

Religious Studies 168

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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

As on online course, there will be substantial emphasis on student participation. This will require careful preparation of reading assignments and informed participation in online discussion groups.

Each week, you will be responsible for posting responses to several questions for discussion. The weekly discussion questions will be available each Friday. Your initial post will be a “**post first**” response. This means that you will not see your classmates' responses until after you have made your initial post. Your “post first” response is due each Wednesday by 11:55 p.m. After you have

posted your initial response, you will be able to view everyone's post. (This approach tends to yield more variety and uniqueness in the class posts.)

You will then be responsible for making at least two more posts. One of these must be in response to another participant's post. Make these responses as substantive as possible. That is, go beyond stating that you agree, or that something is a good point. Instead, try to build on idea, give a related idea or observation, or ask a challenging question. When someone responds to your post, try to respond back. The idea is to build a discussion.

In all, you are required to make a total of three posts per week – one "respond first" and two additional posts.

Discussion group weekly schedule:

Fri. 11:55 p.m. Discussion question(s) posted

Wed. 11:55 p.m. "Post first" response due

Fri. 11:55 p.m. Second response due

Sun. 11:55 p.m. Third response due

After 11:55 on Sunday, you will be able to read the discussions, but will not be able to make further posts.

First paper (2 pages, double-spaced)

This paper is a thought paper in which you 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 guideline 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 midnight 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 midnight on Sunday, July 24

Final Exam

