

**Fall 2009**

**Instructor Information:**

Rabbi Dr. Robert A. Daum

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**Course Meeting Times:** Thursdays, 9:00 a.m. – 11:50 a.m.

**Introduction to Course Content:**

The aim of this course is to read gender (female, male, and variations on these categories already found within the classical sources) in a selection of late antique Rabbinic texts that circulated between ‘the land of Israel’ (Roman/Byzantine Palestine) and ‘Babylonia’ (Sassanian Iran). In the course of exploring the diverse ways in which gender manifests itself in the canonical literary anthologies of classical Rabbinic literature (Mishnah, Midrash, Talmud), students will (1) begin to develop a basic understanding of the history of the classical Rabbinic period, (2) begin to acquire basic research skills necessary for working with classical Rabbinic sources in translation, and (3) consider how applying a ‘modern’ analytical category like gender to classical Rabbinic texts enriches and complicates our understanding of the development of Rabbinic Judaism, as well as our appreciation of the interplay between gender and religion in our own time.

**Pre-requisites:** HB500, HB600

**Competencies:**

In completing this course a student will

- Be able to define briefly a set of basic terminology (i.e., 10 – 15 terms) required for *beginning* study of rabbinic literature
- Demonstrate research skills for working with classical rabbinic sources
- Be able to articulate an understanding of some of the varieties of (en)gendered characters, identities, roles, motifs, narratives, and legal questions represented in classical Rabbinic sources
- Be able to review and evaluate a bibliographic resource informed by aspects of gender theory and textual characteristics of rabbinic literature
- Be able to describe aspects of gender depicted in a classical Rabbinic source
- Be able to articulate some of the complications of applying contemporary gender categories and concepts to pre-modern religious text traditions
- Be able to explain how contemporary discussions of gender might be productively complicated by how genders are represented in a Rabbinic text

- Be able to articulate some important differences between biblical and post-biblical, rabbinic representations of gender

**Format:**

The course consists of two principal segments. The first segment entails lectures and discussions regarding gender(s) in rabbinic literature (along with necessarily rudimentary introductions to rabbinic culture, histories, literary collections, concepts and terminology). The second segment consists of student seminar presentations on research topics selected by students in consultation with the professor. Students may work in teams or pairs; a portion of some class sessions is dedicated to research group work.

**Expectations of the Student:**

- *Attendance, preparation for, and participation* in all class sessions, according to VST policies
- As assigned, prepare summaries of weekly readings in advance of class
- Presentation of a seminar report on a selected topic: provide a written summary of the presentation not to exceed 500 words or two typed pages to be distributed to all seminar participants on the day of the presentation; prepare discussion questions; give a 30 minute oral presentation followed by a 30 minute discussion)
- Major research paper on chosen topic (length: 3750 – 4500 words / 15 –18 typed pages, double spaced in 12 point font with standard margins)

**Differentiating MDiv/MATS Requirements:**

The “Expectations” noted above apply to MDiv students. MATS students have an additional requirement: their major research paper must be 4500 – 5750 words / 18 – 23 pages.

**Required Reading: Course Reader.** See Timetable for sequence and precise reading assignments. (Primary source texts taken from classical rabbinic literature will be distributed in class by the instructor.)

**Note: Weekly assigned reading averages 100 pages.**

**Course Timetable:**

Course readings are to be read before the class for which they are listed in preparation for lecture and discussion.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<b>17 September</b>	<b>Gender &amp; Rabbinic Literature Introduction I</b>	

Date	Theme	Readings
24 September	Gender & Rabbinic Literature Introduction II	Boyarin, "Gender," in <i>Critical Terms</i> , 117-135; Fonrobert, "Regulating the Human Body," 270-294
1 October	Gender & Rabbinic Literature Introduction III	Carrigan et al., "Toward a New Sociology," 99-118; Satlow, "Try to be a Man," 19-40; Baskin, "Distinguishing Differences," 1-43 "Constructing Eve," 44-64
8 October	Gender and Ethnicity	Kessler, "Let's Cross that Body," 329-359; Peskowitz, "Spinning Tales," 91-120; Kraemer, "The Other as Woman," 121-144; Satlow, "They Abused Him Like a Woman," 1-25
15 October	Historiography	Wegner, "The Image and Status of Women in Classical Rabbinic Judaism," 73-100
22 October		Boyarin, "Against Rabbinic Sexuality," 131-146; Lev, "How the `Aylonit Got Her Sex," 297-316
29 October	Reading Break	
5 November		Biale, "Law and Desire in the Talmud," 33-59; Satlow, "Rabbinic Views on Marriage, Sexuality, and the Family," 612-626
12 November		Ilan, "Women in Jewish Life & Law," 627-646
19 November		Ilan, "Daughters of Israel: Weep for Rabbi Ishmael," 15-34; Fonrobert, "The Weeping Rabbi," 56-83
26 November		Boyarin, "Masochism," 81-126
3 December		Boyarin, "Rabbis and their Pals," 127-150

**Assignments:**

- 1. Weekly preparation:** As assigned, prepare a summary of readings for class discussion; you need not turn in these summaries, which should assist you in contributing to seminar discussions.
  - a. Summarize the author's method and main argument.
  - b. Evaluate the argument critically in light of other readings, lectures, and class discussion.
  - c. Suggest one or two contemporary applications and implications, bearing in mind problems of reductive comparativism (anachronism, 'parallelomania', and so on, which will be discussed in class).
- 2. Research seminar presentation:**
  - a. Meet (at least once) with professor to select and focus seminar reading(s) and topic.
  - b. Prepare and lead seminar on your selected topic. If you wish to assign any additional reading(s) beyond the already assigned reading(s) designated for the day of your presentation, distribute these for presentation at least one week before class.
  - c. Presentation of a seminar report on a selected topic: provide a written summary of the presentation not to exceed 500 words or two typed pages to be distributed to all seminar participants on the day of the presentation; prepare discussion questions; give a 30 – 45 minute oral presentation followed by a 30 – 45 minute discussion or small group activity)
- 3. Major research paper** on chosen topic.
  - a. The major research paper topic need not be the same as the seminar presentation topic, but you are welcome to integrate these assignments.
  - b. Length: 3750 – 4500 words / 15 – 18 typed pages, double spaced in 12 point font with standard margins.
  - c. Paper will show knowledge of how contemporary notions of gender analysis might be applied to a classical rabbinic text, as well as an articulation of a contemporary, present-day application or implication.
  - d. You are *encouraged, but not required*, to submit a non-binding, tentative outline, bibliography, and thesis statement six weeks prior to the due date for general feedback in an appointment with the professor.
  - e. **DUE: 12 Noon on Friday, Dec. 18.**

**Differentiating MDiv/MATS Requirements:**

The "Expectations" noted above apply to MDiv students. MATS students have an additional requirement: their major research paper must be 4500 – 5750 words / 18 – 23 pages.

**Weekly reading assignments, which average under 100 pages per week, are excerpted from the following:**

Baskin, J. R. (2002). Midrashic women: formations of the feminine in rabbinic literature. Hanover, University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press.

Biale, D. (1992). Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America. New York, Basic Books.

Boyarin, D. (1997). "Jewish Masochism: On Penises and Politics, Power and Pain". Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man. Berkeley, University of California Press: 81-126.

Boyarin, D. (1997). "Rabbis and their Pals: Rabbinic Homosociality and Lives of Women". Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man. Berkeley, University of California Press: 127-150.

Boyarin, D. (1998). "Gender". Critical Terms for Religious Studies. M. C. Taylor. Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press.

Boyarin, D. (2007). "Against Rabbinic Sexuality: Textual Reasoning and the Jewish Theology of Sex". Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body. G. Loughlin. Malden, Mass., Blackwell Publishing: 131-146.

Carrigan, T., B. Connell, et al. (2002). "Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity". The Masculinity Studies Reader. R. Adams and D. Savran. Malden, Mass., Blackwell Publishing, Ltd.: 99-118.

Fonrobert, C. E. (2001). "When the Rabbi Weeps: On Reading Gender in Talmudic Aggadah." Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues 4: 56-83.

Fonrobert, C. E. (2007). "Regulating the Human Body: Rabbinic Legal Discourse and the Making of Jewish Gender". The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature. C. E. Fonrobert and M. S. Jaffee. New York, Cambridge University Press: 270-294.

Ilan, T. (2001). "'Daughters of Israel, Weep for Rabbi Ishmael': The Schools of Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Ishmael on Women." Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues 4(Fall 5762 / 2001): 15-34.

Ilan, T. (2006). "Women in Jewish life and law". The Cambridge History of Judaism. Vol. 4. The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period. S. T. Katz. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 627-646.

Kessler, G. (2005). "Let's Cross that Body When We Get to It: Gender and Ethnicity in Rabbinic Literature." Journal of the American Academy of Religion: 329-359.

Kraemer, R. S. (1994). "The Other as Woman: An Aspect of Polemic among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World". The Other in Jewish Thought and

History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity. L. J. Silberstein and R. L. Cohn. New York, New York University Press: 121-144.

Lev, S. (2007). "How the *Aylonit* Got Her Sex." AJS Review **31**(2): 297-316.

Peskowitz, M. (1994). "Spinning Tales: On Reading Gender and Otherness in Tannaitic Texts". The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity. L. J. Silberstein and R. L. Cohn. New York, New York University Press: 91-120.

Satlow, M. L. (1994). "'They abused him like a woman': homoeroticism, gender blurring, and the rabbis in late antiquity." Journal of the History of Sexuality **5**(1): 1-25.

Satlow, M. L. (1996). "'Try to Be a Man": The Rabbinic Construction of Masculinity." The Harvard Theological Review **89**(1): 19-40.

Satlow, M. L. (2006). "Rabbinic views on marriage, sexuality, and the family". The Cambridge History of Judaism. Vol. 4. The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period. S. T. Katz. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 612-626.

Wegner, J. R. (1991). "The Image and Status of Women in Classical Rabbinic Judaism". Jewish Women in Historical Perspective. J. Baskin. Detroit, Wayne State University Press: 73-100.

**Recommended (not required) reading for further research:**

1. Baker, Cynthia. *Rebuilding the House of Israel: Architectures of Gender in Jewish Antiquity*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002.
2. Boyarin, Daniel. "Rabbinic Resistance to Male Domination: A Case Study in Talmudic Cultural Poetics." Pages 118 – 141 in *Interpreting Judaism in a Postmodern Age*, ed. Steven Kepnes. New York: New York University Press, 1996.
3. Brown, Peter. *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.
4. Burrus, Virginia. *Conceiving Manhood in Late Antiquity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
5. Gafni, Isaiah. "Babylonian Rabbinic Culture." Pages 223 – 265 in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed. David Biale. New York: Schocken Books, 2002.
6. Grossman, Avraham. *Pious and Rebellious: Jewish Women in Medieval Europe*. Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2004.
7. Hezser, Catherine. *The social structure of the rabbinic movement in Roman Palestine*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997.
8. Hezser, Catherine. "Classical Rabbinic Literature." Pages 115-140 in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, eds. M. Goodman, J. Cohen and D. Sorkin. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.
9. Hauptman, Judith. *Rereading the rabbis : a woman's voice*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998.

10. Irshai, Oded. "Confronting a Christian Empire; Jewish Culture in the World of Byzantium." Pages 181 – 221 in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed. David Biale. New York: Schocken Books, 2002.
11. Jacob, Walter and Moshe Zemer, eds. *Gender Issues in Jewish Law: Essays and Responsa*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001.
12. Katz, Jonathan Ned. The Invention of Heterosexuality. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
13. Kosman, A. and A. Sharbat. "'Two Women Who Were Sporting with Each Other': A Reexamination of the Halakhic Approaches to Lesbianism as a Touchstone for Homosexuality in General." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 75 (2005): 37-73.
14. Kuefler, Mathew. *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
15. Meyers, Eric M. "Jewish Culture in Greco-Roman Palestine." Pages 135 – 179 in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed. David Biale. New York: Schocken Books, 2002.
16. Strack, Hermann L. and G. Stemberger. *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.