

# Classical Rabbinic Literature in Translation

Spring 2019

ILS/Jewish Studies/Literature in Translation/Religious Studies 328

## ***Instructor:***

Professor Jordan D. Rosenblum

Office: 230 Bradley Memorial Building

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

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## ***Course Hours:***

Monday and Wednesday 8:00-9:15 am

## ***Course Credits:***

3 credits, Traditional Carnegie Definition (Option A): This class meets for two 75-minute class periods each week over the spring semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, studying, etc.) for at least 2 hours out of classroom for every class period. The syllabus includes additional information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

## ***Prerequisite(s):***

This course assumes **no** prior knowledge of Hebrew, Aramaic, the Talmud, 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 (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 rabbinic topics. Using drinks and drinking 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 Learning Outcomes:***

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. Students wishing to use laptops must: (1) sit in the first three rows of the classroom; and (2) refrain from using them for anything besides taking class notes. **There is a one-strike policy for using laptops for anything else. Should the instructor observe you playing on the internet, etc., you will no longer be allowed to use your laptop in class for the remainder of the semester.** 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. Cellphones must be turned off and put away during class. *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. Readings are to be completed for the class day upon which they appear on the syllabus. 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 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 18* and due at the beginning of class on **March 4**. 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) Take-home Midterm: 30%. There will be one midterm, due by **10:00 am on March 27**. It may address any of the readings and class discussions up to that point.

(5) Take-home Exam: 35%. A take-home exam, due by **9:25 pm on May 10**, will be cumulative and will address issues covered in the readings and class discussions.

(6) 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\*\***

***Academic Integrity:***

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in the University of Wisconsin-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or

suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to [studentconduct.wiscweb.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/](http://studentconduct.wiscweb.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/).

***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.

***Grade Scale:***

A: 94-100      AB: 88-93      B: 83-87      BC: 77-82      C: 70-76  
D: 60-69      F: 0-60

***Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:***

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty and/or instructors of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty and/or instructors will work either directly with the student or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

Further information, and the source of this statement, can be found at:

<http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/faculty/syllabus.php>

***Diversity and Inclusion:***

The University of Wisconsin-Madison's Institutional Statement on Diversity: "Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world." <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>

***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: Canvas (readings marked with \*)

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

***Class Schedule:***

January 23	Introduction
January 28	Hebrew Bible: Introduction and Overview <b>Reading:</b> <i>EJ</i> , 19-28; <i>TT</i> , 16-40
January 30	Second Temple Judaism: Overview and the Concept of Hellenism <b>Reading:</b> <i>EJ</i> , 9-13, 28-35; <i>TT</i> , 121-125, 151-169, 192-202, 211-218
February 4	Second Temple Judaism II: Qumran <b>Reading:</b> <i>EJ</i> , 139-148; <i>TT</i> , 354-356; <i>Community Rule</i> *
February 6	Second Temple Judaism III: Christianity <b>Reading:</b> <i>EJ</i> , 152-158; <i>TT</i> , 407-414
February 11	The Tannaim: Introduction <b>Reading:</b> <i>EJ</i> , 35-45, 158-164; <i>TT</i> , 523-526, 537-547; “Survey of the Literature and History of the Rabbinic Movement”*
February 13	The Tannaim II: What is the Mishnah? <b>Reading:</b> <i>EJ</i> , 230-240; <i>TT</i> , 497-503; <i>TRL</i> , 121-143
February 18	Mishnah Workshop I <b>Reading:</b> <i>Mishnah Hullin</i> chapters 1-6* <i>Short Paper Topics Distributed</i>
February 20	Mishnah Workshop II <b>Reading:</b> <i>Mishnah Hullin</i> chapters 7-12*
February 25	The Relationship Between the Mishnah and Tosefta <b>Reading:</b> <i>TT</i> , 547-553; Rosenblum reading*
February 27	Tannaitic Midrashim <b>Reading:</b> <i>TT</i> , 553-559; Yadin, <i>Scripture as Logos</i> , 48-79*
March 4	No Class: Work on your paper <b>Paper due at 10:00 am</b>
March 6	Amoraim: Introduction <b>Reading:</b> <i>TT</i> , 619-627

March 11	Amoraim: The Palestinian Talmud (Yerushalmi) <b>Reading:</b> <i>TT</i> , 627-632; <i>TRL</i> , 144-163
March 13	Amoraim: The Babylonian Talmud (Bavli) <b>Reading:</b> <i>TT</i> , 603-617, 633-638; <i>TRL</i> , 165-197
March 16-March 24	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>
March 25	Amoraic Midrash Collections <b>Reading:</b> <i>Genesis Rabbah</i> 38:13*; <i>TT</i> , 638-647
March 27	No class: Midterm <b>Take-home Midterm Exam Due by 10:00 am</b>
April 1	Rabbinic Topics: Biblical Interpretation <b>Reading:</b> “Biblical Interpretation”*
April 3	Rabbinic Topics: Social Boundaries <b>Reading:</b> “Social Boundaries”*
April 8	Rabbinic Topics: Gender and Sexuality <b>Reading:</b> “Gender and Sexuality”*
April 10	Rabbinic Topics: Magic, Idolatry, and Illicit Religious Practice <b>Reading:</b> “Magic, Idolatry, and Illicit Religious Practice”*
April 15	Rabbinic Topics: Human and Non-Human Animals <b>Reading:</b> Berkowitz, “Animal”*
April 17	Rabbinic Topics: Sabbath, Festivals, and Holidays <b>Reading:</b> “Sabbath, Festivals, and Holidays”*
April 22	Rabbinic Topics: Prayer and Ritual <b>Reading:</b> “Prayer and Ritual”*
April 24	Rabbinic Topics: Ritual Purity <b>Reading:</b> “Ritual Purity”*
April 29	Rabbinic Topics: Health and Hygiene <b>Reading:</b> “Health and Hygiene”*
May 1	Conclusions
May 10	<b>TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE AT 9:25 pm</b>