

Gender in Rabbinic Judaism

Spring 2010
Hebrew and Semitic Studies 371
Jewish Studies 371
Religious Studies 400

Instructor:

Professor Jordan D. Rosenblum
Office: Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies, 1340 Van Hise Hall
Office Hours: TuTh 11:00-12:00 and by appointment
E-mail: jrosenblum@wisc.edu

Course Hours:

Tuesday and Thursday 1:00-2:15 pm

Prerequisite(s):

This course assumes **no** prior knowledge of gender and/or Judaism

Course Description:

Unlike biological sex, gender is socially constructed. To study gender, therefore, is to study how a variety of social and cultural phenomena interact in the constructions of maleness and femaleness. This course examines how rabbinic Judaism constructs gender in order to better understand how various gender considerations shaped the formation of rabbinic Judaism. Interacting closely with primary texts (all in English translation), students will learn how to read and analyze rabbinic literature. In the final weeks of the semester, we will examine how these ancient considerations affect modern manifestations of Judaism. Throughout this course, students will be challenged to question and verify various scholarly assumptions.

Course Goals:

Through guided reading in the classroom and at home, students will learn how to read rabbinic literature and to assess various theoretical and methodological approaches to analyzing gender in this corpus. Students will further develop these analytical skills through several writing assignments, both in class and take home. Finally, students will understand the historical development of rabbinic gender categories and the literature of rabbinic Judaism.

Classroom Etiquette:

Students are expected to arrive on time and should not engage in private conversations during class. While laptops are allowed in class, students should use their computers for taking notes and not for surfing the web, sending e-mails, etc. There is no reason for a student to be talking or sending texts on his/her cellular phone during class time. This is distracting to both professor and students. *Students whose behavior in class is disruptive can expect a significant reduction in their final grade.*

Requirements and Grading:

(1) Regular class attendance of lectures and careful preparation of assigned texts are considered essential aspects of this course. Please prepare and bring the assigned texts to class each week. In grading papers and tests, I will be particularly concerned that you are learning the material and concepts that are taught in class sessions. Prior learning of Jewish sources is not a substitute for doing the work required by this course.

(2) Attendance and participation: 10%. Active involvement in class is highly important and includes attendance as well as participation in class discussion.

(3) Short paper: 25%. A short paper, no more than **three** typed, double-spaced pages, will be assigned on *February 2* and due at the beginning of class on **February 18**. No e-mail submissions will be accepted. For each 24-hour period that a paper is late, the student's grade will be reduced by one full letter grade.

(4) Response Paper: 5%. Students are required to attend one CJS lecture during the semester (information available online at: <http://jewishstudies.wisc.edu/lectures/>) and to write a one page response paper. The structure of the response paper is as follows: one paragraph summarizing the content and thesis of the lecture and one paragraph of your own critical assessment of the lecture. The response paper must be submitted in hard copy within one week of the lecture. *Late papers will not be accepted.*

(5) In-Class Midterm: 25%. There will be one midterm, given in class on **March 25**. It may address any of the readings and class discussions up to that point.

(6) In-Class Presentation: 10%. On **April 27, 29, and May 4**, each student will give a five-minute presentation to the class. Presentation topics will be distributed on *March 23*. Students will be assigned presentation days in class on *April 8*.

(7) Final Exam: 25%. The final exam, given on **May 13**, will be cumulative and will address issues covered in the readings and class discussions. *Students must take the final exam at the scheduled time.*

(8) You may sign up for honors credit, which can be a very productive way of exploring your own interests in relation to the topics of the course. If you do so, it is your responsibility to talk with the professor to arrange your honors work in the first two weeks of the semester.

****Students are expected to bring relevant texts in hard copy to every class****

Honor Code:

Students are expected to follow the University of Wisconsin-Madison Academic Honor Code. If students have any questions about this policy, please speak with the professor. More information on plagiarism can be found at:
http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html

Extension Policy:

Extensions on papers and exams will **not** be granted. For each 24-hour period that a paper is late, the student's grade will be reduced by one full letter grade.

Required Books:

- (1) R. Kraemer, *Women's Religions in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook* (WR)
- (2) D. Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (CI)
- (3) D. Biale, *Eros and the Jews* (EJ)
- (4) Electronic Reserve (R)

****All books are available for purchase at the University Bookstore****

Class Schedule:

January 19	Introduction: What is Gender?
January 21	Introduction: Gender Theory Reading: Boyarin, "Gender," 117-135 (R)
January 26	Gender in the Hebrew Bible Reading: EJ, 11-32
January 28	Gender in the Second Temple Period Readings: WR, 28-34, 292-297, 332-345
February 2	Introduction to Rabbinic Literature Reading: Goldenberg, "Talmud," 129-143 (R); Holtz, "Midrash," 177-186 (R) <i>Short Paper Topics Distributed</i>
February 4	Gender and Rabbinic Judaism I Reading: EJ, 33-59; WR, 100-110
February 9	Gender and Rabbinic Judaism II Reading: WR, 74-85; Fonrobert, "Gender Identity in Halakhic Discourse," available online at: http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/gender-identity-in-halakhic-discourse
February 11	Non-rabbinic Evidence for Gender in Judaism Reading: WR, 121-130, 143-157, 251-255
February 16	Gender and Greek and Roman Religion Reading: WR, 16-17, 22-28, 38, 40-41, 43-47, 245-248, 283-292

- February 18 Gender and Christianity
Reading: *WR*, 65-67, 72-73, 93-96, 297-308, 356-368
****Short Paper due in class****
- February 23 Carnal Israel: Introduction
Reading: *CI*, 1-30
- February 25 Anthropology and Sexuality
Reading: *CI*, 31-60
- March 2 Dialectics of Desire
Reading: *CI*, 61-76
- March 4 Female Origins and Discourse of Married Sex
Reading: *CI*, 77-106
- March 9 Husbands, Wives, and Sexual Intercourse
Reading: *CI*, 107-133
- March 11 The Torah as “the Other Woman”
Reading: *CI*, 134-166
- March 16 Studying Women
Reading: *CI*, 167-196
- March 18 Constructing the Rabbinic Male Body; Conclusions
Reading: *CI*, 197-245
- March 23 Beyond Boyarin: Christian and Jewish Gender Constructions;
 Midterm Review
Reading: *WR*, 377-394; *b. Avodah Zarah 17a (R)*; Harvey, “The Pupil, the Harlot and the Fringe Benefits,” 259-264 (R)
Presentation topics distributed
- March 25 **MIDTERM** (in-class)
- March 27- April 4 Canceled: Spring Break
- April 6 Gender and the Enlightenment
Reading: *EJ*, 149-175
- April 8 Breakdown of Rabbinic Gender Norms
Reading: Singer, “Yentl the Yeshiva Boy,” 149-169 (R)
Presentation dates and times assigned

- April 13 Gender and Zionism
Reading: *EJ*, 176-203
- April 15 Gender in Israeli Culture
Reading: Kahana-Carmon, “Bridal Veil,” 158-175 (*R*)
- April 20 Gender in American Jewish Culture
Reading: *EJ*, 204-230
- April 22 Gender and Jews in American Film
Reading: Watch the movie *Crossing Delancey* (available at College Library [Helen C. White] on reserve)
- April 27 In-Class Presentations
- April 29 In-Class Presentations
- May 4 In-Class Presentations
- May 6 Conclusions
- May 13 **FINAL EXAM**
12:25 PM – 2:25 PM