

JS 425 (14960) / PHIL 552 (15638)  
JUDAISM RELIGION AND TEXT  
LEC TTH 9:35-10:50  
HUM 277

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### Course Description and Objectives

A survey of rabbinic literatures, specifically the Babylonian *Talmud*, *Midrash*, and *Mishnah*, this course will map how *Talmud* has developed historically, religiously, and aesthetically, with a view to its current reimagination as a literary text of unique spiritual dimensions. By charting *Talmud's* development, students will also experiment with "the exegesis" of *Talmudic* texts and commentaries so that students gain familiarity not only with the rigors of Talmudic logic and reasoning, but also with its hopes, aesthetics, and literary dynamics. We will work through these texts slowly, paying attention to the nuances of each text's style, rhetoric, and purpose.

### Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will have gained experience in several methods of Talmudic interpretation. Learning Outcomes for the course include the following:

- be able to research in translation specific problems, topics, and themes of Rabbinic literature
- recognize important vocabulary particular to the study of Rabbinic texts.
- be familiar with particular examples of Rabbinic texts
- understand key themes in the development of *Talmudic* literatures
- be able to identify differences between Halakhic and Aggadic genres
- be able to analyze discrete examples of Rabbinic literatures
- be able to evaluate the influence of rabbinic *midrashim* on contemporary writers
- compare and contrast perspectives in two rabbinic writers from diverse geographical locations.
- explore the aesthetic and literary values underwriting Rabbinic literatures.

This course is part of two General Education Segment III Clusters, "Jewish Experience" and "Religious Studies." To receive Segment III credit for this course, students must complete cluster requirements as described in the Class Schedule and Bulletin, including the requirement that they have earned 60 units by the end of the semester in which they take the course. Segment III courses are required to include a minimum of 10 pages of writing that will be submitted to and corrected by the professor.

### Texts

#### Required

Any JPS translation of the *Hebrew Bible*.  
*Essential Talmud*. Steinsaltz.  
*Classic Midrash*.  
*Steinsaltz Bava Metziah, Vol 2*. ed. Steinsaltz.

#### Optional

*Nine Talmudic Lectures*. Levinas.  
*Potentialities*. Giorgio Agamben.

\* If you don't have one already, you can purchase either the inexpensive JPS paperback or the Oxford edition from the Bookstore. You can also find a cheap JPS paperback at used bookstores all over the Bay area.

\**Hebrew-English Tanakh Student Bible.*  
(available with the Bookstore)

Some readings will be made available through [ERES](#) and as pdf files.

### Assignments

- |     |   |                                       |
|-----|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1   | 1-2 page pericope analysis                      | 15%                                   |
| 2   | 2-3 page critical reasoning or exegetical essay | 30%                                   |
| tba | Partnered work (includes homework)              | 25%                                   |
| 3   | Quizzes   | 30% (15% each; drop the lowest score) |

### Information on Assignments and Attendance

#### Assignments:

Assignments come from required texts, handouts distributed in class, and occasional readings from e-texts readily available on the internet. Be sure to have assignments completed before coming to class and to format these assignments according to MLA. If you're having difficulties with any of the assignments, come to see me asap. Don't debate about it; come to my office hours. Since there isn't a final for this course, attendance and partnered work assignments are especially important.

#### Plagiarism:

Any student who uses the words or ideas of another person, be it author, critic, or another student, without attributing those ideas according to MLA standards, will receive a No Credit for that paper and will not be allowed to revise; a student who turns in a paper that is substantially or completely written by someone else will receive No Credit for the course. **In either case the student will be reported to the SFSU Student Discipline Officer, who may take further action.**

#### ADA Compliance:

To make this course as accessible as possible to students with disabilities or medical conditions that may affect any aspect of course assignments or participation, students should notify me at the beginning of the course about any accommodations that will improve their experience of or access to the course. Students should also contact the Disability Resource Center at 338-2472 (Voice/TDD).

#### Attendance Policy:

Since class meets twice a week and I cancel class for Jewish holidays, course attendance is particularly important. Attendance for the entire class period is also required; if you leave early or arrive late chronically, I will mark you as absent for those class sessions.

DATE	Lecture	HW (rdgs assigned for the next class)
1/24	Introduction. Unit 1, Intro to Talmud.	<i>Essential Talmud (ET)</i> , Chapter 1. Here's a <a href="#">pdf</a> version of the reading. Hard copies of <i>ET</i> chapters will be available outside HUM 426 too until 2/07.

1/29	Talmudic purpose and opinion.	In <i>Tanakh</i> (Bible): Books of <i>Ezra</i> (esp. 7), <i>Nehemiah</i> (esp. 9). <i>ET</i> : <a href="#">chapter 2</a> .
1/31	Beginnings of Talmud.	<i>ET</i> , chapters <a href="#">3-5</a> .
2/05	Personalities of Talmud & Mishnah	<i>ET</i> , chapters <a href="#">6-7</a> .
07	<b>Quiz.</b>	<i>ET</i> , chapters 8-11. <b>Identify your research source by next class (2/12):</b> <i>Cambridge GT Rabbis</i> ; <i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i> ; <i>Jewish Encyclopedia</i> ; <i>Encyclopedia of Religion</i> ; <i>Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies</i> ; Project Muse; JSTOR. All of these texts are available in Jewish Studies Office for use there. Some may be available through the Library or online. <a href="#">Assignment</a> .
2/12	Unit 2, Beginning Talmudic Exegesis.	<i>ET</i> , chapters 12-15 (new version). Older versions <a href="#">missing chapter</a> .
14	<b>Source Assignment due.</b>	Bokser's <i>Talmud</i> (T), "Tractate Berahkot," 59-83. HW: T, " <a href="#">Moral Maxims</a> ."
19	Beginning Talmud.	<b>HW: <a href="#">Partnered</a> Assignment.</b>
21	Talmud Lab	
26	Talmud Lab / workshop	Hebrew <a href="#">Alphabet</a>
2/28	Talmud Lab / oral presentations.	<i>ET</i> , chapters 17-18. Hebrew <a href="#">Numbers</a> .
3/04	<b>Quiz. <a href="#">Quiz pdf</a>. Moral Maxims assignment is part of the quiz.</b> Talmud Lab / oral presentations continues.	<b>HW: Partnered Assignment; readings from "Nashim" (T). Rdg: "<a href="#">Classical Rabbinic Interpretation (new version)</a>."</b>
3/06	<b><a href="#">Resources</a> avail.</b>	HW: Rabbinic logic.
11	Talmud Lab	
3/13	Talmud Lab	<i>ET</i> , Chapters 19-20; <i>Bava Metzia</i> (Met), IX-XII; 1-8.
18	21a, pg. 1	<i>MET</i> , 21b-22a, 1-8.
3/20	21b, pgs. 1-5.	<i>MET</i> , 22a-23a, 9-17; HW: <a href="#">pericope analysis</a> .
25-27	Classes cancelled for Spring Break.	HW: <a href="#">exegetical</a> paper.
4/01	Talmud Lab finishes too.	

	22a, pgs 6-8; 22a-23a, 9-17.	
03	Class cancelled. <b>Pericope due.</b>	<i>ET</i> , chapters 30-35.
4/08	22a-23a, 9-17 finishes. <b>Quiz.</b>	<i>MET</i> , 25a-26b, 71-92. HW: Outlines.
10	Talmud Lab	<i>MET</i> , 26b-end. HW: <a href="#">Partnered Work</a> .
4/15	Talmud Lab.	<i>Classical Midrash (CM)</i> , 1-50; <i>ET</i> , ch. 27; " <a href="#">Midrash &amp; Midrash Interpretation</a> ."
17	<b><u>Quiz.</u></b>	<i>CM</i> , 53-56.
4/22	Discussion of Midrash	<i>CM</i> , 76-155; <i>Bible</i> , Exodus.
24	Discussion of Midrash	<i>CM</i> , 155-170
29	Class cancelled. We will resume midrash from 80-170 next class. For next class, identify one example of petihta in each assigned section (76-155 = section 1; 155-170 = section 2).	
5/01	Class cancelled. <b>Exegetical paper #1 due.</b>	
06	Midrash Workshop.	Levinas rdg.
08	<b>Modern Midrash/Levinas.</b>	Levinas rdg.
13	<b>Modern Midrash/Levinas.</b>	Agamben rdg.
15	<b>Modern Midrash/Agamben.</b>	
Finals	<b><u>Exegetical / Reasoning Paper #2 due.</u></b>	