

**RS 744 - STUDIES IN RABBINIC JUDAISM: RABBINIC VIEWS OF "THE OTHER"**

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 Term II, 2007 - Mondays, 9:30 a.m., UH 122

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This seminar will explore the dynamics of early Rabbinic self-definition by focusing on images of non-Jews and non-Rabbinic Jews in the classical Rabbinic literature. Traditional accounts of Jewish history depict Rabbinic Judaism as forged in self-imposed isolation from its surrounding Greco-Roman, Christian, and Persian environments. Recent correctives, however, have begun to shed doubt on such activities, exploring evidence for Rabbinic interactions with non-Jews and non-Rabbis. In this seminar, we will survey this evidence with an eye to interreligious interactions in Roman Palestine and Sassanid Babylonia. We will consider laws about interactions with "pagans" as well as tales about Rabbinic encounters with "heretics," philosophers, emperors, matrons, Christians, and others. Special attention will be given [1] to the question of whether Rabbinic literature attests any non-Rabbinic forms of Judaism and [2] to the question of how the depiction of Jesus and Christianity speaks to the changing relationships between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity. By means of this focus, this seminar will introduce students to the main texts of classical Rabbinic Judaism, the tools for their study, and recent trends in research. No knowledge of Hebrew and no background in Rabbinic Judaism are thus required.

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**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**


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- *Seminar participation* - 25% - Perhaps needless to say, students are expected to complete the assigned readings for each seminar and be prepared to engage in discussion about them. To facilitate the latter, each student should type up a brief (i.e. one or two paragraphs) response to the week's primary source readings - thoughts, ideas, points of interest, critiques, questions - to be circulated via email before each class to the instructor and other seminar participants. This is meant to be an informal forum and an opportunity freely to explore and express the ideas raised by the readings, so students will not be graded on the *content* of these responses. However, the *prompt submission* of these responses (i.e., prior to every meeting = at least an hour before) is considered to be an important element part of participation in the seminar and will be graded as such.
- *Presentations* - 35% - Each student will orally present one brief (15-20 min.) summary and critical review of a recent book of special relevance to the study of Rabbis, to be chosen from the list below. In addition, students will be asked to give 3 informal mini-presentations (5 min.) summarizing scholarly articles.
- *Final paper* - 40% - Each student is expected to submit a final paper, 15 to 20 pages in length, on a topic related to the classical Rabbinic literature. Choice of topic should be determined in consultation with the instructor.

Readings will be provided for xeroxing or circulated electronically. Students interested in further work in Rabbis are encouraged to purchase H. L. Strack and G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, Minneapolis, 1991.

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**BOOKS FOR PRESENTATION**


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1. Catherine Heszer, *The social structure of the rabbinic movement in Roman Palestine* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1997).

2. Christine Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Inter-marriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002).
3. David Novak, *The image of the non-Jew in Judaism: An historical and constructive study of the Noahide Laws* (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1983).
4. Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).
5. Marc Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996),
6. Galit Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life: Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature*, trans. Batya Stein (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000)
7. P. Schafer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007)
8. I. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman (University of California Press, 2006).

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### SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

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#### January 15<sup>th</sup> – Introduction: Reading Rabbinic literature

##### *Secondary sources*

- H. L. Strack and G. Stemberger, “The Historical Framework,” “The Rabbinic School System,” “The Rabbis,” and “The Languages of Rabbinic Literature,” in *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 1-14, 56-107.
- R. Goldenberg, “Talmud,” and Barry Holtz, “Midrash,” in *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*, ed. Barry W. Holtz (New York, Summit Books, 1984), 129-212.
- Seth Schwartz, “Historiography on the Jews in the 'Talmudic Period': 70-640 CE,” in *Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, ed. M. Goodman (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), 79-114.

##### *Article presentations*

1. Robert Goldenberg, “Law and Spirit in Talmudic Religion,” in *Jewish Spirituality*, volume 1: *From the Bible through the Middle Ages*, ed. A. Green, New York, 232-52.
2. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 33-75.
3. George Foot Moore, “Christian authors on Judaism,” *Harvard Theological Review* 14 (1921) 197-254.

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### TANNAITIC TRADITIONS ABOUT NON-JEWS AND NON-RABBIS

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#### January 22<sup>nd</sup> – Rabbis and other Jews

*m. Sotah* 9.15; *m. Sanhedrin* 10.1-3; *m. Horayot* 3.8; *t. Sanhedrin* 8.7; *t. Sanhedrin* 13.1-6; *b. Berakhot* 47b (on *am ha-aretz*); *b. Pesachim* 49a-b (on *am ha-aretz*)

##### *Secondary sources*

- S. J. D. Cohen, “The Rabbi in Second-Century Jewish Society,” *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, volume 3: *The Early Roman Period*, ed. William Horbury, W. D. Davies, and John Sturdy, Cambridge, 1999, 922-90.
- Lee Levine, “The Sages and the Synagogue,” in *Galilee in Late Antiquity* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1992), 201-22.

*Book review presentation:* Catherine Heszer, *The social structure of the rabbinic movement in Roman Palestine* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1997).

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January 29<sup>th</sup> - "Idolaters"

*m. Avodah Zarah* [all]; *t. Avodah Zarah* [all]

*Primary sources*

- Strack and Stemberger, "Mishnah," 45-55.
- Catherine Hezser, "Classical Rabbinic Literature," in *Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, 115-140.
- S. J. D. Cohn, "Those Who Say They Are Jews and Are Not: How do you know a Jew in Antiquity when you see one?" in *Beginning of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 25-68.

*Article Presentations*

1. Moshe Halbertal, "Coexisting with the Enemy: Jews and Pagans in the Mishnah" in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Cambridge, 1998), 159-72.
2. T. Grossmark, "Subscribed Content Laws Regarding Idolatry in Jewelry as a Mirror Image of Jewish-Gentile Relations in the Land of Israel during Mishnaic and Talmudic Times," *JSQ* 12 (2005) 213-26.
3. Raphael Loewe, "Gentiles as Seen by Jews after 70 CE," *Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 3, 250-66.

*Book Review Presentation:* Christine Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002).

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February 5<sup>th</sup> - "The Nations"

*t. Sotah* 8.6-7; *Mekhilta de R. Ishmael Ba-Hodesh* 5; *Sifre Deuteronomy* 32:9, *Pisqa* 312; *b. Sanhedrin* 56b (on Noahite laws; cf. *t. Avodah Zara* 8.4)

*Secondary sources*

- Strack and Stemberger, "Halakhic Midrashim," *Introduction*, 247-75.

*Article presentations*

1. Marc Hirshman, "Rabbinic universalism in the second and third centuries," *Harvard Theological Review* 93,2 (2000) 101-115.
2. Eugene Mihaly, "A Rabbinic Defense of the Election of Israel: An Analysis of *Sifre Deuteronomy* 32:9, *Pisqa* 312," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 35 (1964) 103-143 {ATLAS}
3. A. Yadin, "Rabban Gamliel, Aphrodite's Bath, and the Question of Pagan Monotheism," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 96 (2006)

*Book review presentation:* D. Novak, *The image of the non-Jew in Judaism: An historical and constructive study of the Noahide Laws* (New York: E. Mellen Press, c1983).

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\*\*\*February 12<sup>th</sup> - No seminar\*\*\*

February 19<sup>th</sup> – “Heretics,” Sadducees, and Samaritans

*m. Berakhot* 9.5; *m. Demai* 5.9, 6.1; *m. Shebiith* 8.10; *m. Eruvim* 6.1-3; *m. Shekalim* 1.5; *m. Rosh ha-Shanah* 2.1-2; *m. Hagigah* 2.1; *m. Gittin* 1.5; *m. Niddah* 4.1-3; *m. Yadaim* 4.4-8

## Secondary sources

- Richard Kalmin, “Christians and Heretics in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity,” *Harvard Theological Review* 87.2 (1994) 155-169.

## Article presentations:

1. Naomi Janowitz, “Rabbis and their Opponents: The Construction of the ‘Min’ in Rabbinic Anecdotes,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 449-62.
2. Reuven Kimelman, “*Birkat Ha-Minim* and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity,” in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, vol. 2, ed. E.P. Sanders (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1981), 226-244.
3. Burt Visotzky, “Prolegomenon to the Study of Jewish-Christianities in Rabbinic Literature,” *AJS Review*, 14 (1989), 47-70

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**GENTILES & CHRISTIANS IN THE TALMUDIM, CLASSICAL MIDRASHIM, AND BEYOND**

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February 26<sup>th</sup> – Christianity and Rabbinic self-definition

## Secondary sources

- S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society 200 BCE to 640 CE* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 162-175
- Daniel Boyarin, “Justin Martyr Invents Judaism,” *Church History* 70 (2001): 427-61
- M. Goodman, “Palestinian Rabbis and the Conversion of Constantine to Christianity,” in *Talmud Yerushalmi II*, pp. 1-9.

## Article presentations:

1. S. J. D. Cohen, “A Virgin Defiled: Some Rabbinic and Christian Views on the Origin of Heresy,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 36 (1980): 1-11.
2. M. Simon, “Christians in the Talmud,” in *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (AD 135-425)*, trans. H. McKeating (London: Littman Library, 1996), pp. 179-201.

*Book review presentation:* Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

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 March 5<sup>th</sup> – Talmud Yerushalmi

*y. Avodah Zarah* 1-3

## Secondary sources

- S. Schwartz, “Rabbis and Patriarchs on the Margins” and “Jews or Pagans? The Jews and the Greco-Roman Cities of Palestine,” “Christianization,” in *Imperialism and Jewish Society* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001), 103-28, 129-61, 179-202.

*Article presentations*

1. S. Schwartz, "Gamliel in Aphrodite's Bath: Palestinian Judaism and Urban Culture in the Third and Fourth Centuries" in *Talmud Yerushalmi I*, 203-17.
2. Y. Eliav, "The Roman Bath as a Jewish Institution: Another Look at the Encounter between Judaism and the Greco-Roman Culture", *JSJ* 31 (2000) 416-454.

March 12<sup>th</sup> – **Talmud Yerushalmi**

y. *Avodah Zarah* 4-5

*Secondary sources:*

- P. Schäfer, "Jews and Gentiles in Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture III*, ed. P. Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 335-54.
- Martha Himmelfarb, "The Mother of the Messiah in the Talmud Yerushalmi and Sefer Zerubbabel," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture III*, ed. P. Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 369-89.

*Article presentations*

1. M. Jaffee, "The Oral-Cultural Context of the Talmud Yerushalmi: Greco-Roman Rhetorical Paideia, Discipleship, and the Concept of Oral Torah," in *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality, and Cultural Diffusion*, ed. Y. Elman and I. Gershoni, New Haven, 2000, 27-57 (notes, 58-73).
2. C. Heszer, "Interfaces between Rabbinic Literature and Graeco-Roman Philosophy," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture III*, ed. P. Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), pp. 161-88.
3. A. Lehnardt, "The Samaritans (Kutim) in the Talmud Yerushalmi: Constructs of the 'Rabbinic Mind' or Reflections of Social Reality?" in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture III*, ed. P. Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), pp. 139-60.

March 19<sup>th</sup> – **Genesis Rabbah**

*GenR* 1:9; 4:4; 6:3; 8:8-9; 11:6; 13:3; 19:4; 25:1; 39:11; 44:5, 50.3; 52:5; 63:8; 64:10; 75:5; 98.9; 99.8

*Secondary sources*

- Maren Niehoff, "Creatio ex nihilo theology in Genesis Rabbah in light of Christian exegesis," *Harvard theological review* 99 (2006) 37-64.
- A. Y. Reed, "Reading Augustine and/as Midrash: Genesis 6 in *Genesis Rabbah* and the *City of God*," in *Midrash and Context*, eds. L. Teugels and R. Ulmer, Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, forthcoming, pp. 75-131.

*Book review presentation:* Marc Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996).

March 26<sup>th</sup> – **Other midrashim**

*Deuteronomy Rabbah* 2.13; 2.34; *Song of Songs Rabbah* 6.5; 7.8; *Numbers Rabbah* 11:36; *Lamentations Rabbah* 1:50; *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 2:23

*Secondary sources:*

- Burton Visotzky, "Trinitarian Testimonies" and "Anti-Christian Polemic in Leviticus Rabbah," *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literature*, Tübingen, 1995, pp. 61-74, 93-105.

*Book review presentation:* Galit Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life: Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature*, trans. Batya Stein (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000)

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April 2<sup>nd</sup> – **Talmud Bavli**

*b. Pesachim* 87b, 118b; *b. Yevamot* 63a; *b. Sotah* 35b; *b. Sanhedrin* 4a; 38b (on minim), 39a-b; 105a (on gentiles); *b. Hullin* 92a; 13b (on gentiles); *b. Avodah Zarah* 2a-3b (on Gentiles); *b. Hagigah* 15a-b (on Elisha ben Abuya)

*Secondary sources*

- Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, "Elisha ben Abuya: Torah and the Sinful Sage" and "Torah, Gentiles, and Eschatology," in *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1999), 64-104, 212-42.
- Daniel Boyarin, "A Tale of Two Synods: Nicaea, Yavneh, and Rabbinic Ecclesiology," *Exemplaria* 12 (2000): 21-62.

*Article presentations*

1. Christine Hayes, "Displaced Self-Perceptions: The Deployment of Minim and Romans in B. Sanhedrin 90b-91a," in *Religious and Ethnic Communities in Later Roman Palestine*, ed. Hayim Lapin (Bethesda: University Press of Maryland, 1998), 249-89.
2. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, "Elitism: The Sages and the Amei Ha-aretz," in *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 2003), 123-42.
3. S. J. D. Cohn, "The Rabbinic Conversion Ceremony," in *Beginning of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 198-238.

*Book review presentation:* P. Schafer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007)

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April 9<sup>th</sup> – **Sefer Zerubavel and the Toledot Yeshu**

Sefer Zerubavel, trans. Martha Himmelfarb + selections from the *Toledot Yeshu* – <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~hummm/Topics/JewishJesus/toledoth.html>

*Articles for presentation:*

1. R. S. Abusch, "Rabbi Ishmael's Miraculous Conception: Jewish Redemption History in Anti-Christian Polemic," in *Ways that Never Parted*, 307-343.
2. D. Biale, "Counter-History and Jewish Polemics Against Christianity: The *Sefer toldot yeshu* and the *Sefer zerubavel*," *Jewish Social Studies* 6.1 (1999) 130-145 + D. Biale, "Historical Heresies and Modern Jewish Identity," *Jewish Social Studies* 8 (2002), pp. 112-132.

*Book review presentation:* I. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman (University of California Press, 2006)

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