



ACADEMY  
*for* JEWISH  
RELIGION

## **STUDENT HANDBOOK**

**ACADEMIC YEAR**

**2016 / 2017**

**5777 / תשע"ז**

**28 Wells Avenue  
Yonkers, New York 10701**

**[ajrsem.org](http://ajrsem.org)**



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## I. MISSION STATEMENT

The Academy for Jewish Religion serves the needs of the Jewish community by ordaining rabbis and cantors and training Jewish leaders who combine their mastery of the intellectual and spiritual richness of our tradition with openness to its application in the pluralistic, contemporary Jewish community, and an awareness of living in the presence of God.

### PREAMBLE

The Academy for Jewish Religion offers a rich and rigorous program of study and training. Its courses, Retreats, Intensives and supplementary offerings are designed to prepare each student to engage – with competence and integrity – in the plurality of traditions and religious expressions, old and new, that make up Judaism and Jewish life. AJR graduate students are challenged by high levels of scholarship as they engage in the study of sacred text and the contemporary Jewish community. AJR ordination students are expected to satisfy standards and commitments that go beyond successful completion of their academic and professional requirements. Every AJR student will strive to meet the highest standards of morality and spiritual authenticity. A spiritual leader trained by AJR will be a person deeply engaged with God, Torah and Israel and committed to realizing an embracing vision of Torah, *Avodah u-G'milut Hasadim* in the world. To carry such a mission, an AJR student will be a person who embodies qualities of maturity, leadership, sensitivity, and ethical responsibility. AJR graduate students and ordination students are expected to work on expanding their own personal experience with Judaism, Jewish issues and Jewish communities. They are expected to be well-informed regarding current events and issues – religious, spiritual, cultural and socio-political – that are discussed and debated in today's Jewish world, a world that is increasingly integrated into the global community of humanity.

## II. GENERAL ACADEMIC POLICY

### A. Class Hours, Preparation Time

A course offered at AJR will be based upon the synthesis of material covered in class sessions, and a body of additional material to be studied by class participants outside of class session, individually or in groups.

A class earning two credits will meet for two hours and twenty five minutes, once a week for eleven weeks. A class earning one credit will meet for one hour and ten minutes, once a week for eleven weeks.

Students should expect to study for two to three hours for each hour of class time. A reading assignment of between 90 and 150 pages would be usual for some courses. In the case of courses working with primary texts, the assignment will be the preparation of specified primary texts, with background material from secondary sources.

In courses designed for ordination students, assignments should, where possible, serve the needs of a student preparing for religious leadership. In some courses, the AJR faculty will base their assignments around the working life of a rabbi or cantor.

## B. Required Books and Materials

Students are advised that almost all AJR courses will require the purchase of textbooks and standard reference works. The cost of these purchases is entirely the responsibility of the student.

In certain circumstances, materials may be provided by the school or the professor and students will be expected to reimburse the school or the professor for the cost of the materials.

## C. Tuition and Fees

The current Tuition and Fee schedule can be found on the AJR website [here](#). Students should look for up to date information about tuition and for an explanation of all fees.

AJR prefers payment by check. We accept major credit cards for tuition payments. You may pay your tuition online through PayPal. All tuition is due before the beginning of the trimester. As an accommodation to students, AJR offers the option of a Payment Plan for a \$100 fee per trimester.

Students who cancel registration prior to the first day of classes are entitled to a refund of 95 percent of that trimester's tuition; students who withdraw within two weeks after the first day of classes are entitled to a refund of 80 percent of that trimester's tuition; students who withdraw within three weeks after the first day of classes are entitled to a refund of 60 percent of that trimester's tuition. No refunds will be made after the first four weeks of classes.

Students are responsible for their full tuition commitment regardless of whether they complete the class. All add/drop adjustments must be made by the end of the second week of class (e.g., the second Thursday of the trimester).

### Specific Policies for GI Bill Recipients

**Credit for Prior Learning** (38 CFR 21.4254(c)(3)). The school maintains a written record of the previous education and training of the GI Bill recipient and grant credit appropriately, with the training period shortened proportionately.

**Pro Rata Refund** (38 CFR 21.4254(c)(13), 21.455). We will refund the unused portion of prepaid tuition and fees on a pro rata basis. The exact proration will be determined on the ratio of the number of days of instruction completed by the student to the total number of instructional days in the course. Any amount in excess of \$10.00 for an enrollment fee or registration fee will also be prorated.

## D. Other Costs of Attendance

It is estimated that books and supplies will cost approximately \$450 per year. Because AJR does not have a residency requirement and because AJR attempts to accommodate the needs of both full-time and part-time students, AJR does not operate any housing or food services. Therefore, all AJR students are commuters. The AJR student community tends to be varied in terms of where students live and how they actually commute and, therefore, costs vary considerably. Many students live close enough to commute to school for classes and return home the same day. Some students who live farther away travel to AJR and stay over one or more nights per week in the general AJR area in order to minimize commuting time. The minority of our students relocate to the AJR area in order to attend classes. Similarly, some students attend classes all three weekdays on which classes are offered (Monday – Wednesday) and some attend only one or two days per week. Because of this varied nature of our student body, it is difficult to estimate personal expenses and the costs of accommodations available in the community. Prospective and current students interested in either relocating to the AJR area or in identifying potential locations to spend one or more nights a week in the area are encouraged to consult real estate agencies in the region and to speak to the AJR administration who may be able to share relevant experiences of other current or recent students.

## E. Financial Aid

Matriculating students taking a minimum of eight credits per trimester may apply for a Financial Aid Package worth up to 25 percent of tuition, rounded to the nearest five dollars. This formula is based upon need – as determined by the student, and confirmed with the Financial Aid Committee. Financial



aid is not available for fees or tuition for Private Study. The Financial Aid committee will consider awarding aid to a student enrolled for fewer than eight credits under exigent circumstances if there are sufficient funds available.

A Financial Aid Package may consist of a scholarship, interest-free loan, or a combination of scholarship and interest-free loan. All interest-free loans are expected to be re-paid within a maximum period of four years after ordination. Students are expected to repay the loan at a minimum rate of \$125 per month, beginning three months after leaving the Academy. Payments are due by the 8th of each month. Payments received after this date will be subject to a late fee of \$25. Special consideration will be given in situations of financial hardship. Loans to students who withdraw from the school are due immediately upon withdrawal.

The Academy, with the agreement of the President of the Alumni Association, reserves the right to raise the annual rate of repayment. Students will be asked to sign a commitment to repay the loan in accordance with these guidelines. Students and alumni will receive a statement at the end of each academic year showing the total amount of the loan that has been extended, payments received and the balance that remains to be paid.

#### F. Student Advising

Students should meet with the Academic Dean for student advising before each trimester. A fuller meeting evaluating progress will be held in preparation for the fall trimester. Shorter meetings will be held to advise students during the year. These advising times are set by the Academic Dean and students can sign up for time slots that work for them. These meetings can be held in person or by phone. At other times, the Academic Dean is available to meet with students for individual meetings as the student needs.

#### G. Auditing Courses

Students who audit classes are exempt from taking exams and writing papers, but are required to prepare fully for classes. All requests to audit classes must be approved by the Academic Dean. Please note the following: Non-credit bearing courses, such as Musical Skills may not be audited. Required classes may not be audited by matriculated students. *Gesher* students may audit classes only with the permission of the Academic Dean.

#### H. Supplemental Study

In addition to study connected with AJR courses, students should expect to read and study extensively outside the formal program to develop a breadth of familiarity with Jewish sources that cannot be covered in class. Rabbinical students should expect to read the entire *Tanakh* as well as a large portion of the *Mishnah* in Hebrew.

#### I. Independent Study and Transfer Credits

There may be occasions when the interests of a student or other compelling circumstances warrant the pursuit of a course by independent study, either with a member of the AJR faculty or with some other approved instructor. Students interested in taking an independent study course for credit must present the special circumstances behind the request as well as the credentials of the proposed instructor to the Academic Dean. The Academic Dean will consider whether the content of the proposed course will likely be covered by a regularly scheduled course as well as the academic qualifications of the

proposed instructor, among other concerns, in determining whether or not to approve the request. In addition, students may elect to take courses at other approved institutions of higher Jewish learning.

1. Ordination students may take up to sixteen credits as transfer credit or independent study. Students enrolled in the Master's Degree at the Academy for Jewish Religion may take up to six credits as transfer credit. Students enrolled prior to 2014 who are part of the M.A. Program in Jewish Studies at Gratz College may take five courses as independent study in addition to the courses they take at Gratz College. Students in the Accelerated Program may take no more than three courses by independent study or as transfer credit, except with prior permission of the Academic Dean. Courses taken by accelerated students at Gratz as part of the M.A. program do not count as part of the fifty-six onsite credits. It is assumed that accelerated students will be a part of the AJR Master's Program.
2. The process for studying independently is as follows. Students need to find a teacher who will study with the relevant course with them. That teacher needs to be approved by the Academic Dean. Students should fill out the Independent Study Application (available on the website) together with their teacher. This form then needs to be approved by the Academic Dean. After completing the independent study course, students need to fill out a Transcript Update Form in order for the independent study to be registered on the student's transcript. Payment for independent study work is negotiated and paid directly to the teacher.
3. In order to be granted credit for outside work, the Academic Dean must pre-approve the coursework. No credit will be earned at AJR until the student presents a transcript or other acceptable documentation showing successful completion of the course with a minimum grade of B. The requirement to submit a transcript or other acceptable documentation showing successful completion of coursework also applies to courses taken at Gratz College as part of the AJR Master's in Jewish Studies at Gratz College.
4. There will be a transfer credit fee charged for each outside course or independent study added to the student's transcript, including those accepted toward the student's program from before their entrance to AJR. This fee does not apply to courses taken at Gratz College as part of the AJR Master's Track in Jewish Studies.
5. It is strongly suggested that students transfer credits in to AJR as they take the course in order to maintain the accuracy of their transcripts. In addition, students may not take more advanced classes until prerequisite course have been formally transferred in.
6. The transfer of credit of four or more courses from one institution at one time will be charged a bulk transfer credit fee. All fees are listed on the AJR website.

#### J. Advanced Standing

Many students come to us having studied previously at graduate institutions and receive advanced standing credit for that work. During the first trimester of study, students in that situation should meet with the Academic Dean to work out their advanced standing, and test out of the classes they feel they have already mastered. Applicable transfer credit fees are due for the transfer of credits toward advanced standing.

#### K. Accelerated Program

Students who come to AJR with a strong background in many areas of Jewish studies and who have had a strong involvement in the Jewish community for at least five years may be eligible for the Accelerated Program. The advanced standing of students in this program allows them to place out of many course requirements and an individualized program is created with each student. It is the student's responsibility to be sure that a copy of the individualized program is filed in the Administrative Office. Students in the accelerated program are required to take a minimum of fifty-six credits at AJR and must complete the ritual skill requirements, comprehensives, and a senior thesis.

#### L. Rabbinic Program for Cantors

AJR has created a program tailored to ordained and invested cantors who want to be ordained as rabbis. Specific courses are required of these students in addition to their needing to test out of a selection of classes. Students in this program need to take a minimum of 50 credits as a residency requirement in order to complete the program. AJR alumni who have already taken substantial coursework at AJR are exempt from the residency requirement. A specific scholarship is available to students in this program in recognition of their previous years in ordination programs.

#### M. Attendance and Written Work

1. Attendance at AJR class sessions is an AJR requirement.
2. Students who miss two class sessions will be required to complete make-up work corresponding to the content of all sessions missed. Excessive lateness or leaving class early will not be tolerated. At the professor's discretion, repeated partial absences may be considered an absence requiring make-up work.
3. Students who miss a third class have the option of dropping the course or converting their status in that class to that of auditor with no academic penalty and no refund of tuition, and cannot use the class towards credit for Academy requirements.
4. In the event of severe mitigating circumstances, the instructor and student will meet with a member of the Senior Administration to approve an alternative plan for meeting course requirements.
5. In order for a change of class status to take effect the student must file the appropriate paperwork in the Administrative Office.
6. Please do not "call in sick" to the office. It is your responsibility to notify the instructor directly or via another student in the class. A student who has missed a class is responsible for obtaining all handouts and details of assignments and for learning the material covered in the class session. Faculty cannot make sure that students receive materials for classes missed. Please contact a fellow student for this information.
7. Students sometimes arrange with a fellow student to call in to a class via phone or Skype. AJR cannot facilitate the phone or Skype call. In addition, classes attended through Skype or phone will count as absences.

#### N. Guide for Submitting Papers

Written papers submitted as course work should be double-spaced in a standard, easily readable, 12-point font (such as Arial, Helvetica, or Times Roman) with a one-inch margin on all sides. Proper citations for all work used must be included. For guidelines on the proper formatting of citations and the listing of works cited, please see the Chicago Manual of Style [here](#).

#### O. Grading Policy

The preferred form of grading at AJR is conventional letter grades. There are specific courses and specific situations, however, in which a Pass/Fail grading system is the more logical option. In this era of “grade inflation” it is important that the Academy for Jewish Religion contribute to the maintenance of reasonable standards in the award of letter grades. The award of the grade of “A” or “A-” should imply some significant level of distinction demonstrated by the student. A solid performance should earn the grade of “B” or “B+”.

Letter grades are accompanied by narrative comments from instructors. These comments, which offer the chance to weigh carefully the progress made, and the successes and challenges, are often the most important piece of feedback received by students.

#### P. Policy on Taping Classes

As a learning aid, students may record the audio component of classes with the permission of the professor. These recordings may be lent to other students enrolled in the recorded class, but it is understood that otherwise they are only for the private, personal use of the student making them (or the absent student on whose behalf they are made) and that the recorded material will never be broadcast, duplicated, transcribed into printed form, or made available to any person not enrolled in the recorded class, without the permission of the Academic Dean, the professor, and class participants.

#### Q. Incompletes

The accumulation of incompletes can undermine academic progress and place added stress on one’s personal life. To minimize this practice at the Academy, the following policies will apply:

1. Students must speak to the professor, be granted an Incomplete, and submit a signed Incomplete Request Form to the Administrative Office by the last day of the trimester.
2. Incompletes from the Fall trimester must be handed in by May 1st. Incompletes from the Spring trimester must be handed in by September 1st. Incompletes from the Summer trimester must be handed in by November 1st.
3. In order to remove the Incomplete grade, satisfactory work must be submitted directly to the professors with a copy sent to the Administrative Office attached to an Incomplete Submission Form.
4. If these procedures are not followed or the work is not handed in on time, students will receive a grade of FI for the course, indicating that the student has not passed the class due to incomplete work.

5. Whenever the student has extenuating circumstances, the student may be granted an extension by the Academic Dean. In the event an extension is granted, there may be a grading fee of \$75 per paper or exam to be graded.
6. If no Incompletes are to be granted in a course, professors must state this in writing on their syllabi at the beginning of the trimester, such as when an adjunct professor will only be at the Academy for one trimester.

#### R. Leave of Absence

Students are permitted to take a leave of absence from their course work and to register as an off-site student. Permission is required from the Dean in order to be able to maintain this status for more than two consecutive trimesters. Students who have not registered for any trimester, either as an active student or as an off-site student, will be automatically withdrawn from the program.

#### S. Withdrawal from AJR

Students who wish to withdraw from AJR should write a letter to the Academic Dean or the AJR office stating that they are withdrawing from their AJR program. If students do not register before the start of the trimester will be considered withdrawn from AJR.

#### T. Readmission to AJR

Should a student who withdraws from the program want to resume studies, he or she must submit a letter to the Academic Dean requesting readmission to the school. Reapplication to AJR includes writing an essay explaining what the student has been doing since their withdrawal from AJR, developments in their theology, and reasons for wanting to continue their studies. This should be accompanied by two letters of reference.

#### U. Annual Retreat and Intensive

AJR holds a four-day Retreat each Fall that offering students opportunities to build strong relationships within the AJR community, to meet new classmates, and to focus in depth upon an experience or an area of learning that demands more attention than class sessions allow. Retreats also offer opportunities to interact informally with AJR faculty, the administration and alumni.

In the middle of the Spring trimester, AJR holds a week of intensive study on a topic that is of deep concern to the contemporary Jewish community. Topics for this Intensive program (and for the Retreat) include such areas as practical professional development, outreach, the arts and religion, and contemporary spirituality.

The Retreat and Intensive are integral and crucial parts of preparation for ordination. Consequently, all matriculated ordination students, including those studying elsewhere, are required to participate in the full program. M.A. students and non-matriculated students are warmly invited to attend. Retreat and Intensive attendance for ordination students, including a description of the topic(s) covered, will be recorded on the student's transcript. It is hoped that this will make an impact on potential employers.

In the event that a student must miss all or a portion of a Retreat or an Intensive due to extenuating circumstances, the student is responsible to obtain written approval from the Academic Dean to miss

some or the entire program. Only students attending the full Retreat or Intensive program will have attendance and the topic recorded on his or her transcript.

Unless a student requests a private room (for an additional fee), AJR coordinates rooming assignments for students at the Retreat. AJR assumes that Jewish ethics concerning relationships will guide students' conduct, including students' requests for roommates. As a general rule, AJR asks that unwed students in an intimate relationship not room together for reasons of *mar'it ayin*. If you feel that this policy should not apply to you because of a life partnership that does not include legal marriage or for any other reason, you must discuss with Rabbi Hoffman or Rabbi Hammer.

#### V. Internships and Fellowships

The Placement Office encourages students to take advantage of professional internship and fellowship opportunities. These are available as year-long commitments or as short-term seminars and retreats. A detailed list of opportunities is available from the Placement Office. Whether participation is the result of personal invitation or by general application, student participants represent AJR as an institution and should keep the administration informed of the content and expectations of these experiences. Only students in good academic standing will be considered for such programs. New students need to be vetted by the school before applying for these programs.

When an open invitation is made by AJR to students to apply for an internship or interseminary experience, the administration will be responsible for the selection or final appointment. Priority will be given to students with more advanced standing or with a relevant connection to the subject matter. If there are students who are interested but who have participated in previous experiences as an AJR representative, they will be placed on a waiting list.

#### W. Seminar in Core Concepts

Seminar in Core Concepts is a sequence of six seminars. It includes Core Concepts Seminar I through 6, which comprise three full years of study. The seminars cover some of the fundamental values, concepts and vocabulary of Jewish tradition. The student is expected first to gain a basic acquaintance with these terms and then to delve more deeply into them so as to appreciate their range of significance. The goal of the seminars is to gather information and to develop an integrated way of thinking about and expressing these value-concepts, so that the student may grow from an appreciation of the tradition to active and creative participation in the discourse of Torah.

Ordination students are required to take any four of the six seminar trimesters given in the sequence. Graduate students are required to take a total of four credits of any combination of Core Concepts Seminars and *Havruta* sessions. Each seminar will meet for sixty minutes weekly. Core Concepts seminars count as credit-bearing courses toward the M.A. program, but are considered non-credit as part of the ordination programs.

Rabbinical and cantorial students may only take Core Concepts in trimesters where they are taking other credit bearing classes.

#### X. Talmud and *Havruta*

Students taking Talmud are required to take the accompanying *Havruta* class. After the required six trimesters of Talmud, if a student wants to take additional trimesters of Talmud, s/he may take the class without the accompanying *Havruta* session with the permission of the Academic Dean.

#### Y. New Requirements and Program Revision

The number of credits required for graduation will not be varied after the date of matriculation.

Within the required number of courses, if new distribution requirements or required courses are introduced, students with fifty credits or fewer will be required to follow the new system.

#### Z. Academic Honesty

Students at AJR must ascribe to the highest standards of academic honesty.

1. Any student found to have engaged in plagiarism from a published book, internet source or from other students may be expelled from the school. Expulsions may be appealed to the Presidential Council.
2. Students are not permitted to submit the same work to fulfill separate requirements without the express knowledge of each professor.
3. Students may not work together on exams (take-home or in-class), projects, or papers, unless permission is specifically granted by the professor.

### III. AJR MASTER'S OF ART IN JEWISH STUDIES

The Academy for Jewish Religion offers a Master's Degree in Jewish Studies. Students may take this degree on its own in order to deepen their knowledge or to further their professional development. Rabbinical and cantorial students are required to have completed an M.A. in Jewish Studies before they are ordained. If they enter either ordination program already having earned such a degree, they will be exempt from this requirement. It is assumed that ordination students who lack this degree will fulfill it through AJR's M.A. Program. Those students who are looking to apply for federal loans are encouraged to fulfill this requirement through the online Master's Program at Gratz College, detailed in Section IV (page 13).

The thirty credits of required courses – emphasizing Jewish sacred text and issues of the contemporary Jewish community – that make up the Master's Program comprise thirteen courses of two credits each and four courses of one credit each. Most of AJR's courses are two credit courses. The Core Concepts Seminar and *Havruta* are one credit courses. For rabbinical and cantorial students, all of the two credit courses count toward their ordination programs. Ordination students may take an additional four credits of electives in the M.A. program to replace the Core Concepts/*Havruta* requirement. While the Core Concepts Seminar and *Havruta* counts as credit bearing courses toward the Master's degree, they do not count as credit bearing courses toward the ordination programs. The M.A. program may be completed in about 18 - 24 months of study.

Not all courses are offered every year. Generally, one may assume that most Rabbinics, Hebrew, and some Bible courses are offered every year. Introductory courses such as Introduction to Bible, Introduction to *Mishnah* and Introduction to Liturgy are also offered every year. Most Philosophy, History, and Professional Skills courses are offered every other year. Students should keep this in mind when registering for courses so that they do not miss the cycle of courses.

## A. Coursework

- Sacred Literature: 4 Courses  
At least one course must be in Bible and one in Rabbinic Literature.
- Liturgy: 2 Courses
- Pluralism: 1 Course
- Philosophy: 1 Course
- Spirituality: 1 Course
- Electives: 4 Courses

## B. Core Concepts Seminars and/or Havruta

“Havruta” refers to supervised group study sessions involving cooperative learning techniques monitored by the supervisor and written work approved by the supervisor. Students taking sacred text courses will be eligible to attend one Havruta session each week (since AJR’s once-per-week classes are offered on three days per week: Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday) for each sacred text course, with a total, therefore, of no more than three Havruta sessions per week. Since Havruta is considered part and parcel of Talmud courses themselves, and the written work produced in Havruta is for the sake of the Talmud course itself, students taking Talmud cannot take Havruta for credit to coordinate with their Talmud class, but they may take Havruta for credit as part of another text class. As noted above, these classes do not count as credit bearing classes for the ordination program.

- Four Courses of One Credit Each

## C. Hebrew Language Requirement

Students entering with limited Hebrew language facility should plan to take additional courses to complete the program since the coursework for the degree assumes familiarity with basic grammar, the ability to read unvocalized Hebrew texts, and the ability to understand basic spoken Hebrew. In order to complete the program, students must show Hebrew competency at the level equivalent to the completion of HEB351. Students not already proficient in Hebrew should be taking these classes during their study at AJR.

## D. The Master’s Project

A Master’s Project represents the ability of a student to work with academic books and articles toward the creation of a project that applies these in a practical and functional, educational way. Students who wish to create a scholarly study as their Master’s Project must demonstrate mastery of the primary sources in their original languages. Students will choose an appropriate mentor with the help of the Master’s Projects Advisor. Such a mentor – who must have the necessary expertise for the particular project – may be chosen from the AJR faculty or from the general community. A mentor’s fee will be collected by AJR and the mentor will be paid by AJR. The Academic Dean and the Master’s Projects Advisor may not serve as mentors. The mentor’s fee is \$300.



The Master's Project should involve a topic that has been a focus of your thoughts and a point of challenge and curiosity over a period of time. The Master's Project is not a term paper. It takes special time and attention. You should approach the project as if you were preparing a document for publication. You are encouraged to submit projects of excellence for publication to respected journals either prior to or after ordination.

- a. A Master's Project must have a serious academic research component as well as be reflective of dynamic imagination and creativity.
- b. It should be heavily footnoted from source materials, both primary and secondary. An extensive bibliography should accompany the work.
- c. Your project should be in proper English and or Hebrew, both grammatically correct as well as fluent.
- d. A careful outline will help you to develop a cohesive thought and content pattern.
- e. Your project can be in essay form, appear as a developed curriculum or take the form of an instruction manual or guide.
- f. Master's Projects range in length from about fifty to one hundred pages.
- g. Proposals for the project must be approved by the Master's Project Advisor, Rabbi Jeff Hoffman.
- h. As you proceed with your project, you may find that what you thought would be one chapter may itself evolve into an entire paper. You have flexibility to renegotiate the topic when this occurs. If you feel the project could lead to a substantial book size text, view the project as a publishable article that could serve as the forerunner to such a text.
- i. The Master's Project fulfills the senior project requirement for ordination students.

#### E. Senior Project Time Line

The time line provided below begins the April before the last year of school.

- **Proposal** Last week of April to the second week of June (year prior to anticipation of completion of Master's degree).

Your Master's Project topic should be chosen and formally submitted in writing – with goals and methodology clearly delineated and approved, and with a requested mentor you would like to invite to work with you. The topic for your project and your mentor must be approved by the Master's Project Advisor. This should be done prior to the mentor being approached in order to avoid embarrassment should the mentor or topic not be approved. Mentors do not have to be from the AJR faculty, but should be respected as experts in the area chosen.

Once the Master's Project Advisor has approved the mentor, the mentor's fee is due. Please note: A proposal consists of:

- i. A title

- ii. A one to two sentence synopsis of the specific question that the paper will answer or the specific issue that the paper will investigate
- iii. Background and additional information – several paragraphs

- **Outline**                      First week of August

Submit an extensive outline of your project citing most of the sources on which you will be drawing as well as your proposed meeting schedule with your mentor. The submission of this outline assumes that you have done substantive reading and have acquired enough sources to write an informed outline. Include a section in your outline entitled “Survey of the Literature.” This section should include citations of books and articles related to your topic. Your research for these citations will ensure that you will be building on work that has already been done. Part of the research should include a search for books in the online catalog of a major Judaica library such as the [library of The Jewish Theological Seminary](#) or [Hebrew Union College](#) and for articles on [RAMBI](#), [click here](#).

- **First Draft**                      Last week of October

Submit the first draft of your paper to your mentor and to the Master’s Project Advisor for review and comment.

- **Second Draft**                      Last week in November

Submit your second draft of the project. This should be a polished draft. The date of submission will give your mentor and the Master’s Project Advisor ample time to review the work.

- **Final Editing**                      December

December is set aside for editing and fine-tuning. A digital file of the final document should be sent to the Master’s Project Advisor. Oral presentation will occur during lunch sessions scheduled between January and April.

## F. Mentor Guidelines

It is assumed that your Senior Project mentor is an expert in your chosen subject area as well as a guide who will help you through this process. Please consider these guidelines prior to beginning your project and after your mentor has been approached and has accepted his/her role.

- Arrange an extended meeting to brainstorm your ideas and your proposed methodology.
- Take notes on suggested materials and references.
- Arrange a timeline including dates by which you will submit segments of your project to your mentor and dates by which they will be returned to you for editing. While each segment is being edited, you should be continuing your research and writing.

#### IV. THE MASTER'S DEGREE IN JEWISH STUDIES AT GRATZ COLLEGE

For those students who need to apply for federal loans: In collaboration with Gratz College, AJR has crafted a Master's Track that is specifically tailored to the needs of AJR students engaged in the complex process of academic and sacred study and growth. A flexible yet limited menu of courses has been selected to achieve our purposes.

The AJR Master's in Jewish Studies Track at Gratz College requires the satisfactory completion of twelve courses. Nine of the twelve courses must be taken through the on-line program at Gratz College and three of the twelve courses will be taken at AJR.

AJR courses eligible to count toward the Master's include the following:

- Introduction to Bible
- Introduction to Liturgy
- Shabbat Liturgy
- Festival Liturgy
- *Yamim Nora'im* Liturgy
- Introduction to *Mishnah*,
- Intermediate Talmud
- Advanced Talmud
- Personal Theology

For purposes of calculating the three courses to be taken at AJR, each of the courses listed above counts as one-half (1/2) course, except for the Talmud courses which count as full Gratz courses since they meet twice as long (including the *Havruta* time period).

No courses taken at AJR before the Fall 2008 semester may be grandfathered into this program. All courses taken as part of the Master's program also fulfill AJR requirements. No extra courses need to be taken in order to fulfill the requirements for the AJR ordination program or the Master's.

Rabbinical students will choose courses at Gratz that fulfill the following AJR requirements:

- History of the Period of Antiquities
- Medieval History
- Modern History
- Contemporary History

- Critical Issues (professional skills)
- Education I
- Education II
- Senior Thesis (comprises 6 credits)

Cantorial students will choose courses at Gratz that fulfill the following AJR requirements:

- Seminar in Classical Judaism
- Seminar in Modern Judaism
- Introduction to Classical Rabbinic Literature
- Music History
- Education I
- Methods of Teaching Jewish Studies through the Arts
- Education elective
- Judaism in America
- Senior Project (comprises three credits)

Academic advisement will be available at both Gratz and AJR to ensure that students enroll in the proper courses. While the Gratz M.A. allows for much choice in its program, in order to make this M.A. work as part of the AJR program, it will be essential to choose courses with AJR approval.

Students need not take courses at Gratz every semester; they may space out the courses as desired to fit their individual programs. However, students must be taking four credits at AJR in order to be allowed to take courses at Gratz toward the M.A.. In order to be eligible for federal loans, students must be taking two courses at Gratz. All questions about federal loans should be addressed to the relevant individual at Gratz College.

Administratively, students will be part of both Gratz and AJR. When students apply to AJR, their application will be shared with Gratz College. While the student will need to be accepted by both schools, AJR will facilitate this process. Advisement will take place in both schools and payment will go to each respective school for courses taken at that school. (AJR courses will be paid for at AJR and Gratz courses will be paid for at Gratz.) Each school may also charge its own respective administrative fees.

Please note that rabbinical students in the AJR Master's Track at Gratz College fulfill their senior thesis requirement at Gratz College.

## V. PLACEMENT

The Placement Office is available to assist students in finding work experiences, whether for income or for the acquisition of skills. Experiences within Jewish settings or related to general clergy function will be disseminated in regular employment opportunity updates sent to the student body. The placement office works with both students and alumni for employment needs. At times, the Director of Placement will be in touch with the supervisors of our students in order to monitor students' progress.

### A. Placement Procedure

Once the student is ready to seek a position, s/he should make an appointment with the Director of Placement. At that time, together they will review the resume to assess skills and discuss goals in placement. All pulpit or clergy-related work obtained through the placement office requires that students be vetted by faculty to ensure that they are ready to undertake the position and to safeguard AJR standards.

The Director of Placement will maintain copies of the student's resume. Resumes are sent with a cover letter from the Placement Office describing both AJR and the candidate. Cantorial students should provide a link to vocal selections or a CD.

Positions that are related to fieldwork for Ordination students will be formally monitored and evaluated in conjunction with the student, the fieldwork supervisor and the Placement Office. This will be done mid-way and at the end of the academic year through a written-evaluation form and follow-up conversations between the supervisor and the Director of Placement. Students will sign off on the evaluation form and have the opportunity to comment and elaborate on the experience.

### B. Placement Leads and Referrals

Job listings are sent via email to students on a regular basis. Note that by agreement with ARC, these lists are first distributed to alumni via the ARC website and sent to students after a three day interval. Placement leads are procured in a variety of ways. The Director of Placement works with a network of professionals, lay leaders and alumni who make referrals. AJR places ads and articles in Jewish newspapers and magazines. Calls are made to introduce AJR to synagogues in desired geographic areas. Websites for professional employment, organizational Listservs, the classified section of the Anglo-Jewish press and other resources are reviewed regularly. Students are encouraged to use their own resources and networks to find positions and to share information with the Director of Placement even if not applicable to their situation. A lead remains "exclusive" to the individual only as long as it is not public information. Once a lead is obtained, detailed intake conversations determine the needs of the institution and establish a relationship. The intake form notes the history and background of the congregation, its current composition and orientation, description of the position, and the qualifications sought in an applicant. The contact person and the student are notified when resumes go out. Referral to a position is made based on knowledge of a student's skills, religious comfort level, preference and location. AJR tries to facilitate placements that best match the student's qualifications and preferences with those of the organizations seeking candidates for a position. Follow up contacts are made after an interview with both applicant and institution. Students should expect honest feedback and constructive criticism as part of the placement process and as a means to improve and strengthen interview and presentation skills.

## **VI. STUDENT CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT FOR ORDINATION STUDENTS**

This policy applies to all rabbinical/cantorial positions held by students, whether or not the position is a part of the Fieldwork Program.

AJR students have primary responsibility for the courses in which they are registered. Duties to congregations or other agencies must be secondary to student obligations in all but the most exceptional circumstances. AJR senior staff will support students in negotiating this issue with employers.

Students obtaining work within the Jewish community should review a potential position with the Director of Placement. Any proposed Contract or Letter of Employment should be submitted before a student enters a commitment with a congregation or agency.

A student who has too much time committed to work may not be able to handle a full course-load, and thus should be aware that the duration of study may be increased.

AJR will not sanction contracts/positions that require students to work during AJR-required programs such as the Retreat, Intensive and ordination, and during class time for courses in which students are enrolled.

AJR students are not permitted to perform intermarriages.

AJR students should not be installed as an institution's "rabbi" or "cantor." Installation as a professional member of the clergy should take place only after ordination.

## **VII. FIELDWORK REQUIREMENTS FOR ORDINATION STUDENTS**

### **A. Introduction**

An essential complement to the rigorous AJR academic program is supervised, diversified field experience in the full range of rabbinical or cantor responsibilities.

1. While volunteer or paid experience in the field is encouraged throughout a candidate's education, two years' fieldwork experience earned concurrently with taking the AJR Fieldwork Support Seminar (FWSS) is required for ordination.
2. Each fieldwork year must be composed of at least thirty weeks, with an average of ten hours per week at a single location. Students may choose to take only one trimester of fieldwork at a time. It need not be a full year.
3. Experience earned prior to entering AJR cannot be used to fulfill this requirement.
4. Any position held while a student is enrolled in *Mechina* may not count toward the fieldwork requirement. As a rule, first year students' work does not count toward fieldwork. In extenuating circumstances, the Director of Placement may make an exception.

5. It is the responsibility of the student to complete the fieldwork as agreed upon with the site supervisor and the Director of Placement in order to fulfill the Fieldwork Support Seminar requirement.

## B. Congregational Fieldwork

AJR graduates are viewed by prospective employers as capable of serving in the full spectrum of rabbinic and cantorial duties. Accordingly, one year must, and both years can, be fulfilled by congregational placements as *kol bo* or assistant rabbi or cantor, concurrent with participation in FWSS. (Minimum average of ten hours/week – see Section A2 on the previous page) Fieldwork should include, but is not limited to, leading services, giving sermons or *Divrei Torah*, public reading from the Torah, teaching adult education, officiating at life cycle events and attending synagogue committee meetings.

Fieldwork supervision should be provided by professional clergy, ordained or invested with a minimum of five years of experience.. In the case of solo clergy, an arrangement must be made to match the student with an appropriate professional for supervision. The expectation is that there will be a supervisory meeting no less than once every two weeks, and that the supervisor will make an on-site visit once a trimester .

In occasional situations, exemption from congregational training may be granted. In such cases, the following reduced congregational awareness program will be required and reviewed by the student's advisor:

1. Students will find a rabbi/cantor (as appropriate) to mentor them and the students will attend their congregations for six full Sabbaths finding the opportunity to lead or assist in some capacity.
2. Experience must include the following: giving three sermons/*Divrei Torah* and reading Torah, four adult education sessions, attending/shadowing clergy for one wedding, one funeral, one naming, one circumcision, and attending a meeting of each of the following: the Board of Directors, the Ritual Committee, and the Executive Committee.
3. Both the student and mentor will be asked to complete a written evaluation upon the fulfillment of this module.

## C. Other Modalities

AJR is mindful of the different ways today's Jewish community is served by clergy. No longer are synagogue structures the only setting for Jewish worship and identity building. The placement office encourages students to think "out of the box" in the ways they envision their form of clergy service. AJR will work with students to create a fieldwork experience that meets the requirements of the school as well as the professional interests of the students. Specialized fieldwork formats have included settings that promote social justice and environment issues, holistic settings that promote spiritual and community interests with body mindfulness; more informal settings of retreats and community centers, Jewish communal service and alternative education settings.

At least one year of supervised fieldwork must be in a congregation. The following categories have traditionally qualified for the other year of fieldwork:

1. One full CPE (Clinical Pastor Education) unit that includes its own integral group supervision process will fulfill one year of fieldwork/FWSS. Students do not need to attend Field Work Support Seminar while engaged in CPE.
2. Additional CPE units are of great value but will not be applicable to the fieldwork requirement.
3. Up to two additional CPE units can be applied as academic transfer credit in the area of professional skills. Each additional CPE unit will receive two credits.
4. A copy of the CPE application/registration form or information listing the sponsoring agency, the institution that will serve as the practice site, and the name of the supervisor should be filed with the placement office. Credit for a CPE unit as a year of fieldwork is dependent upon submission of the final evaluation and the certificate of completion to the AJR office to be kept in the student's file.
5. Along with FWSS participation, up to one full academic year, comprising a minimum of ten hours per week as:
  - a. Religious School Principal, Director of Education or Director of Congregational Learning
  - b. Hillel Director, Hillel Rabbi, Hillel Assistant Director
  - c. Position at a JCC, Jewish Federation, Jewish youth movement or other Jewish agency that requires the development and demonstration of the major skills required of a rabbi or cantor in their professional career
  - d. Chaplain (hospital, prison, hospice, etc.)
6. Religious school teaching and summer positions are not eligible to meet the fieldwork requirement.

#### D. Procedures for Receiving Fieldwork Credit

The following procedures are necessary to receive fieldwork credit:

1. AJR students must prepare a description of positions intended for fieldwork credit and submit these for approval to the Director of Placement as part of the registration process each trimester. The [Fieldwork Approval Request form](#) may be found by [clicking here](#).
2. A formal contract or letter of appointment between the student and the hiring agency/congregation must be reviewed by the Director of Placement or designated colleague and should be included with the position description.
3. To allow for quality guidance in contracting, documents should be submitted at least one month in advance of the anticipated commencement of duties. A minimum of fourteen days prior to contract signing is required by AJR to allow staff enough time for adequate response.
4. The position description should also include a summary of hours, duties, brief description of the setting, name, mailing address, fax, phone/email of the president or administrative head of the work site, and the student's address and phone/fax/email at that work site.



5. The Placement Office will maintain ongoing contact with the Fieldwork Supervisor. Formal feedback is offered via mid-year and year-end evaluations, which is to be signed by both the supervisor and student and should reflect their review and discussion of the process.

#### E. AJR Role

The Director of Placement will maintain relationships with a variety of agencies and congregations and make every effort to help each student find a context for fieldwork that supports his/her learning goals and professional aspirations. Students are encouraged to propose fieldwork sites based upon their own network of contacts. Ultimate responsibility for attaining these positions rests with the student.

#### F. Fieldwork Support Seminar (FWSS)

Fieldwork Support Seminar is a supervised professional development forum for students to present issues that have arisen in their fieldwork experience and to derive support, perspective and guidance in how to proceed. Attendance at FWSS is required of students in each trimester of work in the field that is intended toward fulfillment of the fieldwork credit. The only exception to this will be for a student in a supervised CPE program.

## VIII. STUDENT COURTESY CODE

This Courtesy Code created by students through the Student Association offers suggestions for preserving “*Shalom Bayit*” with our neighbors and maximizing comfort within our own environment and in the larger community. Here are some guidelines:

#### A. At AJR

- Each AJR student is an ambassador for our school, whether to visiting prospective students, new students, or to the public at large. Please take your role as an emissary seriously and present yourself and the school in the best possible light. Everything we do or say reflects on our school and our community.
- Please respect the administrative and personal space of AJR staff, including desks, telephones, refrigerator and supply closets. Students should not use any AJR administrative space for their own personal use.
- Throw out your trash. It is inconsiderate to fellow students and to cleaning staff to leave cups and bottles lying around. Please dispose of remaining fluids in nearby sinks.
- Please be aware that the lounge is shared space for students, faculty, administration and guests. Do not leave your dirty cups, dishes or containers in the lounge sink or remaining on the table.
- Please do not eat in the Beit Midrash except during lunchtime meetings, and keep drink containers closed. The *Beit Midrash* is reserved for quiet study, prayer or *Havruta* study.
- Please re-shelve library books before the next period, especially after *Havruta* study.

- If you have a problem that you need to discuss with AJR staff, please make sure you consult the appropriate person. Use your student liaisons when possible. Once you have made a request, please allow the staff member or student liaison enough time to address.

#### B. In Class

- Please be sensitive to the needs of the group and be aware of the amount of material that each class must cover.
- Please be aware of other students' needs when asking questions or making comments in class. Class participation is great, but please be considerate and conscious to not impose your personal learning needs at others' expense.
- AJR students have a variety of learning styles. Please be patient with students who may move at a different pace than yours. Keep in mind that good listening skills are very important for rabbis and cantors. If you find the behavior of a particular student is interfering with your learning, please speak to him or her privately. Respectful, face-to-face, private discussions often clear up the matter. If the problem persists, please see the Dean of Students.
- If you have a contagious illness, please do not come to class. Ask fellow students to take notes. Colds and flu prevent many with student pulpits – especially cantors – from doing their jobs.
- Please turn your cell phone off or put it on silent mode during class. If you have to leave class to answer a call, please do this quietly to create a minimum of distraction for fellow students.
- When the instructor or fellow students are speaking, basic respect demands that we give them our attention. Therefore, it is a violation of basic respect to use our computer or other devices to check for email or voicemail, to surf the Internet, or to do anything that is not directly connected with the class in session. In addition, engaging in other computer or internet work distracts other students. Please make sure that computers are only used for coursework for that class during classes.

#### C. Dress at AJR

Members of the AJR community are challenged to consider the teaching of Torah in all areas of their lives. “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God demand of you! Only this: to revere the Lord your God to walk in all of His paths...” (Deut. 10:12). This applies to many areas, and specifically to the way in which we dress. AJR’s approach does not refer to a rigid and specific set of expectations, but to a broad and flexible range of possibilities based on a key Jewish value: *tzni'ut*, “modesty.” Individuals of all genders and sexual orientations are asked to consider how the way in which we dress reflects a modest or immodest way of presenting ourselves. Our school’s mandate is to prepare students to serve as professional members of the clergy. Throughout their years of study, students are often challenged to transition into the roles of professional teachers, leaders, scholars, rabbis and cantors. Therefore, AJR community members are asked to view the way they dress with that same eye toward professionalism.

#### D. Sexual Harassment and Bias

The Academy for Jewish Religion is committed to the principle that discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated in the Academy community. This policy applies to all employees, administrators, faculty, staff, and students, including all applicants for admission or employment, and is applicable to visitors to the Academy and to those with whom the Academy conducts business. To view the [full policy, please click here.](#)

## IX. STUDENT MONITORING

#### A. Conditional Acceptance

A student who is admitted conditionally will need to meet with the Director of Recruitment to assess the progress made in the areas of concern by the end of the student's first trimester. If further monitoring is necessary, the student will be informed at that meeting.

#### B. Jewish Status of Partner/Spouse of Ordination Students

The Academy for Jewish Religion Entrance Requirements state that "the spouse or partner of an applicant to a program leading to ordination must also be Jewish. It is the conviction of the Academy that this requirement enables our students and our graduates to serve the widest spectrum of the Jewish community as leaders and as exemplars of Jewish life." The natural implication of that admission policy is that the spouse or partner of an ordination student at the Academy for Jewish Religion must be Jewish.

This policy holds true throughout each ordination student's career at the Academy for Jewish Religion. Spouses/Partners who have converted must have converted following the same guidelines required of students through a bona fide *Beit Din* with *tevilah* and *milah* or *hatafat dam brit*, as appropriate.

#### C. Ongoing Assessment of Ordination Students

There will be ongoing assessment of each student's psychological and spiritual growth. At the end of each academic year, a committee formed of members of the AJR faculty and administration will review each student's progress. While the progress of all students is reviewed by administration and faculty, a meeting will be held with only those students who will most benefit from an immediate follow up. Any student may request such a meeting.

A question may arise as to the potential suitability of an AJR student for ordination at any time during a student's career at the Academy. When this occurs, great efforts will be made to enable the student to heal and grow. This assessment process will begin with the Academic Dean.

1. The Dean will speak with the student or will delegate someone to speak with faculty who know the student and the student's field site supervisors. Those who provided references that assisted students in being admitted to AJR may be contacted to determine the extent of the history of the problem behavior and clarify its importance.
2. A faculty member may offer to spend additional counseling hours with the student.

3. If the student is already in therapy and is amenable, an AJR representative may speak with the student's therapist. Therapy may be recommended or required for continuing attendance at AJR.
4. Students may be asked to formulate learning contracts delineating the stages and methods of the anticipated learning process.

#### D. Suspension or Expulsion

To the greatest extent possible, the Administration and Core Faculty of AJR takes responsibility for the spiritual and psychological guidance of each student throughout his/her career at the Academy.

There may be times when a student requires more guidance or support than the institution is able to give or proves to be unsuited for further training. When this is determined, it is the school's duty to suspend or expel the student from its program.

Suspension or expulsion may result when a student violates Academy policy in any of three areas: academic, financial, or personal suitability for high level Jewish Studies.

1. Academic – Any student who receives a grade of C, C-, or F will be placed on academic probation. A student placed on academic probation for two consecutive trimesters will be liable for suspension, subject to the review of a meeting of AJR advisors.
2. Personal suitability – A few representative examples of the wide range of personal issues that could lead the Administration to consider suspension or expulsion of any student are:
  - a. Repeated incidents of severe emotional volatility or anger
  - b. Boundary problems, for example, inability to share classroom or meeting time maturely, chronic lateness, communication skills problems such as regularly calling faculty or student at inappropriate times
  - c. Romantic, abusive or sexual approaches to or relationships with staff, congregants, clients, or faculty
  - d. Inability to understand severely destructive behaviors in one's own personality; inability to establish and carry out a plan to modify such behavior(s) to safe, professional levels
  - e. Gross inability to tolerate and assimilate constructive feedback
  - f. Conviction by civil or criminal court for illegal activities
3. Financial standing - Students who are in arrears on their payments to the Academy at the end of a trimester will not be admitted to classes until they are in good financial standing unless they have made arrangements with our financial office. It is imperative that students take responsibility for the financial obligations and speak proactively with the financial office to deal with any potential problems that may arise.

Suspension will, as a rule, be expressed by refusal to readmit a student at the beginning of the subsequent trimester. Only in the gravest cases may a student be suspended during the course of a trimester. A letter will be given to a suspended student specifying the conditions to be met in order to

lift the suspension. Suspension may be imposed by a committee of not less than four, comprising members of the senior administration and member of the full time or core faculty.

Students who wish to appeal the imposition of a suspension or expulsion may follow the course described in Section XIX (page 32) – Appeal to the Presidential Council.

## **X. SENIOR STANDING FOR ORDINATION STUDENTS**

### **A. Requirements for Senior Standing**

Upon entering the senior year, students must have fulfilled all but 14 of their courses, completed their proficiency exams, have significant work done on their senior projects, and be in good standing financially.

In addition, each student must meet criteria of personal suitability for the cantorship or rabbinate. Our program of training culminates with institutional *semikhah* conferred upon the candidate by the Academy in the presence of a witnessing *Beit Din*. In order to be able to ordain a candidate, the Academy must feel certain that the candidate's ways of interaction with others are safe and well-balanced. This decision will be informed by:

- the manner in which a student interacts within the AJR community;
- feedback from AJR faculty and advisors;
- feedback from colleagues and congregants at worksites; and/or
- direct discussion with the student.

The decision to ordain any candidate will be made by the Senior Administration. Someone who is determined to be unprepared in any of the areas delineated above will not be ordained.

## **XI. ORDINATION REQUIREMENTS**

### **A. Status Interview**

In the Spring trimester prior to the anticipated senior year, the student will have a formal interview with a member of the Senior Administration to review his/her status in regard to ordination requirements and readiness for Senior status.

### **B. Completion of Examinations and Comprehensives**

All examinations and comprehensives must be completed by September 1st of the academic year in which ordination is expected. If a student fails a comprehensive examination, a determination will be made by the Dean as to whether the exam should be retaken or whether alternate coursework should be done in its stead. Based on the results of the exam, the decision may be made that the student will need to put off ordination for a year or more. In extreme cases, if multiple exams are failed, or if exams are failed multiple times, it may be determined that the student is not eligible for ordination.

### C. Senior Project

Rabbinical and cantorial students fulfill their senior project requirement by completing the Master's Project as part of the M.A. in Jewish Studies, as detailed in Section III (page 9). Those fulfilling the Senior Project requirement at Gratz College should follow guidelines provided by Gratz College.

### D. Senior Practicum

Senior cantorial students must present a Senior Practicum.

### E. Ritual Skills

Senior Ritual Skill requirements must be completed by the end of the first trimester of the senior year. Specific ritual skill requirements are outlined in the appropriate supplement for rabbis or cantors. The Ritual Skill Handbook provides a description of the requirements for each skill.

- AJR offers an optional, non-credit, Ritual Skills preparatory course approximately once every 2-4 trimesters for those who desire help in training for Ritual Skills testing. Additionally, there is link to resources for Ritual Skills training on the AJR website, under "Current Students." This list of resources is currently small and is to be viewed as a beginning. The AJR administration is committed to continually revising and expanding it in order to increase its utility. Sometimes students elect to arrange private tutoring to help them prepare for Ritual Skills testing. We encourage such students to first consult with Dr. Prouser or Rabbi Hoffman before arranging tutoring so that we can provide the kind of guidance and coordination that will maximize the benefit of the tutoring.

### F. Financial Obligations

All financial obligations to the Academy must be settled by March 1st and acknowledgment of any debt for student loans must be filed with the Financial Office.

## **XII. ORDINATION CEREMONY**

The format and structure of the Ordination ceremony will be determined by the Senior Administration. Changes in the customs of the Academy for Jewish Religion ordination ceremony will be fully discussed with the Academy for Jewish Religion community.

1. Female rabbinical ordinees may choose to use either Rav or Rabbah as their Hebrew title on the *semikhah* documents. All students will use Rabbi as their English title.
2. At present, each ordinee is allotted 2½ minutes after their ordination, which may be used for teaching, musical presentation, or personal remarks. This 2½ minute limit applies to both cantorial and rabbinical ordinees. Seniors must submit the text of their presentation two weeks prior to ordination. Candidates for cantorial ordination must submit the musical selection they will be performing at ordination by January 2017.
3. Each Senior may choose the four participants in his/her own ordination. There will be one Presenter and three members of the witnessing *Beit Din*. Three members of this group must be a part of the

Academy for Jewish Religion community – that is members of the faculty (who have taught at AJR within the past five years), alumni, or a current member of the Board of Trustees.

4. The members of the *Beit Din* must have received a rabbinical or cantorial ordination (or cantorial investiture) acceptable to the Academy for Jewish Religion. The *Beit Din* for a rabbinical student must be comprised of rabbis. We encourage cantorial students to choose a *Beit Din* comprised of three cantors. If a student desires, one member of the *Beit Din* may be a rabbi.
5. The Presenter will introduce the candidate for ordination using formal text prepared by the Administration. This is the ordinee's formal introduction as a Jewish professional and, therefore, this role should be given to someone with standing in the Jewish professional community.

### **XIII. SPIRITUALITY AT AJR**

AJR prioritizes the integration of spirituality – the experience of connection to God as each individual understands God – into all aspects of rabbinical and cantorial education. Our classes contain exploration of Jewish spiritual resources and personal meaning, and offer tools for creating a vibrant and connected Judaism. A day at AJR always has set times for reflection and prayer as well as intellectual study.

We welcome reverence, curiosity and openness about one's own spiritual life and the spiritual lives of others. We invite a pluralistic approach that respects many different ways of being spiritual. Some individuals feel God through Torah study, while others feel transported by song or silence. Some feel most connected to spirit when in community prayer, and others feel most connected on a mountaintop. At AJR, we invite the sharing of many different kinds of spiritual approaches.

#### A. Prayer

Afternoon prayer (*Minhah*) is a part of all study days at AJR. There is morning prayer (*Shaharit*) one day a week. The entire community is invited to participate in these daily rituals. Prayer at AJR is pluralistic: the kind of service depends on who is leading. Some services might be egalitarian Conservative with traditional liturgy, while others might include innovative language such as the names of the matriarchs. Still other prayer services might be Reform or Reconstructionist, Renewal or eclectic in orientation - there might be poetry, chanting, instrumental music, or guided meditation. We ask our community members to be open to their fellow students' and teachers' prayer practices while being true to their own practice as well.

#### B. Holidays

AJR marks the Jewish holidays with special lunchtime teaching programs and ritual experiences. There might be an interfaith service in the *sukkah* on *Sukkot*, a *Tu b'Shevat* seder, a *Purim* feast with *Purim* spiels, a teaching on the laws of *hametz* before *Pesah*, a model seder, a visit from a survivor on *Yom haShoah*, a nature walk on *Lag ba'Omer*, and many other programs. These programs are meant to invite students and faculty members to enter the spirit of the holiday, and are also models for students to use in creating their own holiday programming.

#### C. Meditation

Meditation and visualization have been important tools for Jewish mystics across the centuries. AJR holds guided meditations during lunchtime periodically throughout the year, using various Kabbalistic

and other Jewish methods for meditation and reflections. We have a beautiful meditation room. AJR schedules a half-hour of guided meditation once a week and there is the opportunity for anyone to meditate at any time.

#### D. Spiritual Spelunking

Spiritual Spelunking is a lunchtime program held once each trimester. In this program, faculty members and invited guests speak about their own spiritual questions, concerns, and significant moments. The community then reflects together on these sharings. Recent topics have included everything from theology to *halakhic* practice, the story of the sage Shimon bar Yochai to Jewish-Catholic dialogue, and Jewish music to Judaism and science.

#### E. Classes

All classes at AJR attempt to integrate the spiritual. Some classes specially geared to the topic of spirituality include Jewish Contemplative Practice, Personal Theology, Liturgy, Contemporary Ritual, Jewish Mysticism, Jewish Dreamwork, and “*Tefillah* and Seminar,” a laboratory in prayer leadership.

We invite suggestions for new ways we can make our community environment conducive to spiritual experience.

### XIV. LIBRARY

The AJR library consists of approximately 10,000 catalogued titles. The library catalogue can be accessed on the [school's website](#). There is a computer in the lounge area outside the library that students can use to access the catalog. The library uses The Library of Congress Cataloging system, which is the standard among Jewish Seminary Libraries. For more information on how this cataloging system works, [click here](#).

The library works on the honor system; AJR does not have high-tech security measures. **ALL BOOKS MUST BE SIGNED OUT** with the AJR office or the librarian. Although this may seem like an inconvenience, it is essential to the management of the library that we know where all the books are all the time. (Failure to sign out books may result in loss of library privileges). Non-reserve books may be signed out for a period of thirty days.

### XV. AJR FOOD POLICY

As a *M'qom Torah* embracing all *Klal Yisrael*, AJR attempts to follow policies that maintain the integrity of our Torah while respecting diversity of approach. In that spirit, we have adopted the following guidelines regarding food items at AJR:

Alcoholic beverages should not be brought onto AJR premises, except when wine may be deemed appropriate for a sacred occasion or a *simhah*. In such cases, the wine must be certified kosher. Other beverages, such as juices, must comply with the appropriate guidelines for an individual and the institution as set forth below.



The following should never be brought onto AJR premises whether for individual use or for shared use: food items which are from non-kosher animals, meat that is not slaughtered in accordance with traditional rules of *kashrut*, and foods that combine meat and dairy ingredients.

For official school events, AJR will serve only foods that are certified kosher by an authoritative and recognized supervisory body. An unregistered “K” doesn’t qualify for this standard. “Official school events” include any event organized by AJR, e.g., reception after ordination, AJR fund-raising events, AJR holiday celebrations, receptions following a cantorial practicum or the sharing of a rabbinic senior project, and foods to be communally shared as part of an AJR class session. For full day programs, AJR’s policy will be to wait three hours to serve dairy after serving meat. In those cases, a *pareve* option will also be served to accommodate those individuals that wait six hours between eating meat and milk.

As individuals, we may have differing commitments to *kashrut* and differing interpretations of its rules. Therefore, all food brought onto AJR premises by any individual for the individual’s own consumption may be cooked in an individual’s own kitchen or bought at a store that lacks kosher certification as long as that food conforms to #2 above, i.e., it does not contain meat from non-kosher animals, meat that is not slaughtered in accordance with traditional rules of *kashrut* nor combines meat and dairy ingredients.

There is also some flexibility regarding food that is brought to AJR to be informally shared with others not as part of an official school event, e.g., to be left in the student lounge. AJR wants to allow community members to share their own food with other community members as long as that is done with an open and pluralistic spirit. As with all food brought to AJR, such food must conform to #2 above and not contain meat from non-kosher animals, meat that is not slaughtered according to traditional rules of *kashrut* nor combine meat and dairy ingredients. However, like food brought for individual use, food brought for informal sharing may be cooked in an individual’s own kitchen or bought at a store that is not certified kosher. Such food must be accompanied by a form that identifies who has brought the food in to be shared, the ingredients in it, and the kind of kitchen in which it is prepared. The form allows us to be open about the source of the food and permits AJR community members to decide, in an informed way, whether or not they feel comfortable partaking of the shared food. In the spirit of pluralism, there is room at AJR for both stricter and more relaxed applications of the rules of *kashrut*.

## **XVI. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

“Whoever breaks vessels, or tears garments, or destroys a building, or clogs a well, or does away with food in a destructive manner, violates the principle of *bal tashhit*.” *Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 32a*

Guided by the ancient Jewish principles of *bal tashhit* -- the commandment not to waste (Deut. 20:19-20) – and the injunction in Genesis *l’ovdah vel’shomrah* – to work for the earth and preserve it (Gen 2:15), AJR has instituted sustainability guidelines in order to insure the maximum possible attention to issues of environmental preservation.

AJR commits to buying recycled or partially recycled materials where possible and financially practical. This includes copy paper, disposable paper goods, plastic utensils, etc. AJR encourages faculty and students to act in a similar manner.

AJR asks everyone on campus to reduce use of paper, plastic, and other substances that are valuable resources and/or damaging to the environment when discarded. This means considering whether paper

photocopies are really needed during a class or an event, sending materials electronically, serving food that does not require very many utensils, avoiding excessively packaged food, etc.

We do not use Styrofoam at AJR events because of its toxic impact on the environment.

AJR asks everyone on campus to reduce use of fuel by turning lights and other appliances off when not in use.

The vast majority of the fuel used by the AJR community is used by commuters in private cars. We advise carpools and public transportation wherever possible.

AJR commits to a yearly review of its environmental practices to determine whether the products we use and the practices of our institution are environmentally sustainable.

We hope, through these policies, to be good stewards of creation and to contribute to the preservation and healing of the earth. *“This is the way of the righteous and those who improve society... that nothing, not even a grain of mustard, should be lost to the world, that they should regret any loss or destruction that they see, and if possible they will prevent any destruction that they can.”* (Sefer HaChinuch, #529)

## **XVII. SCHOOL CLOSINGS**

AJR will be closed and classes will be cancelled for the day due to weather conditions when the New York City or Yonkers public schools are closed, or at the discretion of the Academic Dean. When the MTA closes, AJR will be closed. Please check the AJR website or log on to [cancellations.com](http://cancellations.com) for up-to-the-minute announcements. Students may also register at [cancellations.com](http://cancellations.com) to receive cancellation announcements. Cancellation notices may also be sent by AJR. Please check your email.

## **XVIII. STUDENT LIFE AT AJR**

### **A. Tefillah at the Academy for Jewish Religion**

Included in the opportunities for study and spiritual growth at the Academy for Jewish Religion are occasions to join together in *Tefillah* as a community. AJR holds *Minhah* each day that classes are held and *Shaharit* on Wednesday mornings when classes are held.

We are interested in a variety of styles. We welcome all kinds of worship structures whether they consist of a full, traditional service, Reform *davening*, meditative worship, etc. The one requirement is that every service include a *Kaddish Yatom*. Among the core values of the AJR community are egalitarian participation in all areas of Jewish life for women and men. This holds true in the prayer life at AJR. All of our administration and faculty members are happy to help guide students who are looking for help in preparing a service; please approach these teachers. Rabbi-In-Residence, Rabbi Jeff Hoffman, and Director of Spiritual Education, Rabbi Jill Hammer are especially involved with prayer life at AJR, and love to consult with students who desire some guidance. This guidance can refer to melodies, structuring a service, etc.

If a *sheli'ah tsibbur* makes an error of some kind in the course of the prayers, Rabbi Jeff Hoffman or Rabbi Jill Hammer will convey that to the person in private. Other faculty members or students should

speak to these two rabbis if they have a concern, rather than approaching a prayer leader directly. Our goal is to provide a gentle and supportive learning environment.

The regular services led by our students and faculty are not only spiritual pauses during the day and week, but are also educational opportunities to hone skills and to learn different models of worship. One of the frustrations that full-time rabbis and cantors have is their inability to visit other synagogues, especially on Shabbat and holidays, except during vacation. While we don't hold services at AJR on Shabbat and festivals, members of the AJR community have had their eyes opened to all kinds of different practices simply by attending Tuesday morning *Shaharit* and daily *Minhah* services. These are opportunities of which students should avail themselves.

*Shaharit* is held every Wednesday morning when classes are in session. AJR opens on Wednesday mornings by 8:00 am for the 8:15 am service, and the service will end no later than 9:00 am to allow for a calm transition to 9:15 am first period classes. We are invited and encouraged to set a spiritual tone for the day each Wednesday by worshipping together at AJR.

*Minhah* is held every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday when classes are in session. *Minhah* begins at 3:30 and should conclude by 3:50. Classes resume at 3:55.

We are aware that because of our busy schedule throughout the day, we need *Tefillah* to end on time. We ask *Tefillah* leaders to be conscious of this and we ask the community to come to *Tefillah* on time so as not to put added time pressure on the *sheli'hei tsibbur*. It is a very important lesson for clergy in training to understand the value of others people's time, to adhere to schedules, and to be spiritually mindful at the same time. It is a hard lesson to learn, but if we can train ourselves to begin and end worship on time while we are still students, we will gain a skill that will be highly appreciated when we work as ordained rabbis and cantors.

We are all urged to come and experience worship that is created by fellow students and faculty as often as we can. Let's all contribute of ourselves to help create meaningful *Tefillah* at AJR.

#### B. Lunchtime Programming

Students are encouraged to attend lunchtime programming which includes communal conversations, visiting speakers, new student check-ins, practica, and much more. These programs are of great value to the education of students, and add to our sense of community.

#### C. ATM

There is an ATM (\$3.00 charge for use) outside the café on the first floor of the building.

#### D. Email

The majority of communication between the AJR Administration and students takes place through email. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the Administrative Office has a working email address and that the email account is checked regularly.

Students in leadership positions are required to vet all communication using the AJR logo with the AJR administration prior to sending.

Communications to AJR lists from students in leadership positions should not be sent on Shabbat and holidays. This includes second and eighth days of holidays (including *Rosh Hashanah*, *Sukkot*, *Simhat Torah*, *Pessah*, and *Shavuot*) whether or not the student personally observes those days. In addition to the email lists that the school uses for regular communication with the students, there are additional lists maintained for other purposes:

AJR sends a weekly *D'var Torah* to our community. You will be automatically added to this email list.

The “One-list” is a Yahoo Group for the AJR community. This listserv provides a way for students and alumni to pose questions and discuss current issues. To join this list, please send an email to: [AJR-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AJR-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

The Student Association also maintains a list for communications among the student body. To join this list, please contact the president of the Student Association, who will direct you to the proper person. Please note that the administration is not included in the distribution of the Student Association email list. If you wish any member of the administration to be informed of something communicated on this list, you must specifically type in that address.

#### E. Volunteerism at AJR

AJR students are our face to the public and serve as ambassadors to help showcase our school and community. It is the contributions of our generous and dedicated corps of volunteers that help make each communal event at AJR run successfully. Opportunities to volunteer range from greeting and guiding guests at our public events, such as ordination and opening days of the spring Intensive, to staffing phones at fundraising call-a-thons, performing at municipal celebrations or physically setting up “sacred space” for practica, blessing circle and ordination.

Retreats and Intensives rely on student volunteers for *Tefillah*, cabaret, hospitality, and other aspects. New students are mentored by student volunteers.

The Student Association also has volunteer opportunities that contribute to the quality of the student environment.

Volunteering is a strong AJR tradition that enriches student life and enhances your student experience.

#### F. Family Participation

Anyone wishing to bring a visitor to a class must first ask the instructor for permission. While we welcome family members and friends to our learning community, we must limit participation to a week’s worth of classes. This means that the visitor may attend each class one time. Participation can be staggered over a period of time, but limited to one visit per course. Should someone wish to attend additional sessions, approval must be obtained from the Academic Dean and payment charged at the audit rate.

#### G. Food

We are encouraged to support the local kosher food establishments in Riverdale and Westchester, several of which (including Riverdale Market, Cafeccino, Kai Fan, and Eden Wok) will deliver to AJR. Delivery usually requires a \$50 minimum plus a delivery charge. Advance notice is appreciated.

There are a number of places very close to AJR in Yonkers that offer a variety of foods. It should be noted that none of these currently has kosher supervision and none claims to be kosher.

It is possible to find a diverse range of vegetarian and dairy foods for those who would like to find such items. Guidelines for which foods may be brought into AJR can be found in Section XV (page 26) – AJR Food Policy. Members of the AJR community whose *kashrut* practice includes eating in non-kosher restaurants while avoiding non-kosher meats, seafood, and foods containing a mixture of meat and dairy are encouraged to converse with the staff at the various food vendors in the area. Most of them are interested in pleasing potential new customers. It is important to keep in mind that what a restaurateur has in mind when he or she says or writes “vegetarian” can be very different from what a *kashrut*-minded person has in mind. It can be common for restaurants to label a food item as “vegetarian” as long as it doesn’t contain any actual pieces of meat, even if it does contain, for example, chicken broth. The more local food purveyors hear from the individuals at AJR that there is a desire for truly meat-free options, the more kosher-friendly options may be created.

The closest food option to AJR is The Waterfront Café – found on the ground floor of 28 Wells Avenue (AJR’s building) in Yonkers, NY. Café hours are 7:00 am to 4 pm. There are numerous places to purchase food in the immediate area surrounding AJR’s building and on Main Street, just a two - three block walk from AJR. When AJR meets during a legal holiday, the Café may be closed. Students are informed in advance to prepare for those days. Often students are given the option on those days to order lunch delivered to the school.

#### H. Mailbox

Each student and faculty member has a “mailbox.” Each student has a folder in the top drawer of the file cabinet in the lounge. Faculty mailboxes are located in the Faculty Room.

#### I. Photocopying

There is a copy machine for student use located near the computer beneath the stairs. The photocopier in the AJR office is for administrative use only.

#### J. Quiet Study

If the *Beit Midrash* is not available for quiet study, students are welcome to use open classrooms or the mezzanine-level conference room. *Note that AJR administration has full time priority use of the conference room.* Classroom 4 has also been designated as a permanent quiet study space – classes are generally not scheduled in this room. The small Cantorial Practice/Coaching Room next to the *Beit Midrash* is NOT a study space; it is reserved for practice and use by cantorial students. Private study spaces are for student use on a first-come first-served basis. However, students should not try to reserve or hold spaces by leaving personal items there while they are in class.

#### K. Restrooms

Restrooms are located on the mezzanine outside of the main door to the right. There are also restrooms on the first floor of the building outside the café. The first floor restrooms are locked. The key is housed in the Waterfront Café, which is open until 4:00 pm.

#### L. Lounge

The student lounge offers a microwave, refrigerator, water cooler and tea/coffee/hot chocolate machine for use by students. Please put your name on anything you store in the refrigerator; otherwise it will be considered common property. Please remember to keep the student lounge neat.

#### M. Allergens

Members of the AJR community are asked not to wear excessive cologne as they can cause difficulties for those with allergies.

### **XIX. APPEAL TO THE PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL**

Students may file complaints through formal and informal procedures. No action will be taken against any student filing complaints. A student has the right to formally appeal major decisions, that is, suspension or expulsion, to the Presidential Council. The decision of the Presidential Council shall be binding and final in all matters.

1. A student shall advise the Senior Administration in writing of intent to make an appeal to the Presidential Council. It shall be the responsibility of the Administration to schedule a meeting of the Presidential Council.
2. The student shall submit in writing an account of the circumstances and the grounds upon which an action by the Presidential Council is requested. The Executive Vice-President shall submit in writing a statement of the position of the Administration. One written addition may be presented by each party. Copies of all written submissions shall be sent to the other party.
3. There shall be no discussion of the issues with any member of the Presidential Council, other than by means of these written submissions and at the meeting of the Council. The student's file shall be available to the Presidential Council.
4. Three members of the Presidential Council shall be a quorum for the purpose of hearing an appeal. The Presidential Council shall meet at the premises of AJR unless exceptional circumstances dictate some other venue.
5. The student may be accompanied by a friend or family member; either party may be represented by an advocate.
6. The case of the student shall be presented first, followed by the Administration's case. Both may present testimony.
7. All matter concerning the conduct of the Appeal, the admissibility of any testimony, the length of submissions, and the personal conduct of all parties shall be at the sole discretion of the presiding member of the Presidential Council.
8. The decision of the Presidential Council shall be communicated within twenty-one days of the Appeal. There shall be no obligation upon the Presidential Council to give reasons or explanation of their decision, although they may do so.

9. All matters before the Presidential Council shall be regarded as confidential and shall not be publicly discussed.

## **XX. GUIDELINES FOR FIRE EMERGENCIES AT AJR**

### **A. Reporting a Fire**

Notify those in your immediate surrounding to leave the building. Pull the nearest fire alarm and once outside the building dial 9-1-1 reporting to the operator that you pulled the alarm and what you believe the problem to be.

### **B. Fire Alarms**

When the fire alarm sounds, it is your responsibility to leave the building immediately. Although some fire alarms are false, you must treat every fire alarm as if a real fire is occurring. Our building houses various offices including Contrafect Corporation, a commercial lab.

### **C. Exiting the Building**

In addition to the main entrance and stairwell, there is an Emergency Exit door and stairwell next to classroom 3. In an emergency, all should exit through the closest open exit. In the event of a fire emergency, any student or faculty member who is in the vicinity of the *Beit Midrash* is asked to take the Torah outside with them if they can safely do so.

### **D. Once Outside the Building**

All AJR students and faculty will meet opposite the building's main entrance under the overhang. This will allow us to account for everyone.

### **E. Fire Extinguishers**

Fire extinguishers are placed in specific locations throughout AJR. These extinguishers should be used only in the event of an actual fire. Please notify the office if you used a fire extinguisher.

The Appendices contain floor plans of AJR's space (both floors), noting the locations of EXITS and FIRE EXTINGUISHERS.