

Studies in Post-Biblical Judaism: History and Literature of Rabbinic Judaism

RS-709; McMaster University, Term I, 2003/2004 – Tuesdays, 1:00 to 3:00 pm, UH 122

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This seminar will survey the literary genres, socio-historical contexts, and characteristic beliefs of the classical Rabbinic literature, together with the main research tools, methodologies, and debates in the modern study thereof. Special attention will be given to the continuities and discontinuities between Second Temple Judaism(s) and Rabbinic Judaism, on the one hand, and the profits and pitfalls of comparisons with early Christianity, on the other. Proficiency in Hebrew and/or Aramaic is not required, but arrangements will be made so that those with some background in one or both can study the assigned texts in their original language(s).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- *Seminar participation* - 30% - 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 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. See Schedule of Assignments (please check for updates).
- *Book review* - 30% - 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 Rabbinics. See Schedule of Presentations.
- *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.

MAJOR SECONDARY SOURCES

Below is a list of some of the other books and collected volumes from which secondary sources assignments have been taken. Students who are planning on doing further research in this area are especially encouraged to purchase Strack and Stemberger's introduction.

- H. L. Strack and G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, Minneapolis, 1991.
- B. Holtz, ed., *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classical Jewish Texts*, New York, 1984.
- S. Safrai, ed., *Literature of the Sages*, Philadelphia, 1987.
- M. Chernick, ed., *Essential Papers on the Talmud*, New York, 1994.
- S. J. D. Cohen, ed., *The Synoptic Problem in Rabbinic Literature*, Brown Judaic Studies 326, Providence, R.I., 2000.
- G. H. Hartman and S. Budick, eds., *Midrash and Literature*, New Haven, 1986.
- P. Schäfer, ed., *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Greco-Roman Culture*, 3 volumes (vol. 2 edited with Catherine Hezser), Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 71/79/93, Tübingen, 1997, 2000, 2003.
- M. Goodman et al, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, Oxford 2002.

See also the list of [On-line Resources](#) on this site.

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