics and politics of developing a Jewish-vegan culture and raise doubts in my own program. I hope for discussion to yield additional strategies for confronting the aforementioned crisis and for enriching Jewish veganism.*

**Presenter: Adrienne Krone**, Allegheny College

**Title:** "Living with a Light Footprint on the Earth": Jewish Veganism and Jewish Ecologies on Jewish Community Farms"

**Abstract:** *Drawing on original ethnographic fieldwork conducted at sixteen Jewish community farming organizations between 2013 and 2016, this paper will explore how ethical dietary practices that reimagine the place of Jewish humans in the world are forged in the context of the growing Jewish community farming movement. The farming spaces these organizations created make the ethics commonly associated with veganism including animal rights, environmentalism, human health, and food justice tangible. This paper will also provide a brief overview of the well-funded, increasingly organized, and growing movement to have Jewish community farming play a role in American Jewish life.*

**Respondent: Aaron Gross**, University of San Diego

**10:30-11am**                      **Break**                      Acadia

**11 am-12:30 pm**                      **Concurrent Session II: Joint SCE-SJE**                      Studio 2

**Topic: Vulnerability and the Ethics of Reconciliation**

**Abstract:** Justice is often considered a matter of past harm and present restitution. This panel argues that the ethics of reconciliation reimagines justice as a matter of establishing right relationships without eliminating our vulnerability to one another within such relationships. Unlike traditional models of justice-seeking, it is forward-looking, attending to the development of our relationships under conditions of ongoing risk and vulnerability. Drawing on discussions of temporality, forgiveness, and reconciliation in Jewish and Christian ethics, we consider racial and sexual domination as apparently intractable situations of injustice and ask how, if at all, the ethics of reconciliation might address them.

**Convener: Anthony Bateza**, St. Olaf College

**Presenter: Anna Bialek**, Washington University

**Title:** "Structural Injustice, Vulnerability, and the Temporality of Perpetration"

**Presenter: Molly Farneth**, Haverford College

**Title:** "Racial Domination and the Conditions for the Possibility of Reconciliation"

**12:30-2:00pm**

**Lunch**

**12:45-1:45 pm**

**SJE Board Meeting**

*Studio 3*

**12:45-2:00pm**

**JRE Editorial Board**

*St. Charles*

**12:45-2:00pm**

**Student Caucus**

*Riverview II*

*(Pre-registration needed for lunch.)*

**Conveners: Melanie Jones**, Chicago Theological Seminary

**Leonard Curry**, Vanderbilt University Divinity School

**12:45-2:00pm**

**Junior Faculty Caucus**

*Riverview I*

*(Pre-registration needed for lunch.)*

**Topic:** "A Guide to Publishing in Theology"

**Presenter:** R. David Nelson, Baker Academic and Brazos Press

**Summary:** For those new to academic publishing in the area of theology, the process of finding and working with a publisher can be very daunting. This workshop will provide participants with an introduction to the publishing world from the perspective of an industry insider. Participants will gain from the session a working knowledge of the publishing landscape and helpful tips for how to create and present a proposal.

**Conveners: Elizabeth Sweeny Block**, Saint Louis University

**Thomas Bushlack**, University of St. Thomas

12:45-2:00pm

Caucus for Contingent Faculty Concerns

Lafayette

**Conveners:** Debra Erickson, Independent Scholar

Lincoln Rice, Marquette University

2-3:30pm

SCE Plenary

Carondelet

**Presenter:** Kelly Brown Douglas, Goucher College

**Title:** "The Religion of America's Exceptionalism and the Matter of Black Lives"

**Respondent:** William Werpehowski, Georgetown University

**Convener:** Stacey Floyd-Thomas, Vanderbilt University

3:30-4:00pm

Break

Acadia

4-5:30 pm

Concurrent Session III

Studio 7

**Topic:** Beyond the State: Judaism, Law and Social Formation

**Convener:** Martin Kavka, Florida State University

**Presenter:** Yonatan Brafman, Jewish Theological Seminary

**Title:** "Neither Privatization nor Politicization: Alternative Social Formations and Norms in Isaac Breuer and Mordecai Kaplan"

**Abstract:** *In view of both theoretical and practical problems resulting from an almost exclusive focus on the state as a social formation and its laws as valid social norms, this paper analyzes the thought of Isaac Breuer (1883-1946) and Mordecai Kaplan (1881-1983). It argues that they both, in different ways, decenter the state by constructing accounts of Jewish social formations that neither privatizes Judaism as the religious congregation nor politicizes it as the state. Correspondingly, each of them develops an account of Jewish norms that neither distorts them by modeling them on state law nor truncates them by interpreting them as religious ritual.*

**Presenter:** Randi Rashkover, George Mason University

**Title:** "Law, Communal Normativity and the Post-Secularization Debate"

**Abstract:** *It has been almost twenty years since Peter Berger published his recantation of the secularization thesis in recognition of the role religion continues to play in the political arena. Nonetheless, current post-secular analyses do not exhaust religion's role in contemporary society. Strung between the two extremes of privatized emotivism on the one hand and the religion-state alliance on the other hand one finds a third model of rationally reflected upon communal normativity. This paper will analyze Jewish law as one particular form of communal normativity and show how it provides a basis for a public yet non-statist expression of Jewish life.*

**Respondent:** Mark James, Hunter College

<b>4:58 pm</b>	<b>Shabbat candle-lighting (on your own)</b>	
<b>5:45-6:00pm</b>	<b>Lifetime Achievement Award</b>	<i>Carondelet</i>
	<b>Recipient: Charles Curran</b>	
	<b>Presenter: Peter Paris</b> , Princeton Theological Seminary	
<b>6-7:00pm</b>	<b>SCE Presidential Address</b>	<i>Carondelet</i>
	<b>Cristina L.H. Traina</b> , Northwestern University	
<b>7:00-7:45pm</b>	<b>SCE Presidential Reception</b>	<i>Acadia</i>
	<i>(SJE members must Pre-register for reception.)</i>	
<b>7-7:45 pm</b>	<b>Kabbalat Shabbat Services</b>	<i>Balcony L</i>
	<i>(Please bring your own siddur.)</i>	
	<i>Service is in Hebrew: all are welcome.</i>	
<b>7:45-9:15pm</b>	<b>Shabbat Dinner</b>	<i>Balcony M</i>
	SJE Presidential Greetings: <b>Geoffrey Claussen</b> , Elon University	
	<i>(Pre-registration required for dinner. Meal is kosher vegetarian.)</i>	

## **Saturday, January 7, 2017**

<b>7:15-8:45am</b>	<b>Breakfast with an Author</b>	<i>Bissonet</i>
	Buffet opens at 7:15; Discussion 7:45-8:45	
	<i>(Pre-registration/payment is required.)</i>	
<b>8:00am-6pm</b>	<b>Exhibits Open</b>	<i>Acadia</i>
<b>9-10:30 am</b>	<b>Shabbat Services</b>	<i>Balcony L</i>
	<i>D'var Torah: William Plevan, Princeton University</i>	
	<i>Service is in Hebrew; all are welcome. (Please bring your own siddur.)</i>	

**9:00-10:30am**

**SSME Plenary**

*Carondelet*

**Presenter: Su'ad Abdul Khabeer**, Purdue University

**Title: "Knowledge of Self: Hip Hop, Blackness and Muslim Ethics"**

**10:30-11:00am**

**Break**

*Acadia*

**11am-12:30pm**

**SCE Plenary: "The Problem of What We Care About"**

*Carondelet*

**Presenter: Lisa Tessman**, Binghamton University

**Respondent: Darryl Trimiew**, Atlanta Divinity Center

**Convener: Diana Fritz Cates**, The University of Iowa

**12:30-2pm**

**Shabbat Lunch**

*Balcony M*

*(Pre-registration required for the kosher vegetarian meal.)*

**12:30-2:00pm**

**Women's Caucus**

*Riverview II*

*(Pre-registration required for lunch.)*

**Conveners: Amy Levad**, University of St. Thomas

**Nikki Young**, Bucknell University

**2-3pm**

**SJE: Gathering with Authors**

*Studio 6*

**Moderator: Andrea Dara Cooper**, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

**Author: Amanda Mbuvi**, High Point University

**Book: "Belonging in Genesis: Biblical Israel and the Politics of Identity Formation"** (Baylor University Press, 2016)

**Author: Elias Sacks**, University of Colorado at Boulder

**Book: "Moses Mendelssohn's Living Script: Philosophy, Practice, History, Judaism"** (Indiana University Press, 2016)

<b>3:30-4pm</b>	<b>Break</b>	Acadia
<b>4-5:30pm</b>	<b>Concurrent Session IV-SJE</b>	Studio 8

**Topic: Narrative and Ethics: From the Book of Genesis to A.B. Yehoshua**

**Convener: William Plevan**, Princeton University

**Presenter: Gavi S. Ruit**

**Title: "Rabbinic Commentary on Genesis 34 and the Construction of Rape Myths"**

**Abstract:** *This paper examines the intersection of Judaism and rape culture by investigating the Jewish commentaries on a biblical rape story (Gen 34) for reflections of rape myth. The exegeses on Genesis 34 are well suited to this endeavor because, in the biblical story, the victim Dinah is mostly passive and entirely silent. She is a neutral figure, a screen upon which commentators project the thoughts or behavior they ascribe to her. Additionally, the word generally translated as "rape" (innah) can have a range of meanings, which gives the commentators greater latitude to project their own values and anxieties onto the text. As this paper demonstrates, rape myth ideology enters Jewish tradition during the rabbinic era and is absent prior to that period.*

**Presenter: Lital Abazon**, Yale University

**Title: "Perversion and Ethics in A.B. Yehoshua's Literature – The Case Study of Facing the Forests"**

**Abstract:** *This paper offers a close reading of A. B. Yehoshua's 1962 novella Facing the Forests through the Lacanian notion of perverse personality structure. Aiming to challenge former critique of Yehoshua's widely-analyzed text, this reading shows how the author uses perverse personality traits in order to reveal and criticize Israeli patterns of self-victimization and shirking away from responsibility. Thus, Yehoshua sheds a bright and cruel light on the very foundations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.*

**Presenter: Jeffrey Rubenstein**, New York University

**Title: "The Story of Plimo and Satan (Bavli Qiddushin 81a-b): Toward a Jewish Ethic of Disgust"**

**Abstract:** *The emotion of disgust has received increasing attention in social, political, legal and moral discourse in recent years. This paper focuses on the Talmudic story of Satan's encounter with Plimo (Qiddushin 81a-b) as an entry point to exploring the role of disgust in Jewish Ethics. Disgust plays a crucial role in the story in that Satan, disguised as a beggar, tests Plimo's compassion by afflicting his body with boils and sores, and doing "disgusting things with them." The second half of the paper considers disgust in other rabbinic sources and offers some comparisons to the conception of disgust in the writings of other ancient authors.*

<b>5:55 pm</b>	<b>Havdalah</b>	(on your own)
<b>6-7 pm</b>	<b>Bioethics Board Meeting</b>	Studio 1

8-9:30 pm

Covenantal Ethics Interest Group:

Galerie 6

**Joint SCE-SSME-SJE**

**Topic: "Will the President-elect Keep Faith?"**

**Panelists: Sohail Hashmi**, Mount Holyoke College (SSME)

**Henry Mugabe**, Zimbabwe Theological Seminary

**Randi L Rashkover**, George Mason University (SJE)

**Summary:** *How should we assess the prospects of the President-elect to serve as a moral political leader? What might the language of covenant offer such an assessment? Do we imagine covenant to be a source of criticism, an object of criticism, or both? Responding to these questions will be an interreligious and international panel consisting of Sohail Hashmi (SSME) of Mount Holyoke College, Henry Mugabe (Global Scholar) of Zimbabwe Theological Seminary, and Randi L Rashkover (SJE) of George Mason University.*

8-9:30 pm

Works-in-Progress Workshop

Galerie 1

**Topic: Ethics and Mysticism**

**Moderator: Emily Filler**, Earlham College

**Presenter: Sarah Zager**, Yale University

**Title: "'Science' and 'Nonsense': Using the Kabbalah to Think Philosophically in Post-Holocaust Jewish Theology"**

**Abstract:** *This paper considers the perennial use of the kabbalistic idea of tzimtzum in these texts, using Hans Jonas's essay "The Concept of God After Auschwitz" and David Weiss Halivni's essay "Prayer in the Shoah," as key examples of this phenomenon. I will argue that neither Jonas nor Halivni successfully translate the kabbalistic sources they use into philosophical concepts that can be deployed to answer the key questions they put forward, but that both thinkers give us the opportunity to rethink how best to translate between the classical Jewish and philosophical idioms.*

8-9:30pm

Evening Session

Studio 9

**Topic: Animal Ethics: Environmental Ethics and Theology**

**Title: "Thinking Ethically about Companion Animals: The Nahash (Serpent) in Genesis, Pets during Hurricane Katrina, Fellow Asylum Seekers in the Syrian Refugee Crisis"**

**Panelists:**

**Allison Covey**, University of Toronto (SCE)

**Jonathan K. Crane**, Emory Center for Ethics (SJE)

**Loretta Lambert**, Louisiana Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)

**Summary:** Are companion animals moral subjects in their own right, whose interests and welfare merit protection? What kind of relationships should we humans seek to cultivate with them? In good times or emergency situations, is it appropriate to use limited resources to secure their well-being, or should humans always take priority?

To answer such questions, Crane will offer a reading of the wily nahash (serpent) in Genesis and other Jewish texts as a creature desperately seeking to be Adam's companion; Lambert of the Louisiana SPCA, who was on the ground with animal rescue efforts during and in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, will speak of the interrelated interests of human and nonhuman animals; and Covey will defend the investments made to save and reunite the animal companions of refugees fleeing the Syrian Civil War by drawing upon Catholic Social Teaching.

9:30-11:30pm

University of Chicago Reception

Riverview II

## **Sunday, January 8, 2017**

7:45-8:45 am

**SJE Business Meeting**

Studio 10

*Open to all SJE Members*

8-8:45am

**Ecumenical Worship Service**

Studio 2

7:30am-12:30pm

**Registration Desk Open**

2nd Floor

8:30-11:15am

**Exhibits Open**

Acadia

9-10:30am

**Concurrent Session V--SJE**

Studio 10

**Topic: Rabbinic Activism and American Judaism**

**Convener: Sarah Imhoff**, Indiana University Bloomington

**Presenter: Aryeh Cohen**, American Jewish University

**Title: "From JTS to Riverside Church: The Relationship Between Torah min Hashamayim and Heschel's Activism"**

**Abstract:** I want to suggest, contra Heschel himself, that the impetus for Heschel's activism is found in the first part of his magnum opus—*Torah min Hashamayim be-Aspaclarya shel HaDorot*. I will suggest that Heschel's activism is a religious solution to a theological problem, a problem which is spelled out as the tension between Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Akiva. Heschel describes God as suffering with Israel. This suffering (according to Rabbi Akiva) is an instance of the partnership between God and Israel. I will further suggest that this is a uniquely Heschelian model of what Oscar Romero referred to as the transfiguration. I argue that Romero's transfiguration theology can help illuminate a part of Heschel's framing of Heavenly Torah which has largely gone unnoticed or has been ignored.

**Presenter: Timothy Quevillon**, University of Houston

**Title: "Israeli Ethics in Houston: Rabbi Moshe Cahana and the Application of Musar to Conservative Judaism in Postwar Texas"**

**Abstract:** *This paper explores the ethical teachings of Houston's Rabbi Moshe Cahana, an Israeli immigrant who used his background in the Musar Movement within Jewish ethics and experience fighting in the Irgun to transform Conservative Judaism in Houston into an ethics-based activist religion. Cahana used these experiences as his justification for liberal Jewish social activism in Texas and throughout the South. Cahana became one of Houston's foremost civil rights activists pushing for the integration of Jewish businesses in the early 1960s, protested with Martin Luther King in Alabama, and took part in the Farm Workers' Movement led by Cesar Chavez*

**10:30-11am**

**Break**

Acadia

**11 am-12:30pm**

**Concurrent Session VI--SJE**

Studio 8

**Topic: Twentieth-Century Jewish Thought**

**Convener: Benjamin Ricciardi**, Northwestern University

**Presenter: Daniel May**, Princeton University

**Title: "For the Sake of Politics: Power and Plurality in Hannah Arendt and the Organizing of the 'Katrina Survivors Network'"**

**Abstract:** *The first campaign of the "Katrina Survivors Network" successfully halted the cancellation of cell-phone service to thousands. In its specificity and immediacy this victory captured much that characterizes a successful community organizing drive: power was created to serve the material self-interests of a particular constituency. Yet this is a limited framework by which to recognize the success and limitations of the case. Through narrative and interviews with those involved in the Katrina Survivors Network I examine how the urgent demands created by the storm both opened up and constrained a space of democratic action, and I suggest that the emergence of that space and its ultimate collapse can be illuminated through the political thought of Hannah Arendt and its particularly Jewish ethical sensibility.*

**Presenter: Nechama Juni**, Brown University

**Title: "Inventing Ethics: A Social Practical Account of Levinas's Ethical Experience"**

**Abstract:** *This paper will challenge the philosophical coherence of the 'phenomenological reading' of Levinas's Totality and Infinity – in which individual's ethical orientation emerges from a transformative experience that the individual undergoes – based on recent pragmatic approaches to language-use and concept-acquisition. I will argue for a new reading in which, far from describing a natural process that all people undergo, the text induces the ethical experience in its readers by teaching them about the concepts and stages of the experience. This finding holds implications for the nature of ethics itself and for the kinds of texts that productively shape ethical subjectivity. Must a text describe pre-existing ethical truths in order for its readers to find it convincing, or can it perhaps invent ethics by teaching its readers how to acquire a new ethical perspective?*

**Presenter: Samuel Brody**, University of Kansas

**Title: "Jewish Thought and Political Economy: The State of the Field (If There Is a Field)"**

**Abstract:** *This paper seeks to explore the boundaries of the subfield "Jewish Thought" (and perhaps especially the sub-subfield "Modern Jewish Thought"), focusing on its relationship to the modern fields of political economy and economics. Assuming that economics represents something of a terra incognita to Jewish thought as commonly construed, I will inquire as to why this should be so (dealing in passing with the large body of Jewish studies literature - as distinct from "thought" - on Jews and economies). Discussion will proceed via analysis of the Oxford Handbook of Judaism and Economics, an illuminating case study for the argument that a disciplinary lacuna exists.*