

WOMEN AND JUDAISM

Rowan University, Spring 2004 _____ M/W 9:25–10:40

Dr. Melissa Klapper _____ klapper@rowan.edu _____ X3982_

Welcome!_ In this course, we will explore the subject of women and Judaism from the perspectives of religion, history, anthropology, literature, and sociology._ We will cross time and space as we study everything from ancient Israel to contemporary America from the viewpoint of the ongoing encounter of gender and Judaism._

Required Texts _____

Greenberg, Blu._ *On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition* (OWJ)

Grossman, Susan and Rivka Haut._ *Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue* (DK)

Sacks, Maurie, ed._ *Active Voices: Women in Jewish Culture* (AV)

Taitz, Emily, Sondra Henry, and Cheryl Tallan._ *The Jewish Publication Society Guide to Jewish Women* (JPS)

Umansky, Ellen and Dianne Ashton._ *Four Centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality* (FC)

*readings on reserve in the library

Course Requirements

Participation ___ 15%

Reading journal ___ 15%

Document analyses (2) ___ 25%

Research proposal ___ 5%

Research paper ___ 20%

Final exam ___ 20%_

As an upper-level course, this class requires a serious commitment of time and energy._ We will work especially hard on sharpening critical reading skills._ The best way to approach the reading is to keep up with the syllabus._ You are expected to complete each day's reading before coming to class._ During most class meetings there will be exercises based on the readings, ranging from discussions to role-playing activities._ Participation in classroom discussions and in-class activities will form an important part of your grade._ _

The course combines lectures, discussions, in-class writing, small group work, and audiovisual presentations. You are expected to incorporate all of these materials into tests and written assignments.

Attendance is mandatory. Please contact me in advance if you must be absent. More than three unexcused absences will result in automatic reduction of your final grade of one grade point per absence (e.g., from B+ to B).

There are several writing assignments for this course. We will discuss all of them in greater detail in class.

You will keep an ongoing reading journal. Most of the writing will be done in class, but it will be based on the assigned readings for that day. The journals will be collected and graded cumulatively at several points during the term and at the end of the semester.

You will write two document analyses during the semester. One will be due before spring break (February 11, February 25, March 3, or March 10) and one after spring break (March 31, April 5, April 21, or April 26). In 3-4 pages, analyze the document(s) in the assigned reading on your choice of these dates. What can you learn about the author(s)? Who was the intended audience? What was the relationship between gender and Judaism being expressed in this document? In what way does the historical context of the document(s) matter?

You will write an 8-10 page research paper on a topic of your choice. As we will be covering a very wide range of history and geography, you have the opportunity to learn more about a subject that really catches your interest. You could write about Jewish women in a particular time and place (e.g., Jewish women during the Holocaust). You could investigate a religious issue around women and Judaism (e.g., the different denominations of Judaism's attitudes toward women's ordination as rabbis). You could compare Jewish women with women of another religious group (e.g., religious educational systems for Jewish and Catholic girls in contemporary America). No matter what topic you choose, you should plan to make use of Rowan's interlibrary loan system and the research facilities in the Philadelphia area for your project. A research proposal is due February 18. The final paper is due April 21.

Theoretical Perspectives

1/21 Introduction to course

1/26 *Cynthia Ozick, "Notes Toward Finding the Right Question"

*Judith Plaskow, "The Right Question is Theological"

1/28 OWJ, "The Theoretical Basis of Women's Equality in Judaism" and "Jewish Women: Coming of Age"

Jewish Women in the Ancient Near East

2/2 JPS, "Buried Treasures: Archeological Evidence from the Ancient Near East"

2/4_DK, Susan Grossman, "Women and the Jerusalem Temple" and Hannah Safrai, "Women and the Ancient Synagogue" _

2/9_JPS, "A Written Legacy: Literary Evidence from the Ancient Near East to 600 C.E." _

2/11_AV, Judith Baskin, "Silent Partners: Women as Wives in Rabbinic Literature"

Genesis 1:26-31; 2:15-25; 21:1-13; 24:1-27, 57-67; 27:1-46; 29:1-35; 30:1-24; Exodus 2: _

1-10; Judges 4:4-24; Ruth 1; Esther 2:1-20, 4:1-17, 5:1-8, 7:1-10, 8:1-6; Proverbs 31:10-31 _

Jewish Women in Islamic Lands I

2/16_JPS, "Jewish Women Under Islam: The Near East, North Africa, and Spain to 1492" _

2/18_DK, Sara Reguer, "Women and the Synagogue in Medieval Cairo"

*Ren'e Levine Melammed, "A Woman Teacher in Twelfth-Century Cairo"

research proposal due _

Jewish Women in Europe I

2/23_JPS, "Further from Home: Jewish Women in Christian Europe to 1492" _

2/25_DK, Emily Taitz, "Women's Voices, Women's Prayers: The European Synagogue of the Middle Ages"

*Ivan Marcus, "Mothers, Martyrs, and Moneymakers: Some Jewish Women in Medieval Europe" _

Jewish Women in Italy

3/1_JPS, "A Separate Community: Jewish Women in Italy until the 1800s" _

3/3_FC, "Traditional Voices: Introduction," Sara Cobia Sullam, "Letter to Baldassar Bonifaccio," "Stronger Voices: Introduction," and Rahel Luzzato Morpurgo, poems _

Jewish Women in Europe II

3/8_JPS, "European Jewry Moves East: The Early Modern Period (1492-1750)" _

3/10_DK, Shulamith Berger, "Tehines: A Brief Survey of Women's Prayers"

FC, Glickel of Hameln, "Memoirs," "Tkhine of the Matriarchs," "Tkhine of the Matriarchs for Rosh Hodesh Elul," "The Tkhine of Three Gates," and "On Putting the Sabbath Loaf into the Oven" _

Spring Break!!!! _ Enjoy!!!!

3/15, 3/17_

Jewish Women in Islamic Lands II

3/22_JPS, "A Different Voice: Jewish Women in the Lands of Islam (1492-1750)"_

3/24_*Ruth Lamdan, "The Mercies of the Court: Jewish Women Seeking Divorce in Sixteenth-Century Palestine, Syria, and Egypt"

FC, Rachel Susman Ashkenazi, "Letter to Her Son Moses"__

Jewish Women in Europe III

3/29_JPS, "Opening Doors: Jewish Women During and After the Haskalah (1750-1900)"_

3/31_AV, Dianne Ashton, "Grace Aguilar and the Matriarchal Theme in Jewish Women's Spirituality"

FC, Grace Aguilar, "The Spirit of Judaism"__

Jewish Women in the Americas

4/5_JPS, "Jewish Women in the New World: From the First Settlement until 1900"

FC, Ray Frank, "Woman in the Synagogue," and Rebekah Kohut, "Welcoming Address, First Convention, National Council of Jewish Women"__

Passover Break and Research Days

4/7, 4/12, 4/14_

Women and Contemporary Judaism Around the World

4/19_DK, Rivka Haut, "Women's Prayer Groups and the Orthodox Synagogue," Judith Hauptman, "Women and the Conservative Synagogue," and Rela Geffen Monson, "The Impact of the Jewish Women's Movement on the American Synagogue, 1972-1985"__

4/21_AV, Susan Starr Sered, "Toward an Anthropology of Jewish Women: Sacred Texts and the Religious World of Elderly, Middle-Eastern Women in Jerusalem"

DK, "Susan Grossman and Rivka Haut, "From Persia to New York: An Interview with Three Generations of Iranian Women"

FC, Ruby Daniel, "We Learned from the Grandparents: Memories of a Cochin Jewish Woman"

research paper due_

4/26_DK, Annette Daum, "Language and Liturgy"

OWJ, "Women and Liturgy" _

4/28_OWJ, "In Defense of the 'Daughters of Israel': Observations on Niddah and Mikveh" AV,
Penina Adelman, "A Drink from Miriam's Cup: Invention of Tradition Among Jewish Women"

FC, Penina Adelman, "The Womb and the Word: A Fertility Ritual for Hannah" _

5/3_FC, Ellen Umansky, "Piety, Persuasion and Friendship: A History of Jewish Women's
Spirituality"

Conclusion of course _

date of final exam to be announced