

INTRODUCTION TO RABBINIC LITERATURE
HB/NT/SR 645

Spring Semester, 2015
Thursday, 2:00-4:50 P.M.
G-133

Office hours:
Wednesday, 1:30-4:00 (occasional absences)
or by appointment

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Werner 225

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will concentrate on the literature composed and compiled prior to 700 C.E.: an initial encounter with selected rabbinic texts; a prologue to some of the major ideas at the center of these texts; and an introduction to the critical historical and literary issues attendant their study. A survey of the relationship between these texts and Jewish history will conclude the course.

2. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- a. To develop an understanding of the nature of Rabbinic literature and its variety
- c. To learn how to find one's way around this literature and the tools available for its study
- b. To develop an understanding of the complexity of the issues shaping how one studies this literature and its interpretation
- d. To develop an understanding of some of the major issues and topics discussed in this literature
- e. To develop an understanding of how Rabbinic literature can be used as a source for Jewish history of the Greek and Roman eras
- f. To acquire a basic understanding of Jewish history and beliefs
- g. To develop a basis for enhancing the understanding of Judaism used in the development of Christian belief and teaching

3. TEXTBOOKS:

Fonrobert, Charlotte E. and Martin S. Jaffee, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007
Schechter, Solomon. *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights, 1993 (reprint of 1961 and 1909 editions)
Solomon, Norman. *The Talmud: A Selection*. London: Penguin Books, 2009

4. CLASS REQUIREMENTS:

- a. Read the pages assigned for each class session and come to class prepared to discuss the material in them. You will be expected to be familiar with material in the primary texts assigned. For the readings in the secondary literature you will be expected to have noted at least one question from each of the readings and be able to explain the major arguments.
- b. You will be expected to write a research paper for the course:
This should be a research paper on a major person, topic, institution, or theological issue related to the earlier stages of the Rabbinic movement. A list of potential topics is attached. Other topics are possible with the consent of the instructor. This paper should be at least 3000 words in length. A draft of this paper will be discussed in class sessions on April 30 and May 7. The final copy is due May 18. To facilitate this process, the papers will be posted on Sakai by Monday, 8 A.M., prior to

the class in which they are being discussed. Every student will read the papers and bring questions to the class session for discussion. The paper should be based on the material available in the primary texts and provided ample discussion of that evidence, while also demonstrating familiarity with the secondary literature on the subject.

It is assumed that the papers are based upon the *SBL Handbook of Style* (Second Edition) and *The Chicago Manual of Style* as it is explained and adapted in Kate L. Turabian, revised by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, and University of Chicago Press editorial staff, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* (7th ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). The use of footnote style is expected.

c. In lieu of a final examination you will be expected to compose a 1000-1250 word essay, outlining your approach to the problem described in Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, pp. 33-59. This should be based upon the perceptions and understanding you have gained on Rabbinic Literature from your participation in the class and the completion of the reading and research requirements. It will be due on May 21 and will form the basis for the discussion of that class period.

d. More than one unexcused absence will result in the loss of one letter grade. Late papers will result in the loss of one letter grade. More than 3 absences results in a grade of "F".

5. GRADES:

Research Paper	40%
Class Readings	30%
Final essay	30%

6. CLASS AND READING SCHEDULE:

Feb 5 - Introduction to Course and Jewish History

Feb 12 - Introduction to the Literature and Historical Overview

M. 'Abot 1-2 (Solomon, 553-56)

B. Gittin 56a-b (Solomon, pp. 391-95)

Chris Seeman and Adam Kolman Marshak, "Jewish History from Alexander to Hadrian," in *EDEJ*, 25-55

Yaakov Elman, "Classical Rabbinic Interpretation," *JSB*, 1844-63

Fonrobert and Jaffee, xiii-xvi, 1-9

Solomon, 721-24

Feb 19 - The Rabbinic Tradition

M. 'Abot 2:5-16 from Danby, *The Mishnah* (e-copy)

Amram Tropper, "Tractate Avot and early Christian Succession Lists," in Becker and Reed, *Ways That Never Parted*, 159-88 (e-copy)

Daniel Boyarin, "The *Diadoche* of the Rabbis; or, Judah the Patriarch at Yavneh," in Kalmin and Schwartz, *Jewish Culture and Society*, 285-318 (e-copy)

Shaye Cohen, "The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, rabbis and the end of Jewish sectarianism," *HUCA* 55 (1984): 27-53 (in *ATLA*)

Feb 26 - God and Israel

B. Berakot and Ketubbot (Solomon, 5-31, 350-53)
 Schechter, 21-64, 97-115
Book of Legends, 359-64
 Determine Paper Topic

Mar 5 - God and Torah
 Schechter, 116-69
Book of Legends, 403-409, 414

Mar 12 - Literary analysis of legal literature
 Jaffee in Fonrobert and Jaffee, 17-37
 Alexander in Fonrobert and Jaffee, 38-57
 Cohen in Fonrobert and Jaffee, 121-43
 Hezser in Fonrobert and Jaffee, 144-63
 Select Topic for Paper #2

Mar 19 - Midrash: Biblical Interpretation; Sin and Rebellion
 Solomon, 218-26
 Fraade in Fonrobert and Jaffee, 99-120
 Steven Fraade, "Literary Composition and Oral Performance in Early Midrashim," in *Legal Fictions*, 365-79 (e-book)
 Schofer in Fonrobert and Jaffee, 313-35
 Gary Porton, "Rabbinic Midrash," in Neusner, *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, 217-36
 Schechter, 219-63

Apr 9 - Catastrophic events in Jewish history
 ARNA 4; 34 (Goldin, 35-38, 141)
 B. Ta'anit and Gittin (Solomon, 255-61, 389-95)
 Jonathan Klawans, "Josephus, the Rabbis, and Responses to Catastrophe Ancient and Modern," *JQR* 100[ns] (2010): 278-309 (in *ATLA*)
 Robert Goldenberg, "The Destruction of the Jerusalem Temple: Its Meaning and its Consequences," in Katz, *CHJ*, 4.191-205 (e-copy)
 Steven Fraade, "The Temple as a Marker of Jewish Identity Before and After 70 C.E.: The Role of the Holy Vessels in Rabbinic Memory and Imagination," in *Legal Fictions*, 523-54 (e-book)

Apr 16 - Views of History and of Institutional History
 Rubinstein in Fonrobert and Jaffee, 58-74
 Schwartz in Fonrobert and Jaffee, 75-96
 Gafni in Fonrobert and Jaffee, 295-312
 Haim Lapin, "The Origins and Development of the Rabbinic Movement in the Land of Israel" in Katz, *CHJ* 4.206-29

Apr 23 - Ascent Literature and the Future
 Solomon, 291-98, 510-17
 B. Sanhedrin 96b-99a (e-copy)
 Swartz in Fonrobert and Jaffee, 198-221

Lawrence Schiffman, "Messianism and apocalypticism in Rabbinic texts," in Katz, *CHJ*, 4:1053-72 (e-copy)

Karin Hedner-Zetterholm, "Elijah and the Messiah as Spokesmen of Rabbinic Ideology," in *The Messiah in Early Judaism*, 57-78 (e-copy)

Apr 30 - Paper Presentations

May 7 - Paper Presentations

May 14 - The Kingdom of God
Schechter, 65-115

May 18 - Revised Final Research Paper is due

May 21 - Final Essay is due

7. REFERENCES FOR READINGS:

Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds. *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007

Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. *The Jewish Study Bible*. 2d ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014 (JSB). Reference

Bialik, Hayim Nahman, and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky, eds. *The Book of Legends: Sefer Ha-Aggadah. Legends from the Talmud and Midrash*. Trans. William G. Braude. New York: Schocken, 1992. Reserve Shelf

Collins, John J. and Daniel C. Harlow (eds.). *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010 (*EDEJ*). Reference and Reserve

Danby, Herbert. *The Mishnah. Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974. Reserve

Fraade, Steven. *Legal Fictions*.

Goldin, Judah. *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990. Reserve.

Kalmin, Richard and Seth Schwartz, *Jewish Culture and Society Under the Christian Roman Empire*. Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion. Leuven: Peeters, 2003. Reserve

Katz, Steve T. ed. *Cambridge History of Judaism*. Vol. 4: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006 (*CHJ*). Reserve

-----, *The Impact of the Holocaust on Jewish Theology*. New York: New York University Press, 2005. Reserve

Neusner, Jacob (ed.), *Judaism in Late Antiquity*. Vol. 1, Pt. 1. Boston: Brill, 2001. Reserve

Sanders, E. P. *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*.

Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977. Reserve

Zetterholm, Magnus, ed. *The Messiah in Early Judaism and Christianity*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007

8. ADDITIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY:

a. Reference Books and Handbooks:

Ben-Eliyahu, Eyal, Yehuda Cohn, and Fergus Millar, eds. *Handbook of Jewish Literature from Late Antiquity, 135-700 CE*. Oxford University Press, 2013

Collins, John J. and Daniel C. Harlow (eds.). *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010 (EDEJ)-Reference and on Reserve Shelf

Mielziner, Moses. *Introduction to the Talmud*. New York: Bloch, 1968

Skolnick, Fred, ed. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference/Keter, 2007

Strack, H. L., and Günter Stemberger. *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*. Trans. Markus Bockmuehl. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991 (2d ed. 1996)

b. Text editions:

Blackman, Philip. *Mishnayoth*. 7 vols. 2d ed. New York: Judaica Press, 1963-64

Danby, Herbert. *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with introduction and brief explanatory notes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967

Epstein, Isidore, ed. *The Babylonian Talmud*. 35 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1935-48

Freedman, H. and Maurice Simon, ed. *Midrash Rabbah*. 10 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1939

Goldwurm, Hersh. *Talmud Bavli: The Schottenstein Edition*. 72 vols. The Art Scroll Series. New York: Mesorah, 1990-2005.

Neusner, Jacob, ed. *The Babylonian Talmud*. 22 vols. Peabody: Henrickson, 2005. Also CD.

----- . *The Talmud of the Land of Israel*. 35 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982-94

----- . *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew*. 6 vols. New York: Ktav, 1977-1986

Steinsaltz, Adin. *The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition*. 21 vols. New York: Random House, 1986- (There are copies of individual tracts of both Talmuds as well as many other Midrashim available in English and/or German translation. For listings, see Stemberger and Ben-Eliyahu/Cohn/Millar.)

c. Selected significant volumes (note the volumes of selected readings mentioned above) :

Abrams, Judith Z. *The Talmud for Beginners: Vol. 1, Prayer*. Northvale: Jason Aaronson, 1991

Alexander, Elizabeth Shanks. *Transmitting Mishnah: The Shaping Influence of Oral Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006

Bakhos, Carol, ed. *Current Trends in the Study of Midrash*. JSJSupp 106. Leiden: Brill, 2006

Berlin, Adele, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*. 2d ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011

Boyarin, Daniel. *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990

Carson, D. A., Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Siefrid, eds. *Justification and Variegated Nomism, Vol. 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*. WUNT 2:140. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001

Davies, W. D., and Louis Finkelstein, eds. *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Vol. 2: The Hellenistic Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989

Finkelstein, Louis. *Akiba: Scholar, Saint and Martyr*. Philadelphia: JPS, 1936

----- . *The Pharisees: The Sociological Background of their Faith*. Philadelphia: JPS, 1962

Fishbane, Michael A. *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)

Ginzberg, Louis. *Legends of the Jews*. Trans. Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin. 7 vols. Philadelphia: JPS, 1968 New edition, 2003

Goldin, Judah. *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990

- Goodman, Martin and Philip Alexander, eds. *Rabbinic Texts and the History of Late Roman Palestine*. New York/Oxford: published for the British Academy by University Press, 2010
- Greengus, Samuel. *Laws in the Bible and the Early Rabbinic Collections: The Legal Legacy of the Ancient Near East*. Eugene: Cascade, 2011
- Halivni, David Weiss. *Midrash, Mishnah, and Gemara: The Jewish Predilection for Justified Law*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986
- . *Peshat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991
- Hammer, Reuven. *The Classic Midrash: Tannaitic Commentaries on the Bible*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995
- Hauptman, Judith. *Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman's Voice*. Boulder: Westview, 1998
- Hereford, R. Travers. *Pirke Aboth, The Ethics of the Fathers: Sayings of the Fathers*. New York: Schocken, 1962
- Hezser, Catherine, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010
- Holtz, Barry W., ed. *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts* (New York: Summit Books, 1984)
- Horbury, William, William D. Davies and John Sturdy, eds. *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Vol. 3: The Early Roman Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)
- Ilan, Tal. *Integrating Women into Second Temple History*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001
- Jaffee, Martin S. *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE - 400 CE*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001
- Jacobs, Irving. *The Midrashic Process*. CUP, 2008
- Kadushin, Max. *The Rabbinic Mind*. 3d ed. New York: Bloch, 1972
- Kugel, James L. *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as it was at the Beginning of the Common Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998)
- Lapin, Hayim. *Rabbis as Romans: The Rabbinic Movement in Palestine, 100–400 C.E.* New York: Oxford, 2012
- Millgram, Abraham E. *Jewish Worship*. 2d ed. Philadelphia: JPS, 1975
- Montefiore, C. G., and H. Lowe. *A Rabbinic Anthology*. New York: Schocken, 1974
- Moore, George Foot. *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958)
- Mulder, Martin Jan, ed. *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading, and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*. CRINT 2:1. Assen: Van Gorcum/Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988
- Neusner, Jacob. *First Century Judaism in Crisis*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1975
- . *How Important Was the Destruction of the Second Temple in the Formation of Rabbinic Judaism?* Lanham: University Press of America, 2006
- . *Judaism in the Matrix of Christianity*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991
- Rivkin, Ellis. *A Hidden Revolution: The Pharisees' Search for the Kingdom Within*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1978
- Rosenfeld, Ben-Zion. *Torah Centers and Rabbinic Activity in Palestine, 70–400 C.E.: History and Geographic Distribution*. Leiden: Brill, 2010
- Rubenstein, Jeffrey L. *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003
- . *Rabbinic Stories*. New York: Paulist, 2002

- . *Stories of the Babylonian Talmud*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010
- Safrai, Shmuel, ed. *The Literature of the Sages*. CRINT 2:3:1-2. Assen: Van Gorcum/Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987, 2006
- Saldarini, Anthony J. *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan (Abot de Rabbi Nathan) Version B*. SJLA 11. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975
- Samely, Alexander. *Forms of Rabbinic Literature and Thought: An Introduction*. OUP, 2007
- . *Rabbinic Interpretation of Scripture in the Mishnah*. OUP, 2002
- Sanders, E. P. E. P. *Sanders, Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies*. London: SCM/Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1990
- . *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE - 66 CE*. London: SCM/Valley Forge, Trinity Press International, 1994
- Schiffman, Lawrence H. *From Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism*. Hoboken: Ktav, 1991
- Schürer, Emil. *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C. - A.D. 135)*. Rev. ed., Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar and Martin Goodman. 4 vols. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973-87.
- Schwartz, Seth. *Imperialism and Jewish Society: 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001
- Skolnik, Fred, ed. *Encyclopedia Judaica*. 22 vols. 2d ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference/Keter, 2007
- Sommer, Benjamin. *Jewish Concepts of Scripture*. New York: NYU Press, 2012
- Steinsaltz, Adin. *The Essential Talmud*. Trans. Chaya Galai. New York: Basic Books, 2006 (orig. 1976)
- Stern, David, ed. *The Anthology in Jewish Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004
- Stern, David. *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991
- Tropper, Amram. *Wisdom, Politics and Historiography: Tractate Avot in the Context of the Graeco-Roman Near East*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004
- Urbach, Ephraim E. *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*. Trans. Israel Abrahams. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1975
- Zahavy, Tzvee. *The Mishnaic Law of Blessing and Prayers: Tractate Berakhot*. BJS 88. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987
- Zeitlin, Solomon. *The Rise and Fall of the Judaean State*. 2d ed. Philadelphia: JPS, 1968
- Zetterholm, Karin Hedner. *Jewish Interpretation of the Bible: Ancient and Modern*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012

9. PROPOSED TOPICS FOR PAPER:

- Joḥanan ben Zakkai
- Rabbi Aqiba
- Hillel the Elder
- Shammai
- Rabban Gamaliel II
- Judah ha-Nasi
- Honi the Circle-Drawer
- Hanina Ben Dosa
- The Bar Kokba revolt and its significance

Synagogue
 Sanhedrin
 Pharisees
 Sadducees
 Rabbi
 House of Study
 Roman Government and its authorities
 Hellenistic-Roman culture in the Talmud
 Portrayal of Christianity and/or Jesus
 Gentiles
 Women
 Marriage
 Holiness
 Purity
 Art
 Temple
 Liturgy
 The Sabbath
 Messianism
 Am Ha-aretz (people of the land)
 Ritual baths - Miqvaot
 Yavneh (Yabneh-Jamnia)

10. CLASSROOM POLICIES:

Please see Student Handbook for sections providing policy details on the following:

ADA—MTSO seeks to remove barriers to inclusion in its learning communities. Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs at the beginning of the semester. Please contact the Director of Student Services to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Any accommodation must be agreed upon prior to the due date of the affected course requirement.

Class attendance—Regular attendance is expected in all classes. During unavoidable absences, students are responsible for missed work. An excessive number of absences may result in grade reduction or course failure, despite successful completion of all assigned work. In most cases, a student will not be allowed credit for a course if he or she is absent for 25% of the class sessions. As it relates to blended courses, students may not be allowed credit if they are absent for 25% of class meetings or if 25% of online course work is not completed. Use of Skype or similar technology is not a substitute for attendance in class.

Electronic Devices—Turn mobile devices off or “vibrate only” during class. Browsing the Internet or engaging in email or social network conversations during class is discouraged. Instructors have the right to impose grading penalties for disruptions due to electronic devices.

Human Subjects Research—Research by MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel that collects non-public information from and/or about living individuals or contemporary organizations/groups for purposes of publication or public presentation (including class assignments) must be approved by the Human Subjects Research Committee. MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel should err on the side of caution and apply for committee approval of any activity that may fit this description.

Inclusive Language—In accordance with MTSO’s policy on inclusive language, all students are expected to use gender inclusive or gender neutral language in their writing and in the classroom discussions when referring to human beings.

Incompletes—To receive a course grade of Incomplete, students must submit the petition form from the Registrar with all signatures to the Dean's Office before the last day of regularly scheduled classes. See Student Handbook for intensive term deadlines. Any petition submitted without a due date for outstanding work will be denied. If work is not complete by the due date the Registrar will record the grade of F for the course.

Pass/Fail—The decision to exercise this option must be made before the end of the second week of the course by completing the appropriate form available through the Registrar. To receive a grade of "pass" the student must do at least the equivalent of C minus work in the course.

Plagiarism—Plagiarism is a serious matter of academic, professional, and personal integrity. All students at the masters level are expected to understand the requirement to provide attribution when the work of others is used. Students are also expected to be familiar with and understand the school's policy on Academic Misconduct found in the Student Handbook. If students have questions about attribution, citation, and how to avoid plagiarism they should consult the course instructor, the school's writing instructor, or library staff. When in doubt it is better to provide attribution even if one is uncertain about the proper citation form. Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct that results in disciplinary actions per the Student Handbook that may range from failing an assignment or course to expulsion.

Updated 8/13/14