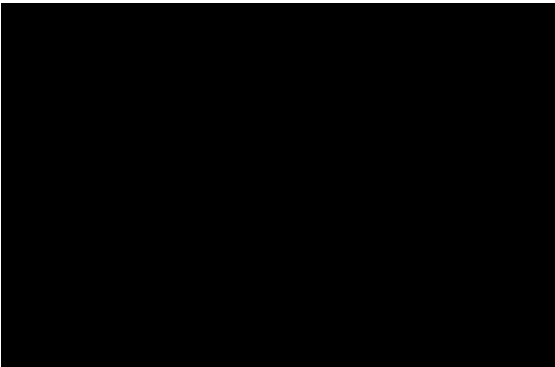


NHC 2016 Course Proposal Submission Form

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| Submission Date | 2015-12-20 22:38:53 |
| Applicant #1 Full Name | Noam Sienna |
| E-mail |  |
| Preferred Phone Number | |
| Address | |
| How many times have you attended the NHC Summer Institute? | |
| Please provide a brief bio and description of your teaching style (intended for the Course Committee). If you have taught at the NHC or other retreats or events before, tell us what you most recently taught, where, and when, as well as what you took from the experience. | I am a Jewish educator, calligrapher, henna artist, and graduate student, who is deeply invested in supporting local, intentional, and creative Judaism. I am a PhD student at the University of Minnesota, where my work focuses on the cultural history of Jewish communities in the Islamic world. I am passionate about honouring the diversity what being Jewish has looked like throughout time and around the world. I enjoy facilitating learning through hands-on engagement, problem solving with peers, and providing access to primary sources. I taught a course on Jewish henna art at NHC Institute 2015 as Timbrel Artist-in-Residence and enjoyed watching art bloom across the skins of Institute participants throughout the week. I was very impressed by the passion of my students for deep Jewish learning, and the wide range of ages, identities, and life experiences that they brought to the course. |
| Please provide a brief bio (50-100 words) that will appear on the NHC website if your course is offered. | Noam Sienna is a Jewish educator, calligrapher, henna artist, and graduate student at the University of Minnesota. Their work focuses on the ritual and material culture of Jewish communities in the Islamic world, and their research has explored such topics as henna art, illuminated manuscripts, medieval poetry, and amulets and magic. |
| Are you applying to present this course with another teacher? | No |
| Course Title | Jewish Magic in Theory and Practice |
| Course Description | This course will explore the history of magic in Jewish communities across the world from the times of the Talmud until the present day. We will focus on the inhabitants of what might be termed 'the Jewish imagination' — angels, demons, and other supernatural forces — and the various ways to interact with them. Some texts strongly discourage interacting with the supernatural, while other texts provide detailed instructions on how to do it correctly... Meanwhile, Jewish art and material culture provide ample evidence for the widespread use of amulets, talismans, charms, herbal medicines, chants, and rituals aimed at chasing away evil spirits, placating angry ones, and entreating friendly ones. And this is a hands-on class: participants will also have the opportunity to create their own amulets or protective talismans. Halakhic disclaimer: rabbinic authorities have differing opinions on amulets, and everyone should participate according to their own comfort. I am not intending in this course to engage in anything generally considered outside the bounds of licit Jewish magic, i.e. there will be no necromancy, fortune telling, or direct communication with spirits. |
| Course Categories | History and Culture Religious Life and Spirituality Text Study for Everyone |

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| Format | Regular course (Four 1.5 hour sessions) |
| Scheduling Preference | No preference |
| SESSION 1 | In this session we will begin our exploration of the history of magical practices in Judaism with examining the core texts on the subject from the TaNaKh and the Talmud. While (some) magical practices are clearly forbidden, the rabbis discuss and even demonstrate a wide variety of practices for protection and healing. We will explore some standard, and some very strange, texts that show the diversity of attitudes towards magic and demonology in ancient Jewish communities. |
| SESSION 2 | In this session we will turn to a different kind of source: art and material culture. Beginning with the incantation bowls of Talmudic Babylonia, we will explore the history of Jewish amulets and talismans, including hamsas, shivitis, magic squares, and many other kinds, in wood, metal, paper, cloth, glass, and bone. We will learn about the different kinds of magical iconography — hands, eyes, fish, birds, and other symbols — and the importance of text, including the Hebrew alphabet, Psalms, the Priestly Blessing, angelic names, Qabbalistic acronyms, and prayers like Ana beKoah. |
| SESSION 3 | In this session we will roll up our sleeves and get to work! Drawing on our investigation of historical amulets (and the texts and imagery that they use), and addressing our own individual concerns, participants will have the opportunity to create their own paper amulet (or on another material that they bring). The amulets could be intended as a plaque to be displayed (like a shiviti) or as a personal talisman to be worn, or something else. We will have an abundance of historical examples to use as inspirations for our artwork, and there is no limit to what we can create! |
| SESSION 4 | Time to gather round the (imaginary) fire! In our final session, as we continue to work on our amulets, we will share some folktales of angels and demons from the Jewish diaspora. Stories about angels, demons, spirits, and other beings in disguise, suggest that the worlds of humans and spirits are intertwined, and that each might successfully perform favours for the other. In these folktales piety and humility are rewarded, greed and cruelty are punished, and the mysterious workings of the universe are revealed: in short, they illustrate our deepest hopes and wishes for ourselves and the world. Participants are encouraged to bring stories of their own! |
| Will this course include some form of a presentation or performance to the Institute community? | Yes |
| If yes, please describe the presentation and performance, the space or venue you would like for it, and when it might take place. | Depending on the number of students and their comfort level, the amulets/plaques/other artworks created could be put on display. |

Please provide any other information that you think we should have when considering this proposal. (This may include links to blogs or web sites, videos, reviews, music, images) or other resources about you or that you feel would assist the committee in making its decision. You may also send additional documents or files to courses@havurah.org. Please reference this application in your message.

Some examples of amulets I've created can be seen in the gallery at <http://www.siennajewisharts.com/calligraphy/>.