

**Professor:** Shawna Dolansky  
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**Office Hours:** Tues 11:30-1:00

**Class Hours:** Tues 8:30-11:30  
**Class Location:** Dunning Hall rm 11

*The religious institutions produced by the Jews from the second to the seventh centuries. This course will explore in critical fashion the principal areas of rabbinic activity including: topics on jurisprudence, philosophy, social and political thinking, the role of tradition and scriptures.*

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 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE to understand 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, both Jewish and non-Jewish, 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.

### **EVALUATION:**

1. Seven 2-page weekly reading response papers 5% each = 35% (see below)
2. Class presentation (10%) and write-up (20%) = 30% (see below)
3. Class participation = 10% (attendance at every class is mandatory; missing classes without proper documentation will significantly impact your grade)
4. Cumulative exam November 12<sup>th</sup> in class = 25%

### **Papers:**

You will write seven short reading responses throughout the semester, worth 5% each, on the assigned weekly readings for weeks two 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 class for which the readings were assigned, 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.

### **Class Presentation:**

You will each be responsible for researching and presenting on a topic of your choice, drawn from a list of possible topics (TBA). Students researching the same topic will coordinate so that while their presentation is made jointly, each person in the group will focus individually on a specific area to explain to the class. Each topic will represent an issue in Judaism for which various solutions have been posited, based on reviews of ancient texts by current Jewish Rabbinic authorities. You will choose your topic and thereby join a group. Each group will distribute representative primary source readings to the class and present modern Jewish approaches to these topics based on the primary source readings. A final individually-prepared write-up of your presentation material (both research and reflection) will be due on the last day of class and should be between 12-15 pages, including a works cited list. The final paper should not have a cover page.

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/Jewish-History-Timeline/>. 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. I will also make a timeline of Rabbinic Literature and Glossary of Rabbinic Terms available on Moodle.

### **SCHEDULE:**

- 9/10 Introduction to the course**
- **The Foundation of the Hebrew Bible**
- 9/17 The Persian Period**
- **Early Midrash and Jewish Law; Canonization of the Hebrew Bible**
- TT pp. 65-70; 76-79; 86-93; 96-99; 103-105; 111-120
- [http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Halakhah/halakhictexts\\_101.shtml](http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Halakhah/halakhictexts_101.shtml)
- [http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Midrash/Midrash\\_Aggadah/How\\_Midrash\\_Functions.shtml](http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Midrash/Midrash_Aggadah/How_Midrash_Functions.shtml)
- 9/24 Hellenism**
- **Jewish texts renewed, reformed, resisted – and rebellious; the Maccabees; Philo; Roman attitudes toward Jews**
- TT pp. 121-125; 143-146; 151-169; 171-175; 184-186; 192-206; 209-211; 218-221; 228-230
- [http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Talmud/talmud\\_101.shtml](http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Talmud/talmud_101.shtml)
- <http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Talmud/Mishnah.shtml>
- 10/1 Sectarianism**
- **Hasmonean Intrigue; Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes; Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and the Dead Sea Scrolls**
- TT pp. 231-234; 266-299; 301-310; 321-329; 333-336; 359-360; 363-367

- 10/8**            **The Jewish-Christian Schism**
- **Rome & Herod; the Rise of Christianity; Destruction of the Temple; Synagogues & Rabbis; Josephus; Bar Kokhba**
- TT pp. 369-372; 407-427; 429-434; 442-446; 453-457; 464-469; 470-479; 491-495
- 10/15**            **Mishnah & Midrash**
- **Oral Torah; Tannaitic Academies; Halakhah & Aggadah; Byzantines & Babylonians**
- [http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Talmud/Talmud/Studying\\_Talmud/Tannaim\\_and\\_Amoraim.shtml](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Talmud/Talmud/Studying_Talmud/Tannaim_and_Amoraim.shtml)  
<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Talmud/Mishnah.shtml>  
[http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ritual/Jewish\\_Practices/Halakhah\\_Jewish\\_Law\\_.shtml](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ritual/Jewish_Practices/Halakhah_Jewish_Law_.shtml)
- TT pp. 497-503; 508-513; 518-519; 522-528; 531-543; 554-559; 561-565; 571-574; 612-617
- 10/22**            **Talmud**
- **Amoraic Schools; Two Talmuds; Liturgy**
- [http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Talmud/Talmud/Studying\\_Talmud/First\\_Page.shtml](http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Talmud/Talmud/Studying_Talmud/First_Page.shtml)
- TT pp. 619-622; 623-624; 633-653; 666-668
- 10/29**            **Rabbinic Judaism – the Life of Torah**
- **Religious Rituals & Rites of Passage; Mysticism; Geonim & Responsa**
- Guest Lecture: Rabbi Barry Schlesinger*
- [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](http://myjewishlearning.com/texts/Rabbinics/Halakhah/Geonic_Period/Responsa.shtml)
- TT pp. 671-677; 679-682; 690-692; 694-697; 699-700; 715-723; 731-735; 737-744; 749-752
- 11/5**            **Case Study in 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)
- 11/12**            **In-Class Exam**
- 11/19**            **Presentations**
- 11/26**            **Presentations**
- Final Papers Due at the beginning of class*

**Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is constituted by the five core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (see [www.academicintegrity.org](http://www.academicintegrity.org)). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the “freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas” essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the [Senate Report on Principles and Priorities](#)). Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts & Science Calendar on the Arts & Science website (see [Academic Regulations](#)), and from the instructor of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen's. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.

**Copyright of Course Materials:** Course material distributed in-class and online is copyrighted and is for the sole use of students registered in RELS 228. This material shall not be distributed or disseminated to anyone other than students registered in these courses. Failure to abide by these conditions is a breach of copyright, and may also constitute a breach of academic integrity under the University Senate’s Academic Integrity Policy Statement.

**Course Completion:** Students wishing to negotiate a course grade of “Incomplete” (IN) must submit a written request to the instructor before the end of *classes* and must provide documentary evidence to support the request (as per the “disability policy,” below). Failure to do so will result in the submission of a final grade based on work completed by the end of the course.

**Disability Policy:** If you have a physical, psychological, or learning disability and might require accommodations in this course, please contact immediately Queen's Health Counseling and Disability Services (HCDS), located in the LaSalle Building, 146 Stuart Street (613-533-6467), in order to receive documentation identifying needs requiring accommodation by the instructor (<http://www.queensu.ca/hcds/>).

**Due Dates:** All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the stated day. No assignments will be accepted after that date unless negotiated, with documentary evidence to support the request (e.g., a medical note; a funeral notice, etc.), *before* the initial due date.

**Electronic Devices in the Classroom:** It is important that we maintain an atmosphere of respect and focus on learning in the classroom. Since the use of electronic devices in the classroom can be disruptive to both the instructor and to other students, the use of these devices may be restricted at the discretion of the instructor. Cell phones must be turned off or in silent mode. The use of **laptops and tablets** is restricted to note-taking and following up further information on course material at the behest of the instructor. The use of **recording devices** for lectures is not allowed unless you have requested and been given the express permission of the instructor of the course. **Non-course related use of electronic devices** (e.g. playing games, watching movies, social networking and texting), including smartphones, tablets and laptops, is particularly disruptive to others in the classroom; if it is more important to you to be engaging in these pursuits during class time than participating in the class lecture/discussion, please do not come to class. If you are engaged in such pursuits you may be asked by the instructor or by other students to cease doing so or otherwise leave the classroom.

**Format of Assignments:** Assignments must be submitted as a hard copy and not via email except in exceptional circumstances and when negotiated with the instructor beforehand. Please observe all page length restrictions – failure to do so may detrimentally affect your grade on the assignment. Please do not hand in assignments enclosed in a covering or with a title page; just place a staple in the top left corner.

**Grading:** All components of this course will receive numerical percentage marks. The final grade you receive for the course will be derived by converting your numerical course average to a letter grade according to Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale:

Grade	Numerical Course Average (range)	Grade	Numerical Course Average (range)
A+	90-100	C+	67-69
A	85-89	C	63-66
A-	80-84	C-	60-62
B+	77-79	D+	57-59
B	73-76	D	53-56
B-	70-72	D-	50-52
		F	49 and below