

Summer 2009

Women, Gender and Judaism

Course Description: This course uses religious, historical, and literary sources to explore the experiences and roles of Jewish women. The course begins by examining the status of women in Halakhah (Jewish Law), particularly in the areas of religious rituals, marriage, and sexuality. We also look at Jewish women's experiences from historical and literary perspectives to examine the variety of their experiences, and the ways in which they have sought to create their identities as women within Jewish traditions.

Required Texts:

Rachel Biale, *Women and Jewish Law*
Blu Greenberg, *On Women and Judaism*
Kates and Reimer, *Reading Ruth*
Judith Baskin, *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*
Joyce Antler, *America and I*

Course Requirements and Grading:

Class discussion 30%
One 2 page paper 20%
One 4-6 page paper 25%
Final exam 25%

Participation in discussion groups

There will be substantial emphasis on student participation. This will require careful preparation of reading assignments and informed participation in online discussion groups. You will receive detailed instructions for participating in the discussion groups once the course begins.

First paper (2 pages, double-spaced)

This paper is a thought paper in which you will respond critically to a focused question. The paper should not be a summary. You will need to make a precise and original main point that you then proceed to develop, illustrate, or support. The paper will be graded on content and clarity of writing. Due by 11:55 on Sunday July, 5.

Second paper (4-6 pages, double-spaced)

For this paper, you will follow the guidelines for the first paper. However, this paper will compare and contrast two texts. Due by 11:55 on Wednesday, July 22.

Final Exam

The final exam is an open-book essay exam, covering all of the works that we have read. The final exam is due by 11:55 on Friday, July 24. You will receive the exam at 11:55 p.m. on Wednesday, July 22.

Schedule

Week 1: June 16 - 21

Introduction: Gender and Jewish Studies

Week 2: June 22 – 28

Women and Halakhah

Reading: Rachel Biale, *Women and Jewish Law*

Week 3: June 29 - July 5

Jew as Woman; Woman as Jew: Issues of Identity

Reading: Blu Greenberg, *On Women and Judaism*

First paper due by 11:55 p.m. on Sunday July, 5

Week 4: July 6 - July 12

Jewish Women in Historical Perspective

Reading: In Judith Baskin, *Jewish Women in Historical Perspective*

Week 5: July 13 – July 19

Jewish American Women and Literary Identity

Reading: In Joyce Antler, *America and I*

Week 6: July 20 – July 24

Feminist Midrash

Reading: In Kates and Reimer, *Reading Ruth*:

Second paper due by 11:55 p.m. on Wed. July, 22

Final Exam due by 11:55 p.m. on Fri. July, 24

