

Classical Rabbinic Literature in Translation

Spring 2014

Jewish Studies/ Hebrew and Semitic Studies/Literature in Translation/Religious Studies 328

Instructor:

Professor Jordan D. Rosenblum

Office: Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies, 1416 Sterling Hall

Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 10:00-11:00 am; and by appointment

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Course Hours:

Monday and Wednesday 4:00-5:15 pm

Prerequisite(s):

This course assumes **no** prior knowledge of Hebrew, the Talmud, and/or Judaism

Course Description:

Judaism today *is* rabbinic Judaism. From dietary regulations to marriage laws, Jewish customs are filtered through rabbinic understandings of – and additions to – biblical traditions. This course examines the literary corpus of the classical rabbinic period (ca. 70-640 C.E.) in order to understand how this group shaped the religion now known as Judaism. Interacting closely with primary texts in translation, students will learn the operating principles of rabbinic logic, as well as how scholars (re)construct history based upon this corpus. In the second half of this course, we will focus on a specific tractate (*Avodah Zarah*, or Idolatry). Using this tractate as a test case, students will apply arguments made on the macro level (i.e., about rabbinic literature in general) to the micro level. 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 how to use and assess various theoretical and methodological approaches to 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 and the literature of rabbinic Judaism.

Classroom Etiquette:

Students are expected to arrive on time and should not engage in private conversations. While laptops are allowed in both class and discussion sections, 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 a 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 essential aspects of this course. Please 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 19* and due at the beginning of class on **March 5**. 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 Center for Jewish Studies (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 31**. It may address any of the readings and class discussions up to that point.

(6) Take-home Exam: 35%. A take-home exam, due on **May 14**, will be cumulative and will address issues covered in the readings and class discussions.

(7) 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) M. Jaffee, *Early Judaism* [University of Maryland Press, 2006] (*EJ*)
- (2) L. Schiffman, *Texts and Traditions* [Ktav Publishing House, 1998] (*TT*)
- (3) C. Fonrobert and M. Jaffee, *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* [Cambridge University Press, 2007] (*TRL*)
- (4) Electronic Reserve: Learn@UW (*R*)

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

Class Schedule:

January 22	Introduction
January 27	Hebrew Bible: Introduction and Overview Reading: <i>EJ</i> , 19-28; <i>TT</i> , 16-40
January 29	Second Temple Judaism: Overview and the Concept of Hellenism Reading: <i>EJ</i> , 9-13, 28-35; <i>TT</i> , 121-125, 151-169, 192-202, 211-218
February 3	Second Temple Judaism II: Qumran Reading: <i>EJ</i> , 139-148; <i>TT</i> , 354-356; <i>Community Rule</i> (<i>R</i>)
February 5	Second Temple Judaism III: Christianity Reading: <i>EJ</i> , 152-158; <i>TT</i> , 407-414
February 10	Biblical Interpretation Reading: <i>EJ</i> , 49-89; <i>TT</i> , 531-537
February 12	The Tannaim: Introduction Reading: <i>EJ</i> , 35-45, 158-164; <i>TT</i> , 523-526, 537-547
February 17	The Tannaim II: What is the Mishnah? Reading: <i>EJ</i> , 230-240; <i>TT</i> , 497-503; <i>TRL</i> , 121-143
February 19	Mishnah Workshop I Reading: <i>Mishnah Hullin</i> chapters 1-6 (<i>R</i>) <i>Short Paper Topics Distributed</i>
February 24	Mishnah Workshop II Reading: <i>Mishnah Hullin</i> chapters 7-12 (<i>R</i>)
February 26	The Relationship Between the Mishnah and Tosefta Reading: <i>TT</i> , 547-553; Rosenblum reading (<i>R</i>)
March 3	Tannaitic Midrashim Reading: <i>TT</i> , 553-559; Yadin, <i>Scripture as Logos</i> , 48-79 (<i>R</i>)

- March 5 Amoraim: Introduction
Reading: *TT*, 619-627
****Short Paper due in class****
- March 10 Amoraim: The Palestinian Talmud (Yerushalmi)
Reading: *TT*, 627-632; *TRL*, 144-163
- March 12 Amoraim: The Babylonian Talmud (Bavli)
Reading: *TT*, 603-617, 633-638; *TRL*, 165-197
- March 15-March 23 **SPRING BREAK**
- March 24 Amoraic Midrash Collections
Reading: *Genesis Rabbah* 38:13 (*R*); *TT*, 638-647
- March 26 Conclusions and Midterm Review
- March 31 **MIDTERM** (in-class)
- April 2 Rabbinic Topics: The “Other”
Reading: *TRL*, 243-269
- April 7 Rabbinic Topics: Gender
Reading: *TRL*, 270-294
- April 9 *Avodah Zarah*: Introduction
Reading: *Mishnah Avodah Zarah* chapter 1 (*R*); Schwartz, “The Rabbis and Urban Culture,” 162-176 (*R*)
- April 14-April 16 **NO CLASS: PASSOVER**
- April 21 *Mishnah Avodah Zarah* II
Reading: *Mishnah Avodah Zarah* chapters 2-5 (*R*)
- April 23 *Tosefta Avodah Zarah* I
Reading: *Tosefta Avodah Zarah* chapter 1-4 (*R*); Hayes, “The Private Feasts of a Gentile,” 154-170 (*R*)
- April 28 *Tosefta Avodah Zarah* II
Reading: *Tosefta Avodah Zarah* chapter 5-8 (*R*)
- April 30 *Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah*
Reading: Selected texts (*R*); Schäfer, “Jews and Gentiles in Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah,” 335-352 (*R*)

- May 5 *Bavli Avodah Zarah*
Reading: *b. Avodah Zarah 35b-37a (R)*
- May 7 Conclusions
- May 14 **TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE**