

**CAS RN 337 / GRS RN 637/ STH TX 837  
Gender and Judaism**

**Spring 2014**

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**Office Hours: Tuesday 10-11:30, Wednesday 1:30-3, and by appointment**



**Course Description:** In this course, we will explore the role of gender and sexuality in Judaism and Jewish experience, historically and in the present. Subjects will include constructions of masculinity and femininity, attitudes toward (and uses of) the body and sexuality, textual traditions, and the gendered nature of religious practice and religious authority.

**Course Requirements For RN 337:** The course will be conducted as a seminar, and students are expected to attend and participate in every class. There will be a class participation grade based on attendance, regular journal reflections on our Blackboard Learn site, participation in discussion, and the level of preparedness and involvement in the course. All reading is to be completed before the class for which it is assigned. Written work for the class will include the Blackboard journal, two short analytical papers, and a twelve-page final research paper on some aspect of gender and Jewish experience in the present. The grading for the course will be as follows: 30% for class participation (incl. journal reflections), 20% for each of the short papers, 30% for the final paper.

If you know that you will miss class because you are sick or are away from school for an emergency, please try to let me know ahead of time, if possible, via phone or e-mail. More than three unapproved absences during the semester may result in a lowered overall grade in addition to an unsatisfactory class participation grade.

**Course Requirements for RN 637 and STH TX 837:** In addition to mastering the material required of undergraduates, graduate students are also expected to familiarize themselves with current scholarship in the field and to develop a critical understanding of the relevant issues in scholarship. Additional reading for graduate students includes two articles [to be posted to [Learn](#)] and any two books from the graduate reading list [also to be posted to [Learn](#)].

Graduate students will write three- to four-page reviews of the two additional books and will be asked to make brief (5-10 minute) presentations to the class summarizing the work and placing it within the context of the

general course syllabus. Grad students will also be responsible for the same short papers as the undergraduates, but they will be judged by a standard appropriate to graduate level work. The final paper will be fifteen pages, and I will expect substantive attention to theoretical, methodological, and/or historiographical issues. The grading for the course will be as follows: 25% for class participation, 5% for each of the reviews, 20% for each of the short papers, 25% for the final paper.

## **Assignments:**

[Paper I](#)

[Paper II](#)

[Final Paper](#)

**Expectations of Integrity:** All students should familiarize themselves with the Boston University [Academic Conduct Code](#) or [College of Arts and Sciences Graduate Academic Conduct Code](#) as appropriate and adhere to it. Please see also my [plagiarism policy](#).

**Students with Disabilities:** Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact [Disability Services](#) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. If you suspect that you may have an undiagnosed disability that is interfering with your success in your coursework, please come see me and I will help direct you to the appropriate resources at BU.

**Religious Observance:** University policy is that students have the right to be excused from class for the observance of religious holidays. However, it is your responsibility to notify faculty ahead of time and to arrange to make up any work you might miss. If you plan to miss class for this reason, you must let me know at the beginning of the semester.

## **Required Texts:**

Lori Hope Lefkowitz, *In Scripture: The First Stories of Jewish Sexual Identities* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011) 978-0742547056

David Biale, *Eros and the Jews* (University of California Press, 1997) 978-0520211346

Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (University of California Press, 1997) 978-0520210509

Marvin Lowenthal, trans., *Memoirs of Gluckel of Hameln* (Schocken Books, 1977) ISBN 978-0805205725

Joy Ladin, *Through the Door of Life: A Jewish Journey Between Genders* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2012) 978-0299287344

**Also:** A set of readings on our [Blackboard Learn](#) site. Students should also have access to a copy of the Hebrew Bible, preferably the 1985 JPS translation. I particularly recommend the following version: *The Jewish Study Bible*, Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. (Oxford University Press, 2004)). Two copies of *Tanakh. A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Jewish Publication Society, 1985) are available in the School of Theology Library ( BS895 .J4 1985 ). For an easy to access introduction to Judaism, see Oliver Leaman, *Judaism: An Introduction*, available [online](#) through Mugar.

**Students are expected to bring reading materials to class on the day(s) they are assigned.**

## **Schedule:**

### **Introduction: Gender and Judaism**

**Th January 16** Introduction

### **Women and Men: Gender and Sexuality in the Bible**

**T January 21** Lefkowitz, *In Scripture: The First Stories of Jewish Sexual Identities*, pp 1-30; Genesis 1-3 (in whatever copy of the Bible you are using)

**Th January 23** Lefkowitz, *In Scripture*, 47-63; 85-98

**T January 28** Lefkowitz, *In Scripture*, 129-158

**Th January 30** David Biale, *Eros and the Jews*, 13-32; Genesis 38; Ruth; 1 Samuel 18 and 25; 2 Samuel 11-13

## Rabbinic Culture and the Gendering of Judaism in (Late) Antiquity

**T February 4** Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*, xiii-29

**Th February 6** Boyarin *Unheroic Conduct*, 81-185 (focus your attention on the last two chapters assigned: pp. 127-185)

**T February 11** Judith Romney Wegner, "The Image and Status of Women in Classical Rabbinic Judaism," *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*, Judith Baskin, ed., 68-93 [\[Learn\]](#)

**Th February 13** Class meets at 147 Bay State Rd. Room 202 for Jewish Studies seminar.

**T February 18** Judith Baskin, *Midrashic Women: Formations of the Feminine in Rabbinic Literature*, 1-43 [\[Learn\]](#)

## Gender and Medieval Jewish Culture

**Th February 20** Baskin, *Midrashic Women* 88-118 [\[Learn\]](#)

### Paper I Due

**T February 25** [Judith R. Baskin, "From Separation to Displacement: The Problem of Women in Sefer Hasidim," \*AJS Review\* Vol. 19, No. 1. \(1994\), 1-18](#)

**Th February 27** David Biale, *Eros and the Jews*, 101-120; Elliot Wolfson, "On Becoming Female: Crossing Gender Boundaries in Kabbalistic Ritual and Myth," *Gender and Judaism* (1995) 209-28 [\[Learn\]](#)

## Gender and [Early/] Modernity

**T March 4** *Memoirs of Gluckel of Hameln*, 1-89; 222-277

**Th March 6** Chava Weissler, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women*, 3-35; 89-103 [\[Learn\]](#)

**T March 11** SPRING BREAK

**Th March 13** SPRING BREAK

**T March 18** Guest lecture on Jewish bioethics, halakhah, and transgender/transsexuality by Professor Michael Grodin, BU MED campus. Joy Ladin, *Through the Door of Life: A Jewish Journey Between Genders*

**Th March 20 No Class: Meet Friday, March 21 @ 10:00 instead** for Joy Ladin lecture. Location TBA

Professor Joy Ladin will also be giving a formal lecture through the Program in Scripture and the Arts on Thursday, March 20, 5:30 PM and you are encouraged to attend that as well. Details to be announced.

**Friday March 21** Ladin, *Through the Door of Life*

**T March 25** Iris Parush, *Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society*, xiii-xix; 38-70 [\[Learn\]](#)

**Th March 27** Max Nordau, "Jewry of Muscle," *The Jew in the Modern World*, 547-548; Amos Oz, "The Way of the Wind"; Dan Ben Amotz, "Parent's Day"

**T April 1** Dvora Baron, short stories [\[Learn\]](#). Guest lecture by Professor Abigail Gillman of the Department of Modern Languages Comparative Literature.

## Paper 2 Due

### Contemporary Landscape

**Th April 3** Jewish Observance in a Changing Gender Landscape: Rachel Biale, *Women and Jewish Law*, Forward, Intro and Chapter 1 [\[Learn\]](#)

**T April 8** Gender Inclusiveness and Controversy over "Feminization" in Liberal Judaism: Sylvia Barak Fishman, *Matrilineal Ascent; Patrilineal Descent*, [Intro and Ch 1](#); also essays from *New Jewish Feminism: Probing the Past, Forging the Future*, ed. Elyse Goldstein by Anita Diamant and Rabbi Barbara Penzner [\[Learn\]](#).

Special Guest Speakers: [Anita Diamant](#) and [Rabbi Barbara Penzner](#)

**Th April 10** Niddah: Jonah Steinberg, "From a 'Pot of Filth' to a 'Hedge of Roses' (and Back): Changing Theorizations of Menstruation in Judaism" (1977); Rachel Adler, "Tumah and Tahara" in *The Jewish Woman*, ed. E. Koltun (1976) 63-71 [\[Learn\]](#); Adler, "[In Your Blood Live: Re-visions of a Theology of Purity](#)" *Tikkun* 8: Jan-Feb 1993, 38-41

Visit to Mayyim Hayyim/Living Waters Community Mikveh, Schedule TBD

### **T April 15 Passover No Class**

**Th April 17** Gender/Sexuality Prescriptions (and Proscriptions) in Ultra-Orthodoxy: Watch Youtube video: StyleLikeU Uniforms: The Substance of Hasidic Style [\[Learn\]](#); [Frimet Goldberger on leaving Satmar Hasidism](#); Film: *Trembling Before God* (available to rent or buy cheaply on Amazon instant video; available free with annoying ads on hulu.com; available on dvd through Netflix)

### **T April 22 Passover No Class**

### **Th April 24 SUBSTITUTE MONDAY SCHEDULE: NO CLASS**

**T April 29** Rethinking Gender and Prayer in Orthodoxy: Elana Maryles Sztokman, *The Men's Section: Orthodox Jewish Men in an Egalitarian World*, Intro and Ch 1 [\[Learn\]](#); Yeshivat Maharat

**Th May 1** Gender Crashing/Gender Clashing: *Nashot Hakotel* (Women of the Wall)