



ACADEMY
for JEWISH
RELIGION

STUDENT HANDBOOK

ACADEMIC YEAR

2021 / 2022

תשפ"ב / 5782

**28 Wells Avenue
Yonkers, New York 10701
ajr.edu**

Contents

I. MISSION STATEMENT	4
II. GENERAL ACADEMIC POLICY	4
A. Class Hours, Preparation Time	4
B. Required Books and Materials	5
C. Tuition and Fees	5
D. Distance Learning Program: Hybrid Classrooms	6
E. Attendance and Written Work	7
F. Guide for Submitting Papers	8
G. Grading Policy	8
H. Annual Retreat and Intensive	8
I. Internships and Fellowships	9
J. Seminar in Core Concepts	10
K. Talmud and <i>Havruta</i>	10
III. STUDENT COURTESY CODE	10
A. Representing AJR	10
B. On-site	11
C. In Class	11
D. Dress at AJR	12
E. Sexual Harassment and Bias	12
IV. ORDINATION REQUIREMENTS	12
A. Completion of Examinations and Comprehensives	12
B. Master’s Project	13
C. Senior Practicum	13
D. Ritual Skills	13
E. Financial Obligations	13

V. SPIRITUALITY AT AJR 13

 A. Prayer..... 13

 B. Holidays..... 13

 C. Meditation..... 14

 D. Spiritual Spelunking..... 14

 E. Classes 14

 F. Shalosh Regalim 14

VI. AJR FOOD POLICY 15

VII. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY 16

VIII. SCHOOL CLOSINGS 16

IX. STUDENT LIFE AT AJR 17

 A. *Tefillah* at the Academy for Jewish Religion 17

 B. Lunchtime Programming 18

 C. Email..... 18

 D. Volunteerism at AJR..... 19

 E. Food 19

 F. Photocopying 20

 G. Quiet Study 20

 H. Restrooms 20

 I. Lounge 20

 J. Allergens 20

X. GUIDELINES FOR FIRE EMERGENCIES AT AJR..... 20

 A. Reporting a Fire..... 20

 B. Fire Alarms 21

 C. Exiting the Building 21

 D. Once Outside the Building 21

 E. Fire Extinguishers..... 21

PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE ARE CERTAIN POLICIES AND PRACTICES THAT HAVE BEEN ADAPTED DUE TO THE CURRENT PANDEMIC. THESE ARE NOTED IN RED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE RELEVANT SECTIONS. FEEL FREE TO BE IN TOUCH WITH ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS REGARDING THESE MATTERS.

I. MISSION STATEMENT

The Academy for Jewish Religion serves the needs of the Jewish community by ordaining rabbis and cantors and training leaders and scholars 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.

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. They are expected to be able to express themselves in English with clarity and sophistication, in both oral and written form.

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.

weeks. AJR also offers Intersession classes that meet either for a total of two or four full days (depending on the number of credits).

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 and/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.

C. Tuition and Fees

The current Tuition and Fee schedule can be found on the AJR website at: <https://ajr.edu/students/tuition-and-fees/> as well as in the Catalog. Students should look there for up to date information about tuition and for an explanation of all fees.

AJR prefers payment by check. We do, however, accept all major credit cards for tuition payments. We encourage you to pay your tuition online through Populi. All tuition is due before the beginning of the trimester.

As an accommodation to students, AJR offers the option of a Deferred Payment Plan. Students on a Deferred Payment Plan are required to set up all of their payments in advance through Populi.

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 by the Thursday of the second week of classes are entitled to a refund of 80 percent of that trimester's tuition; students who withdraw by the Thursday of the third week 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.

Refunds (Complete Withdrawal from Term) – Students who cancel their entire registration prior to the first day of classes are entitled to a refund of 95% of that trimester's tuition; students who withdraw after the first day of classes during the first two weeks of the term are entitled to a refund of 80% of that trimester's tuition; students who withdraw during the third week of classes are entitled to a refund of 60% of that trimester's tuition. No refunds will be made after the start of the fourth week of the term.

Refunds (One or More Courses) – Students who drop a course within the two week add/drop period will do so without penalty. Students who withdraw from a course after the two week add/drop period ends, but within the first month of a trimester, are entitled to a refund of 60% of the tuition for that course. No refunds will be made after the first four weeks of classes.

Intersession Refunds – Students who cancel registration of an intersession course prior to the start of the first day of the course are entitled to a refund of 95% of the course. Given the condensed nature of intersession courses, students who withdraw from an intersession course by 11:59 am on the first day, are entitled to a 50% refund for a two-day intersession course, and a 75% refund for a four-day course. If a student withdraws from an intersession course after 11:59 am on the first day of the course, no refund will be given.

Refund Fees – all refunds are less any credit card or bank fees.

Registration fees, in all cases, are nonrefundable.

All refunds will be made by check.

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. For courses that only meet during the second half of the trimester the add/drop period ends after the first week of class.

D. Distance Learning Program: Hybrid Classrooms

DUE TO THE PANDEMIC, ALL FALL TRIMESTER COURSES WILL BEGIN REMOTELY. AJR HOPES TO ALLOW COURSES TO RESUME ONSITE AT SOME POINT IN FALL 2021 OR SPRING 2022.

Through the use of Zoom (an online video conference system) students from all over the world have the capacity to be participate in our curriculum and be part of our community without physically stepping foot inside the classroom.

Each trimester, almost all classes are offered in our Hybrid Classrooms/“Zoom Rooms”. These rooms are equipped with top of the line equipment that allows our Distance Learning students to interact with their instructors and fellow classmates live.

Through the use of multiple cameras and screens our distance students are able to engage with their instructors and our on-site students are able to engage with their colleagues studying from a distance.

At the beginning of the trimester, students will receive an access link for the relevant classes which should be used every week. It is very important to have a strong internet connection in order to participate in these classes. The Media Coordinator is available during each class for any troubleshooting and connectivity issues. Please see the [“Zoom Handbook”](#) for more information.

Depending on the distance that a student lives from AJR there is a different maximum number of courses that they are allowed to take online (as opposed to onsite). Please see “Distance Courses” in the Catalog for details, including the number of sessions of a course that a student may attend online without the course counting as an “off-site course.” During the pandemic the requirement to complete a percentage of courses onsite is suspended.

Please note that all hybrid and distance courses are recorded. These recordings are only to be shared with students in the course and members of the AJR administration.

Technology Needed to Participate in Zoom Classes

All students participating in a class at AJR via Zoom should ensure that they are using the following technology:

1. A device (computer or ipad) with a screen large enough to clearly see all participants in the class as well as the whiteboard (when the whiteboard is the main image being viewed). The device should also be equipped with high quality speakers, a way to attach high quality speakers, or a way to use headphones that facilitates clear audio.
2. A strong internet connection capable of at least 25 Mbps (upload).
3. A quality camera capable of at least 720p (Standard HD).
4. A high quality microphone that allows students to be heard clearly without static.

Etiquette

We expect online students to treat these courses as if they were attending in person. This means dressing according to the AJR guidelines, minimizing background noise, and ensuring that children, roommates, pets, and any other visitors don't interrupt. Additionally, all in-class rules apply. Students should treat their classes as if they are in important business meetings, and should not be engaged in other activities during class sessions.

Be advised that each session will be recorded. If a student is unable to attend a particular class, it will still count as an absence, but they will have the benefit of being able to watch the session later on. Recordings will be posted on the Populi course page.

E. 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 instructor'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 distributed materials 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. Students are responsible for watching the recording of the class session (posted on the course site on Populi).

F. Guide for Submitting Papers

Written papers submitted as course work should be double-spaced in a standard, easily readable, 12-point font. Proper citations for all work used must be included. Unless an instructor requests a specific citation format, any of the standard citation formats such as the Chicago Style (https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html), the SBL Style (<https://www.sbl-site.org/publications/SBLHandbookofStyle.aspx>), or the MLA Style (<https://style.mla.org/>) may be used.

G. 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.

H. Annual Retreat and Intensive

DUE TO THE PANDEMIC, THIS YEAR THE FALL RETREAT WILL BE HELD REMOTELY USING ZOOM. ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED AS DESCRIBED BELOW.

AJR holds a four-day Retreat each Fall that offers 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 through distance learning and those who are on “maintain matriculation” status, are required to participate in the full program in person. 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. That being said, it is essential that those studying through our distance learning program attend the Retreat and the Intensive, as those times enable them to have valuable in-person contact with their instructors and colleagues. Only students attending the full Retreat or Intensive program will have attendance and the topic recorded on their 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 students of different gender identities not room together for reasons of *mar’it ayin*. If you feel that this policy should not apply to you because you are married or in a life partnership that does not include legal marriage or for any other reason, you must discuss with Rabbi Jeff Hoffman or Rabbi Jill Hammer. In the case of gender queer or transgender students, or students in transition, sensitive and confidential attention will be paid to the comfort of the student as well as potential roommates.

Special and creative *tefillot* are an important part of AJR programming. If a student needs a document photocopied for use during *tefillot* at Retreat and Intensive, the AJR office will photocopy the document for all participants if it is up to 10 pages and it is submitted to the office no later than two weeks before the program. If the document is more than 10 pages, our preference is that the document be submitted electronically to the office and it will be projected onto a screen during the service.

I. 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 Director of Placement. 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 more advanced students or those 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 may be placed on a waiting list.

J. Seminar in Core Concepts

Seminar in Core Concepts is a sequence of six seminars. It includes Core Concepts Seminar I through 6, which comprise six trimesters 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. Each seminar will meet for one hour and ten minutes weekly. No credit is given for these seminars and no tuition is charged.

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

K. Talmud and *Havruta*

Students taking Talmud are required to take the accompanying *Havruta* class. For the first two trimesters of Talmud, *Havruta* will be organized by AJR. For the subsequent four trimesters students should make arrangements with their classmates to schedule time each week for *Havruta*. After the required six trimesters of Talmud, if a student wants to take additional trimesters of Talmud, they may take the class without the accompanying *Havruta* session with the permission of the Academic Dean.

III. 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. Representing 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.

B. On-site

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 place library books on the returns cart 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. This year's liaisons are Turia Stark (Cantorial) and Anat Katzir (Rabbinical). – please be in touch with the Student Association President, Steven Goldstein (stevengoldstein.email@gmail.com) for contact information for the liaisons. Once you have made a request, please allow the staff member or student liaison enough time to address the concern.

If you have a contagious illness, please do not come to class. Colds and flu prevent many with student pulpits – especially cantors – from doing their jobs. If you are well enough, you can consider zooming in.

C. 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 speak with a member of the administration.

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.

Many students need or choose to eat snacks during class. This is fine as long as it is acceptable to the instructor. However, please avoid bringing foods with strong odors into class. Please do not cook or prepare food during class.

D. 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.” All individuals 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, regardless of whether they are onsite or on Zoom.

E. 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 see the Catalog or visit [our website](#).

IV. ORDINATION REQUIREMENTS

This section provides a very brief overview of ordination requirements. For more details please consult the Catalog.

A. 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. Retakes of comprehensive examinations must be completed by the first week of January of the expected year of ordination. 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.

B. Master's Project

Rabbinical and cantorial students fulfill their Master's Project requirement by completing the Master's Project as part of the M.A. in Jewish Studies, see the Catalog.

C. Senior Practicum

Senior cantorial students must present a Senior Practicum (see the Catalog for details)

D. Ritual Skills

Ritual Skill requirements must be completed by the end of the first trimester of the senior year. Specific ritual skill requirements and descriptions are outlined in the Ritual Skills Handbook.

Current students have access to a group on Populi called "Ritual Skills," which contains valuable resources and recordings from previous lunchtime Ritual Skills programming that are of help for preparing to fulfill Ritual Skills requirements.

E. Financial Obligations

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

V. 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 most study days at AJR. The entire community is invited to participate in these daily rituals. For more information, please see the section on *T'fillah* on Student Life at AJR.

B. Holidays

AJR marks the Jewish holidays with special lunchtime teaching programs and ritual experiences. There might be 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*, 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 for anyone interested once a week. Onsite 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.

F. Shalosh Regalim

In Fall 2020 AJR launched its “Shalosh Regalim” Spiritual Encounter Program. Participating students will engage one spiritual modality for the year, and will have the opportunity to choose another modality in years to come. Participation is first-come first-serve (with the exception of seniors, who will have priority in choosing a group.). The goal of this year-long experience is to give students an opportunity to learn specific spiritual practices and skills, and to reflect on their spiritual experiences and questions in a supportive non-academic communal setting. Students can choose to be part of a small group of 5-8 people that will meet online with a facilitator for 2 hours and 15 minutes three times over the course of the year, to work with a particular spiritual practice (creative writing, social justice, meditation, or nature connection) and to reflect on their spiritual lives and their deepest questions about God, religion, and living a meaningful life. In between these “anchor” sessions, students will meet in *havruta* to work with the spiritual practice they’ve chosen for the year and consider important questions together. Each of the three group sessions will be a kind of pilgrimage practice during which participants will consider their spiritual “harvest” for that season, witness one another, and work on being present to lived experience and sacred practice.

More details about this program, and the specific modalities offered each year, can be found in Section XXIV of the Academic Catalog.

VI. 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, including events or meeting led by other groups hosted at AJR, 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 Master’s 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 what is stated 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 the rules stated 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*.

VII. 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.

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 HaHinukh, #529)

VIII. SCHOOL CLOSINGS

PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL CLASSES WILL BE HELD REMOTELY THIS FALL, AND CURRENTLY ALL STAFF ARE WORKING REMOTELY. WE WILL KEEP YOU POSTED WITH RELEVANT UPDATES.

Please note that due to the pandemic there are restrictions regarding coming to the AJR campus that will be publicized at the beginning of the Fall trimester.

The Academy’s physical site will be closed for the day due to weather conditions when the New York City or Yonkers public schools are closed, when the MTA closes, or at the discretion of the Academic Dean. AJR sends out email announcements on those days when the building is closed – please check your email. However, in general classes will not be cancelled when the physical site is closed. Instead, all

classes will be held online and such sessions will not count towards the maximum number of sessions that onsite students may take remotely without counting the class as a “distance course.”

IX. 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* most days that classes are held and *Shaharit* periodically throughout the trimester.

We are interested in a variety of styles. We welcome all kinds of worship structures whether they consist of a full, traditional *davening*, Reform service, meditative worship, etc. AJR allows for the option of constituting a minyan that includes both on-site and on-line participants. The *sheliah/sheliḥat tsibbur* may choose to include components of the service that require a *minyan* (i.e., *devarim shebikedushah*) if there are 10 Jews who are participating and those who are on Zoom have their cameras on. Every service includes a *Kaddish Yatom* or an alternative if there is no minyan. If there is a minyan when one counts on-line participants but the *sheliah/sheliḥat tsibbur* is not comfortable constituting a minyan in this way, then one of the AJR faculty or administration members will recite *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 is especially involved with prayer life at AJR, and is happy to consult with students who desire some guidance. This guidance can refer to melodies, structuring a service, etc.

If a *sheliah/sheliḥat tsibbur* makes an error of some kind in the course of the prayers, Rabbi Jeff Hoffman will convey that to the person in private. Other faculty members or students should speak to Rabbi Hoffman 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 *Shaharit* and daily *Minhah* services. These are opportunities of which students should avail themselves.

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. Recordings of lunchtime programs are archived in Populi in a group called "Lunchtime Programs."

C. 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 are expected to be responsive to AJR communications.

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 listserv for the AJR community. It provides a way for students and alumni to pose questions and discuss current issues. To join this list, please send an email to: Linda Ripps (lripps@ajr.edu).

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.

D. 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, to staffing phones at fundraising call-a-thons, performing at municipal celebrations or physically setting up “sacred space” for onsite 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.

E. Food

We are encouraged to support the local kosher food establishments in Riverdale and Westchester, several of which (including Pizza Block, Riverdale Market, Cafecchino, Kai Fan, Carlos and Gabby’s and Eden Wok) will deliver to AJR. Pizza Block and Carlos and Gabby’s deliver using Uber Eats.

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 the AJR Food Policy above. 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 they say or write “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 Café 28 – 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.

F. 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.

G. 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.* 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.

H. Restrooms

Restrooms are located on the mezzanine outside of the door to the right. Students will be given a code in order to access the bathrooms. Should you forget the code, please speak with the AJR office. There are also restrooms on the first floor of the building outside the café. When the first floor restrooms are locked, the key is housed in the Café 28, which is open until 4:00 pm.

I. 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.

J. Allergens

Members of the AJR community are asked not to wear excessive cologne as they can cause difficulties for those with allergies. If you suffer from any dire allergies, or have had potential anaphylactic reactions in the past, please let the AJR administration know before you arrive on campus .

X. GUIDELINES FOR FIRE EMERGENCIES AT AJR**A. Reporting a Fire**

Every year AJR will distribute an annual Safety and Fire Report to all students which includes details relevant to fire safety and evacuating AJR.

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.