

**COLLEGE OF THE HUMANITIES
RELIGION PROGRAM: RELI 3120A**

RABBINIC TEXTS

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From dietary regulations to marriage laws, Jewish customs are filtered through ancient Rabbinic understandings of – and additions to – biblical traditions. This course examines the literary corpus of the classical Rabbinic period in order to understand how this group shaped the religion now known as Judaism.

The course begins in the 6th century BCE, to examine a changing historical landscape and its influences on the development of Jewish biblical interpretation in a post-biblical, multi-cultural world. The Hebrew Bible is the foundational text of Judaism, but it required interpretation in order to be adapted to the world beyond its original time and place. This is the ongoing thread that links the various Judaisms that emerged in that early period, and leads eventually to the creation of the sages, scholars and rabbis who produced the Rabbinic texts that still sit at the core of Judaism today.

We will study this development mainly by reading primary sources, to understand the ideas and methods reflected in the Rabbinic texts produced between 70-640 CE, and how they expressed and became normative Judaism.

Our focus will be on the interaction between text and context, as we examine the methods by which the Hebrew Bible was reinterpreted by the early Rabbis, and the Rabbinic texts were in turn reinterpreted by subsequent generations in a dialogue that continues to the present day.

NOTE: As with any course that pursues the academic study of religion, we examine all texts and contexts from a **secular, scholarly perspective**. The nature of the material is theological, but our task as scholars is to view it academically, to discuss it without being attached to any particular theological interpretation, and yet to respect the fact that the theological interpretations and the beliefs they entail are of great importance to many.

Course Objectives:

In this course, students will learn:

- How academics think, present, and research scholarly information on theological and religious topics;
- An historical overview of the formation of Rabbinic Judaism, from its origins in the biblical period to the present day;
- To critically evaluate primary source texts from a variety of historical periods against their social, cultural, religious, and political contexts;
- To perceive threads in the history of ideas that are common among Western religions and specific to Judaism;
- How Rabbinic Judaism has maintained itself, adapted, diversified, and survived historically to the present;
- How Rabbinic Judaism “works,” i.e. how its methods and goals are observable in action in determining proper Jewish ritual, ethical, and religious behaviours.

EVALUATION:

1. Six 2-page weekly reading response papers 7% each = 42% (see below)
2. Project proposal (8%) Class presentation (15%) and Final Paper write-up (20%) = 43% (see below)
3. Class participation = 15% (attendance at every class is mandatory; missing more than 2 classes without proper documentation will significantly impact your grade)

Papers:

You will write six short reading responses throughout the semester, worth 7% each, on the assigned weekly readings for weeks three through eight on the syllabus. The papers will be typed, double-spaced, two pages long, and stapled. They are due at the beginning of the Thursday class each week (but should cover assigned readings from Tuesday and Thursday that week), and *will not be accepted later than that*. They will be your own reflections on the readings, and you will not do any outside research in order to write them. Good reading responses are thoughtful, critical reflections on the assigned readings. They demonstrate that the readings were carefully and thoroughly carried out, yet they are not reports or summaries of the readings, but rather constitute your own thoughts on the texts you read.

Research Project:

You will each be responsible for researching and presenting on a topic of your choice, drawn from a list of possible topics (sign-up sheet will be circulated in class). Each topic will represent an issue in Judaism for which various solutions have been posited, based on reviews of Rabbinic texts by current Jewish Rabbinic authorities.

Proposal: After doing some preliminary research, you will hand in a 1-page project proposal outlining your topic, your research questions, and a preliminary list of resources. This is worth 8% of your course mark. It is due Nov. 1 at the beginning of class – you will lose 1% for every day that it is late. Although it is only worth 8%, if you do not hand in a project proposal, your final paper will not be accepted.

Presentation: Each presenter will distribute representative primary source readings to the class and present modern Jewish approaches to these topics based on the primary source readings. Presentations will be 15-20 minutes long and include an advanced, but not necessarily complete, understanding of the material under investigation along the lines of the final paper requirements listed below.

Paper: A final write-up of your presentation material (both research and reflection) will be due on Dec 22 as a “take-home” exam, and should be between 8-10 pages, plus a works cited list. The final paper should not have a cover page. The final project paper should include: an introduction of the topic and its importance; a historical overview of approaches to it (as relevant); the ways in which historical cultures and societies have affected the importance of the topic and the proposed solutions; how the history of Rabbinic texts has bearing on modern solutions/approaches to this topic; differences among modern Jewish denominations in solutions/approaches to this topic and the reasons for such differences, based on an understanding of the doctrinal diversity among them.

For all written assignments, please see the important note on academic integrity below.

REQUIRED READING:

1. *Texts and Traditions: A Source Reader for the Study of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism* by Lawrence H. Schiffman (available at the bookstore) – on schedule as “TT”
2. Online selections as noted below
3. Selections from the Bible <http://www.biblestudytools.com> (choose NRSV translation)
4. There is a fantastic interactive timeline of Jewish history, including a section devoted to Jewish texts, available at <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/a-timeline-of-jewish-texts/>. I strongly recommend that you consult this periodically in order to keep the general chronology of events and texts straight as we work through the material.

SCHEDULE:

- Th Sept 8** **Introduction to the course**
- Sept 13 & 15** **The Foundation of the Hebrew Bible**
TT pp. 7-11; 25-39
- Sept 20 & 22** **The Persian Period**
- **Early Midrash and Jewish Law; Canonization of the Hebrew Bible**
Tues: Ezra & Nehemiah TT pp. 65-70; 80-92; 93-96; 103-105
Thurs: Interpretation of Torah TT pp. 106-116 and -
http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Halakhah/halakhic texts_101.shtml
<http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Midrash/Midrash Aggadah/How Midrash Functions.shtml>
- Sept 27 & 29** **Hellenism**
- **Jewish texts renewed, reformed, resisted – and rebellious; the Maccabees; Philo; Roman attitudes toward Jews**
Tues: TT pp. 121-125; 143-146; 151-169;
Thurs: 171-175; 184-186; 192-206; 209-211; 218-221; 228-230
- *NO CLASS OCT 4***
- Oct 6** **The Hasmonean Dynasty**
Thurs: 231-234; 253-266 and
http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Talmud/talmud_101.shtml
<http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Talmud/Mishnah.shtml>
- Oct 11 & 13** **Sectarianism**
- **Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes; Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and the Dead Sea Scrolls**
Tues: TT pp. 231-234; 266-299; 301-305;
Thurs: 306-310; 321-329; 333-336; 359-360; 363-367
- Oct 18 & 20** **The Jewish-Christian Schism**
- **Rome & Herod; the Rise of Christianity; Destruction of the Temple; Synagogues & Rabbis; Josephus; Bar Kokhba**
Tues: TT pp. 369-372; 407-427;
Thurs: 429-434; 442-446; 453-457; 464-469; 470-479; 491-495
- Oct 25 & 27** **FALL BREAK – NO CLASSES**
- Nov 1 & 3** **Mishnah & Midrash**
- **Oral Torah; Tannaitic Academies; Halakhah & Aggadah; Byzantines & Babylonians**
Tues: **Project Proposal due at the beginning of class** + READ TT pp. 497-503 and:
<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Talmud/Talmud/Studying Talmud/Tannaim and Amoraim.shtml>
<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ritual/Jewish Practices/Halakhah Jewish Law .shtml>
Thurs: TT pp. 508-514; 518-519; 522-528; 531-543
- Nov 8 & 10** **Talmud**
- **Amoraic Schools; Two Talmuds; Liturgy**
Tues: TT pp. 554-559; 561-565; 571-574; 612-617; 619-622; and
<http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Talmud/Talmud/Studying Talmud/First Page.shtml>
Thurs: 619-622; 623-624; 633-653; 666-668

Nov 15 & 17

Rabbinic Judaism – the Life of Torah

- **Religious Rituals & Rites of Passage; Mysticism; Geonim & Responsa**

Tues: TT p. 671-677; 679-682; 690-692; 694-697; 699-700; and

[http://myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ritual/Jewish Practices/Halakhah Jewish Law /Sources and Development/Rabbinic Responsa.shtml](http://myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ritual/Jewish_Practices/Halakhah_Jewish_Law_/Sources_and_Development/Rabbinic_Responsa.shtml)

http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Halakhah/Geonic_Period/Responsa.shtml

Thurs: 715-723; 731-735; 737-744; 749-752

Nov 22

Rabbinic Texts and Their Application – Shabbat

Guest Lecture: Rabbi Steve Garten

READING TBA

Nov 24

Rabbinic Texts and Their Application – Gender & Judaism

<http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/tannaitic-literature-inclusion-of-women>

[http://myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Issues/Gender and Feminism/Traditional Views/Rabbinic.shtml](http://myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Issues/Gender_and_Feminism/Traditional_Views/Rabbinic.shtml)

[http://myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Issues/Gender and Feminism/Gender and Feminism 101.shtml](http://myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Issues/Gender_and_Feminism/Gender_and_Feminism_101.shtml)

[http://myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Issues/Gender and Feminism/Feminist Thought/Theology/Blu Greenberg.shtml](http://myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Issues/Gender_and_Feminism/Feminist_Thought/Theology/Blu_Greenberg.shtml)

[http://myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Issues/Gender and Feminism/Feminist Thought/Theology/Rachel Adler.shtml](http://myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Issues/Gender_and_Feminism/Feminist_Thought/Theology/Rachel_Adler.shtml)

Nov 29 & Dec 1

Presentations

Dec 6 & 8

Presentations

Final Papers (“take-home exam”) due Dec 22, emailed by 4pm

REGULATIONS COMMON TO ALL HUMANITIES COURSES

COPIES OF WRITTEN WORK SUBMITTED

Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in “*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*”

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course

GRADING SYSTEM

Letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100 (12)	B = 73-76 (8)	C - = 60-62 (4)
A = 85-89 (11)	B- = 70-72 (7)	D+ = 57-59 (3)
A- = 80-84 (10)	C+ = 67-69 (6)	D = 53-56 (2)
B+ = 77-79 (9)	C = 63-66 (5)	D - = 50-52 (1)

F	Failure. Assigned 0.0 grade points
ABS	Absent from final examination, equivalent to F
DEF	Official deferral (see “Petitions to Defer”)
FND	Failure with no deferred exam allowed -- assigned only when the student has failed the course on the basis of inadequate term work as specified in the course outline.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

The last date to withdraw from **FALL TERM** courses is **DEC. 9, 2016**. The last day to withdraw from **FALL/WINTER (Full Term)** and **WINTER** term courses is **APRIL 7, 2017**.

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at: carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by **Nov. 11, 2016** for the Fall term and **March 10, 2017** for the Winter term. For more details visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/

PETITIONS TO DEFER

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a **FINAL** assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply a deferral of examination/assignment. If you are applying for a deferral due to illness you will be required to see a physician in order to confirm illness and obtain a medical certificate dated no later than one working day after the examination or assignment deadline. This supporting documentation must specify the date of onset of the illness, the degree of incapacitation, and the expected date of recovery. If you are applying for a deferral for reasons other than personal illness, please [contact](#) the Registrar’s Office directly for information on other forms of documentation that we accept. Deferrals of a final assignment or take home, in courses without a final examination, must be supported by confirmation of the assignment due date, for example a copy of the course outline specifying the due date and any documented extensions from the course instructor.

Deferral applications for examination or assignments must be submitted within **5 working days** of the original final exam.

ADDRESSES: (Area Code 613)

College of the Humanities 520-2809	300 Paterson
Greek and Roman Studies Office 520-2809	300 Paterson
Religion Office 520-2100	2A39 Paterson
Registrar's Office 520-3500	300 Tory
Student Academic & Career Development Services 520-7850	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre 520-6608/TTY 520-3937	501 Uni-Centre
Writing Tutorial Service 520-6632	4 th Floor Library
Learning Support Service 520-2600 Ext 1125	4 th Floor Library