

Classical Rabbinic Texts

Spring 2011
Hebrew and Semitic Studies 448
Jewish Studies 448
Religious Studies 448

Instructor:

Professor Jordan D. Rosenblum
Office: Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies, 1340 Van Hise Hall
Office Hours: TuTh 9:00-10:00 am and by appointment
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Course Hours:

Tuesday and Thursday 11:00 am - 12:15 pm

Prerequisite(s):

Hebrew 202 or 324 or consent of instructor

Course Description and Course Goals:

An introduction to the language and literature of the Classical period of Rabbinic Judaism. Our goals are threefold: (1) to build skills in reading and interpreting a range of Hebrew texts, including Mishnah, Tosefta, midrash, and narrative; (2) to study major topics in rabbinic thought; and (3) to introduce key reference books and critical editions so that you will be able to study on your own.

Requirements:

- (1) Class participation and preparation: 10%
- (2) Midterm (**March 22**, in class): 20%
- (3) In-class presentation: 20%
- (4) Final Paper (**May 5**, in class): 50%

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 instructor. More information on plagiarism can be found at:
http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html

Absence Policy:

Participation is ten percent of the course grade and you cannot participate if you are not in class. More than three absences will result in a lowering of your participation grade by one full letter per absence. In case of medical or personal emergency requiring absence, please contact me as soon as possible.

Class Preparation and Participation:

Because language training is a key component of this course, regular preparation and participation are expected. Adequate preparation entails the following: (1) bringing the relevant texts to class (including the Hebrew Bible); (2) the ability to parse and translate every word; (3) consulting the original context for each biblical citation and being prepared to discuss it; and (4) reading the relevant entry in Strack and Stemberger for each text, as well as any other assigned reading for that day. Graduate students may not consult translations or notes during class. Undergraduates may use notes, but may not consult translations during class. I recommend that you prepare these texts in groups.

Midterm:

There will be an in-class midterm on **March 22**. The midterm will have two parts. The first part of the midterm will require students to translate small sections of various texts covered in class. In addition to translating texts, students may be asked specific questions about grammatical structures or technical terminology. The second part of the midterm will consist of short essay questions, in which students must connect, and interact with, primary and secondary readings.

Class Presentation:

In the latter portion of this course, each student *in consultation with the professor* will choose a short text (and perhaps a secondary reading) on which he/she would like to present. The presentation should be modeled on the basic structure of our usual classes, and other students will be expected to prepare for them as they would for a normal class. The student presenting will provide a list of 3-5 questions that he/she would like the class to address, and will distribute them in writing to the entire class at the beginning of his/her presentation. Students will present for an entire class period. Graduate students are expected to demonstrate a higher level of sophistication and engagement with rabbinic scholarship in their presentations. Students must consult with the instructor about their presentation by **February 17**. In addition, students will provide the class with a copy of the Hebrew text from a critical edition and an English translation (published by another scholar, it need not be their own) at least **a week prior** to their presentation. Graduate students may wish to pick topics related to their dissertations. Please come to see me to discuss your topic during my office hours or by appointment, especially if you feel lost in trying to decide on a topic and/or cannot locate a text. It is my job to help! In class on **March 3**, students will be assigned a day on which to present. The topic of the class presentation will lead to the final paper project.

Final Paper:

Undergraduate students 8-10 pages; Graduate students 10-15 pages. Due in class on **May 5**. No e-mail submissions will be accepted. At the core of the final paper is your own translation and commentary on the passage that you presented on in class. The commentary must address the historical and literary questions relevant to your text. In addition, students must connect their passage to at least two of the authors and/or texts discussed in class (which may include those found in other students presentations). Students are encouraged to take their papers to the Writing Center (<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/>).

Extension Policy:

Extensions on papers 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) A Hebrew Bible (preferably the *BHS* [*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*; Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997])
- (2) Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Babli, Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* [Hendrickson, 2006]
- (3) H. L. Strack and G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* [Fortress Press, 1996] (*ITM*)
- (4) Electronic Reserve: Learn@UW (*R*)

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

Class Schedule:

January 18	Introduction
January 20	Introduction cont.; <i>m. Avot</i> 1:1-18; Goldenberg, "Talmud," 129-143 (<i>R</i>)
January 25	<i>m. Avot</i> 1:1-18 cont.; Holtz, "Midrash," 177-189 (<i>R</i>)
January 27	<i>m. Avot</i> 1:1-18 cont.
February 1	<i>m. Hullin</i> 1:1; <i>t. Hullin</i> 1:1-3; Rosenblum reading (<i>R</i>); Hauptman, "Mishnah as a Response to 'Tosefta,'" 13-34 (<i>R</i>)
February 3	<i>Sifre Numbers</i> 115; Numbers 15:37-41; Warren Harvey, "The Pupil, the Harlot, and the Fringe Benefits," 259-271 (<i>R</i>)
February 8	<i>Sifre Numbers</i> 115 cont.; Boyarin, "On the Status of the Tannaitic Midrashim," 455-465 (<i>R</i>)
February 10	<i>Mekilta d'Rabbi Ishmael</i> Kaspā 5; <i>ITM</i> , 15-30
February 15	<i>Mekilta d'Rabbi Ishmael</i> Kaspā 5 cont.; Azzan Yadin, <i>Scripture as Logos</i> , 48-79 (<i>R</i>)
February 17	<i>Mekilta d'Rabbi Ishmael</i> Kaspā 5 cont.
February 22	<i>Mekilta d'Rabbi Ishmael</i> Kaspā 5 cont.
February 24	<i>Mekilta d'Rabbi Ishmael</i> Kaspā 5 cont.

March 1	<i>Sifra</i> on Leviticus 11:46; Jonathan Brumberg-Kraus, “Meat-Eating and Jewish Identity,” 227-262 (R)
March 3	<i>Bereshit Rabbah</i> 38:38 Assign Presentation Days
March 8	<i>Lamentations Rabbah</i> 4:11; <i>Leviticus Rabbah</i> 28:2; David Stern, <i>Parables in Midrash</i> , 4-45 (R) [the Hebrew for <i>Lamentations Rabbah</i> can be found on pages 286-287 of Stern]
March 10	<i>Avot d’Rabbi Natan</i> A4, 40-77; Jordan D. Rosenblum, ““Why do you refuse to eat pork?”: Jews, Food, and Identity in Roman Palestine,” 95-110 (R)
March 12-20	SPRING BREAK
March 22	MIDTERM (in class)
March 24	Student Presentation
March 29	Student Presentation
March 31	Student Presentation
April 5	Student Presentation
April 7	Student Presentation
April 12	Student Presentation
April 14	Student Presentation
April 19-21	NO CLASS: Passover
April 26	Student Presentation
April 28	Student Presentation
May 3	Student Presentation
May 5	Conclusions ** Paper due in class **