Educators have tried to solve the problem of competing purposes by accepting all of them, and by building an institution that would accommodate the result.
Unfortunately, the flip side of the belief that all directions are correct is the belief that no direction is incorrect – which is a sort of intellectual bankruptcy... There is no answer to the query: Why [study] these [subjects] and not others?
– The Shopping Mall High School, Powell et al. (1985), pp. 305-306

Catalog Description
What should Jewish education be? What are its legitimate goals? What are the competing visions of an educated Jew, and how do these influence educational practice? How is Jewish education similar to and different from other kinds of religious education?

Purposes
For those who are engaged in Jewish educational enterprises or wish to be engaged in Jewish educational enterprises – as consumer or producers, as practitioners or policy-makers or critics – it is vitally important to think about the purposes of education generally and Jewish education specifically. The realm of purposes is also the realm of vision: to have an educational vision is to have clarity and focus about why we do whatever we choose to do in an educational setting. So another way of making the point is to say that educational vision is fundamentally important to educational success.

The idea of vision, however, can seem overwhelming. How does one come up with a vision? How does one assess a vision against alternatives? So another way of thinking about the issue is to consider, more modestly, the animating ideas behind the educational choices that we make.

In this course, we will proceed along two tracks. First, we will engage substantively with specific animating ideas, and with specific vision-driven educational institutions, and even with specific educational visions. But second, we want to think about the idea of educational vision itself. What qualifies as a vision? Where do we find visions, and how are they expressed? What are visionary (vision-driven or vision-sensitive) schools like? What is the power of an educational vision in principle – and what are the dangers?

As a course in philosophy, we will be exploring ideas that are debatable and contested. But that does not mean that it is all just a matter of opinion. On the contrary! If it were all just a matter of opinion, we wouldn’t bother taking these ideas seriously. Among our goals is to practice the art of philosophical inquiry, to sharpen our thinking, to get better at developing sound and compelling arguments about things that matter.
Outcomes of the Course
The learning outcomes of this course are as follows:

1. Students will encounter, explore, and deepen their understanding of a set of animating ideas that are central to Jewish education, including the ideas of integration, pluralism, assimilation, and enlightenment.
2. Students will learn to analyze educational practices and institutions in order to perceive the ideas that animate those practices or institutions.
3. Students will gain an appreciation of the value and the necessity of educational vision, and will develop their own reasoned and defensible positions about the purposes of Jewish education.

Requirements
The course will be conducted as a seminar, with an emphasis on productive collaborative engagement with the material (and with each other). Thus, the primary requirement for this course is conscientious preparation of readings and consistent attendance and participation. Please let me know as soon as possible if you know of a conflict with any of the course sessions.

From time to time, I will assign small writing assignments in preparation for a particular class session, to be posted online the day before class.

Following the first section of the course, I will assign a memo, to be written about one of the animating ideas that we discuss.

Following the second section of the course, I will assign a second memo, comparing ideas from two of the institutions that we study.

Each participant in the course will be responsible for studying one of the four core visions of Jewish education as presented in the volume *Visions of Jewish Education* (Fox, Scheffler and Marom, eds.). The details will depend on the number of students in the course, but the basic idea is that you will read the chapter once and make an initial presentation, and read it again in order to prepare for a second occasion when you will be expected to teach the chapter in some fashion. I do not mean that you will lecture to us about the chapter. Rather, you will be responsible for crafting our learning experience for that chapter.

Last, there will be a final take-home exam.

Assessment
My expectation (subject to change) is that grading will be based on the following:

1. Preparation and participation, including online writing: 25%
2. First memo: 15%
3. Second memo: 15%
4. Vision presentation: 20%
5. Final exam: 25%

Disabilities
If you are a student who needs academic accommodations because of a documented disability, please contact me, with your letter of accommodation, as soon as possible. If you have
questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic accommodations, you should contact the Office of Academic Services (6-3470). Letters of accommodation should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure provision of accommodation. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

**Student conduct**
As you know, every member of the University community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. Given the requirements of this course, I do not expect that questions of academic integrity should arise. Discussion of ideas with others is permissible, indeed encouraged; however, all writing should be your own. Please do not hesitate to consult me if you are unsure about these guidelines or about the appropriate course of action in a particular instance.

More generally, I expect that this course will be a place for serious intellectual inquiry. In order for this to happen students must listen carefully to each other; must accept the responsibility to ask questions when something is unclear; and must strive to conduct the discussion with both critical rigor and respect. Please note that critiquing another student’s point is perfectly acceptable, as long as it is done in a courteous and specific manner.

**Readings**
Readings for this course will include portions of the following books, as well as other material that will be made available on LATTE. These books are available for purchase from the Brandeis University Bookstore (as well as elsewhere). Please purchase the books at the beginning of the semester.


**Course Outline**
The appendix contains the planned trajectory of the course. However, experience indicates that we will make adjustments as we proceed, so treat this outline as a draft.