

Great Books of Judaism
AMES/JewSt151/ComLit.57/RelSt27
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Syllabus and Course-Plan

The plan for this course is straight-forward: the semester is divided into four units, one for each of the classic books we will be studying: The Talmud, Rashi's Biblical Commentary, the Siddur or Prayerbook, and the Passover Haggadah.

TEXTS

Bulkpack, available at Campus Copy, 3907 Walnut, tel: 386-6268.

All readings from the Bulkpack are marked on the syllabus by an asterisk (*).

The following required books are available at the Penn Book Center on Walnut near 38th St.

Martin S. Jaffee, Early Judaism (Prentice-Hall)

Reuven Hammer, Entering Jewish Prayer (Schocken)

P. Birnbaum, ed. Daily Prayerbook (Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem) (Hebrew Publishing Comp.)

Nahum Glatzer, ed. The Schocken Passover Haggadah (Schocken)

Jaffee and Hammer will also be on reserve in Rosengarten.

You will also need a Hebrew Bible for the course. Any translation will do, but I have ordered TaNaKH (Jewish Publication Society) at the Bookstore as the recommended text.

All readings are in English translation.

Study-Notes and Questions: For each unit of the course, I will hand out study-notes and questions that will provide background and explanatory comments on the readings and that will direct your attention to various matters and passages to which you should pay special attention while preparing for class. Please use these notes. The readings are often difficult, sometimes confusing, and I will try to clarify as much as I can so as to spare you unnecessary confusion.

I would also appreciate any feedback you give me on these notes, especially if you feel there is something unclear that requires further elaboration.

N.B. Because of the Jewish holidays, there will no classes on Sep. 22 (Rosh Hashana); Oct. 6 (Sukkot); and Oct. 13 (Simhat Torah). There will be one make-up class on Wed. evening, Sept. 23, specific time and place to be arranged. On Friday, November 20th, specific time to be arranged, we will have a special class at the Rare Book Collection of the Center for Judaic Studies to look at medieval manuscripts and early printed editions of the books we are reading in the class.

REQUIREMENTS

1) Familiarity with readings and participation in class discussion, including some brief, informal class presentations to be assigned.

2) Papers: 2 short (5 pp.) papers, and a longer (10 pp.) paper due by the end of the finals period. Further details about the paper will be discussed in class.

This class is associated with WATU and fulfills half the Writing requirement. You are required to meet with our WATU consultant, Leah Kaplan-Samuels, who will explain more about the program to you.

3) The class will have a listserv; please check it regularly for announcements from me. How active the listserv is will depend largely on you, but MINIMALLY each student will be asked to write one or two summaries of class(es) (to be assigned in advance) to be posted on the listserv. Otherwise, I encourage students to use the listserv to extend class discussion beyond the class, to ask questions, record objections and responses, make jokes about the class and instructor, etc.

Course-Plan

1) Sep. 10-- Introductory Class

I. The Talmud

2) Sep. 15-- Historical Overview of the Talmudic Period

Jaffee, EARLY JUDAISM, 25-53.

*Babylonian Talmud, Gittin 55b-56b

3) Sep. 17-- Torah, Oral Torah, Talmud

Jaffee, 54-91, 213-223

Exodus 19:1-20:18

*Some Passages in Rabbinic Lit. about the Oral Torah

*"The Talmudic Page" (22pp. of pictures)

Recommended: *S. Lieberman, "The Publication of the Mishnah"

Check out "A Page of Talmud" image map on Eliezer Segal's home page,
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal>

SEP. 22-- NO CLASS: ROSH HASHANAH

4) MAKE-UP: Sep. 23-- The Mishnah

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

*Mishnah Berakhot, Chaps. 1-9 (from The Mishnah, ed. Jacob Neusner)

*R. Goldenberg, "Talmud," 129-43.

5) Sep. 24-- A First Taste of Talmud

*Goldenberg, 143-72

N.B. Following the Goldenberg essay, I have included in the bulkpack 1) an outline of the Talmudic passage from Berakhot that Goldenberg discusses and a second translation of the passage that you might find easier to read.

6) Sep. 29-- A Second Look at Talmud

*Mishnah Baba Qamma, Chap. 8

Exodus 21:12-27, esp. 22-25; Leviticus 24:17-22; Numbers 35:30-34; Deuteronomy 25:1-3

*Baba Kamma 83b ("The Law of Talionis")

*"Dialogue Between a Philosopher and a Talmudist"

7) Oct. 1-- A Third Talmudic Passage

*Mishnah Baba Metsia, Chap. 4

*Bava Metsia 58b-60b (from the Steinsaltz Talmud)

OCT. 6-- NO CLASS: SUKKOT

8) Oct. 8-- Bava Metsia continued

OCT. 13-- NO CLASS: SIMHAT TORAH

9) Oct. 15 -- Bava Metsia continued

*S. Lieberman, Appendix 1 on Bath Kol

II. Biblical Commentary

10) Oct. 20-- Historical Background

*Heritage, 81-122

*Edward Greenstein, "Medieval Bible Commentaries," 213- 223

11) Oct. 22-- *Greenstein, 224-57

12) Oct. 27-- The Binding of Isaac

Genesis 12-28:9, especially Chap. 22

Deuteronomy 12:31 and 18:10

*J. Tigay, "Child Sacrifice...."

13) Oct. 29-- *Genesis 22 with Rashi's Commentary

14) Nov. 3-- *Rashi, continued

15) Nov. 5-- *Rashi, continued

*Commentary of Rashbam on Gen. 22, 94-100

*Commentary of Sforno on Gen. 22, 134-137

*N. Sarna, "The Meaning of the Akedah" and "The Akedah in Jewish Tradition"

*Greenstein, please re-read.

III. The Siddur

16) Nov. 10-- Prayer and the Prayerbook

R. Hammer, Entering Jewish Prayer, 75-99

*Seder R. Amram Gaon, 3-7, 36-55

Jaffee, 164-91

Daily Prayerbook, Table of Contents; 14-20.

17) Nov. 12-- The Structure of the Prayer Book and Types of Worship

Hammer, 3-26, 39-49, 100-120

Daily Prayerbook, 28-36; 52-60; 67-71; 66-70.

18) Nov. 17-- The Shema'

Hammer, 121-55

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Siddur, 71-82; 191-200

Jaffee, 200-207

19) Nov. 19-- A. The 'Amidah

Hammer, 156-97

Siddur, 81-958

Jaffee, 191-200

B. The Kaddish

Hammer, 281-85

Siddur, 49-50; compare 45-46; 69-70; and 134 (bottom)-135

20) Nov. 24-- Sabbath Prayers

Hammer, 212-249

Siddur, 309-51; 421-30; 463-75; 515-23.

21) Dec. 1-- Modern Judaism and the Prayerbook

*A. Millgram, "Jewish Worship in Modern Times, from Jewish Worship, 569-99

Siddur, 462-75

*Additional Service, in Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book, 137-45

*"Morning Service for Weekdays III and IV," in Union Prayerbook, 338-70

IV. The Passover Haggadah

22) Dec. 3-- The Passover Haggadah and Its Background

The Passover Haggadah, 19-121

Exodus 12:1- 13:16

Mishnah Pesahim 10:1-8, in Haggadah, vii-ix.

Glatzer, Introduction, 5-15

23) Dec. 8-- Sources of the Haggadah

1) Haggadah, 27-29 (Four Rabbis in Bnei Berak); compare *Mishnah Berakhot 1:5

2) Haggadah, 28-35 (Four Sons); *Midrash Mekhilta on Exod. 13:14

3) Deut. 26:1-11; Haggadah, 39-53 (Midrash on Deut. 26:5-8)

24) Dec. 10-- The Haggadah as a Book

*Y.H. Yerushalmi, "On the Passover Haggadah"

Various illustrations in the Haggadah