

## NHC 2018 Course Proposal Submission Form

Submission Date

2017-12-29 01:54:56

Applicant #1 Full Name

E-mail

Preferred Phone Number

Address

How many times have you attended the NHC Summer Institute?

10 or more times

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 an organizer, facilitator, educator, and innovator with 15 years of professional experience inspiring and empowering people to make the world a more just and connected place. Currently I work at HIAS – the world’s oldest, and only Jewish, refugee organization – mobilizing the greater Washington DC Jewish community to respond to the global refugee crisis.

My career path has taken many twists and turns from teaching in public charter schools to producing Jewish music festivals to running conferences on Israeli-Palestinian peace... and at each step of the way I’ve asked myself three questions: what issues in the world do I feel compelled to address? What activities do I actually want to spend my day doing? And, keeping these things in mind, how can I make a living? This course has grown out of the first two questions, as well as other concepts and methods I’ve learned from leadership coaching and empowerment circles I have been a part of. (Unfortunately, the third question will be outside the scope of this course.)

I have taught three times at the Summer Institute and many times at the Chesapeake Retreat. This course proposal is a more full-blown version of a well-attended workshop I taught at Chesapeake in 2016 called “What do I want to do with my life?” In 2005, Laura Bellows and I co-taught a course at the Summer Institute in which participants created original artwork based on quotations from the High Holiday liturgy. The experience was life-changing for me. I think of it as the moment when I started to be the kind of educator I wanted to be – someone who opened space for people to create and express from within. Then in 2011 I taught a course on “telling your Israel story” where participants wrote personal true stories reflecting their nuanced relationships with Israel. Most recently in 2015, I co-taught a course with Liora Halperin that combined historical content with dialogue processes (Liora led the former, I led the latter).

I have deeply valued my NHC teaching experiences because participants bring so much of themselves to the table. In this community, I have found it incredibly fruitful to facilitate opportunities for reflection, connection, and creative expression, organized around a particular theme or purpose.

**Please provide a brief bio (50-100 words) that will appear on the NHC website if your course is offered.**

Sarah D. Beller is a community organizer, facilitator, educator, and innovator who loves to inspire and empower people to make the world a more just and connected place. As community engagement director for greater Washington DC at HIAS – the world’s oldest, and only Jewish, refugee organization – Sarah mobilizes the local Jewish community to respond to the global refugee crisis. Previously, Sarah worked at J Street, where she organized the largest gathering of pro-Israel, pro-peace Americans. Sarah is an experienced dialogue facilitator, an NHC veteran, an amateur bicyclist, a decent dancer, and a mama. She co-founded SongRise, a women’s a cappella group that inspires action for social justice.

**Are you applying to present this course with another teacher?**

No

**Course Title**

Being Zusya: What’s My Calling?

**Course overview (intended for the course committee)**

Over the past year or two, I have heard from many community members and friends that they are feeling a greater sense of urgency about making a positive impact on the world, and doing so in a way that is truly authentic to who they are. As a Chasidic story teaches, if you are Zusya, when you reach the end of your life you won’t be asked “why were you not Moses?” but rather “why were you not Zusya?” In this sense, Judaism calls on us to live our lives as our most authentic selves, even as it calls on us to pursue justice.

The purpose of this course is to create a safe, connected, and creative space in which participants can explore their personal “calling” and envision how they would like to pursue it in the coming year. (I put “calling” in quotes because some may chafe at this concept, but I think that’s okay and we’ll unpack it a little bit!) We’ll frame our exploration around the quote from Howard Thurman: “Don’t ask what the world needs; ask what makes you come alive, because what the world needs is people who have come alive.” However, I would amend this to say, “DO ask what the world needs, AND ask what makes you come alive.” The Venn diagram of these two elements will be the guiding framework for the course.

The course will use a variety of methods, including: interactive (e.g. chevruta conversation, group sharing), reflective (e.g. journaling, guided meditation), and creative (e.g. collage, group read-aloud). Though this is not a text study course, I will provide a few guiding texts/quotes from Jewish and secular sources to ground and enrich each of the main themes. By the end of the course, participants will each come away with a set of personal written reflections in a dedicated journal, as well as a “vision board” with words and/or images which can go up on their wall at home. In addition, the last session will give a chance to for each participant to share their own vision/intentions for the coming year and affirm those of others in a facilitated ritual.

**Course description (100-200 words, to appear on the NHC website if your course is selected)**

“Why were you not Zusya?” the angels of heaven asked Hasidic Rabbi Zusya in a vision. In other words, “why didn’t you live your most authentic life?” Considering the many pressures, expectations, and insecurities most of us face today, finding your “calling”—and actually living it—is easier said than done. This course will create a safe and vibrant space to explore your personal calling (but not before analyzing whether that concept resonates) and envision how you will pursue it in the coming year. We’ll frame our exploration around two elements: what the world needs and what makes you come alive. Bring an open mind and a sense of adventure; come away with the beginnings of a vision for being even more \*you\* (not Zusya!) and making your greatest impact yet in 5779. Open to all life stages.

**Course Categories**

Contemporary Issues  
Meditation and Movement  
Religious Life and Spirituality

**Additional Information (prerequisites, books or materials to bring, materials fee, etc.)**

Participants should bring a blank journal that will be specifically designated for this course.

**Format**

Regular course (Four 1.5 hour sessions)

**Scheduling Preference**

Morning

**Which type of classroom layout would you prefer?**

A room with desks and/or tables

**Please list any other space requirements. We will do our best to accommodate all requests, but we appreciate your flexibility.**

I haven't seen many of the classrooms, but as much flexibility as possible would be great. There will be a lot of journaling so tables would be helpful, but it shouldn't feel cramped or overly formal. An ideal room would have a good amount of space and easily moveable tables and chairs. Also windows would be wonderful!

**SESSION 1**

Goals:

- Build sense of community and safe space (Methods: icebreaker in pairs with prompts, group agreements, guidance on being a helpful coach to fellow participants, active listening practice)
- Introduce the framework for the course (Methods: framing texts, including Zusya story and Thurman quote)
- Explore what the world needs (Methods: brainstorm about “what pisses you off?” i.e. things in your community, city, country, world that just aren’t the way they should be)
- Check in on how people are doing, any hangups (Method: private index cards)

Product:

- Fill in first section of 4-part vision board – what pisses me off / what problem(s) in the world do I feel called to address?

## SESSION 2

### Goals:

- Address any questions/issues brought up in the index cards
- Frame today with text/song – possibly from Psalm 146 (“Ahallela adonai b’chayai, azamerah l’elohai b’odi” / “I will praise G!d with my life, I will sing to my G!d with my all”)
- Explore what makes you come alive; your most authentic strengths (Methods: guided meditation, journaling, small group discussion, group read-aloud in the style of an “I am From” poem)
- Begin to explore your vision for the future – how to meld or balance “what makes you come alive” and “what the world needs” (Methods: venn diagram in journal or on large paper, talking with a partner, etc.)

### Product:

- Fill in second section of 4-part vision board – what makes me come alive? What are my authentic strengths?

## SESSION 3

### Goals:

- Continue to explore your vision for the future (Methods: writing on vision board and optional collaging with supplies provided; chance for brief consultations with instructor)
- Identify what you need to let go of in order to realize your vision (Method: journaling)
- Set specific intentions for the coming year (Method: active listening with a partner)

### Product:

- Fill in third section of 4-part vision board – what’s my vision for my next chapter? Specific intentions for what I will do in 5779 to pursue it?
- Fill in fourth section of 4-part vision board – what do I need to let go of to make this vision possible?
- If time/interest: make separate collage with words and/or images of your vision/intentions – to be posted at home or office

## SESSION 4

### Goals:

- Symbolically “let go” through tashlich-like ritual (Method: symbolically cast away the ideas and insecurities that hold us back from our visions/intentions – possibly by going outside to the stream together and throwing in leaves or stones)
- Share and affirm each others’ visions and intentions (Method: sit in circle and go around with designated length of time for each person to speak, with an option to pass; after each person shares, we’ll offer a few words of affirmation such as “ken yehi ratzon” – may it be G!d’s desire)

**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.**

I would be interested in posting a large piece of paper or chalkboard at the shuk, talent show, dining hall or other communal space where community members could respond to a prompt such as, “In 5779, how will you be the change you wish to see in the world? How will you be YOU?”

**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](mailto:courses@havurah.org). Please reference this application in your message.**

Thank you for considering this proposal!