RS 320 Gender and Religion: Judaism
HSS 111
TR 9:40-10:55 AM
Spring 2015
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SYLLABUS

Learning Objectives:
Familiarize students with the history and religious traditions of Jewish women. What is a woman’s place in Judaism? How has life for Jewish women changed from Biblical times to the present? How do Jewish women see themselves? Is a Jewish woman truly a woman of valor or is her price below rubies?

Course Outcome:
“Gender and Judaism” focuses on Jewish women from the Bible to the present. During the semester, we will examine the lives of women from all walks of life, from different time periods, and from different cultures within Judaism. After completing this course, students will have knowledge of the history, beliefs and practices of Judaism and methodological and theoretical skills in the critical study of Judaism; they will have the ability to construct clear written and oral arguments; and they will have a good understanding of what it means to be a Jewish woman historically and today.

Course Requirements:
Required texts are: Ellen M. Umansky & Dianne Ashton, Four Centuries of Jewish Women’s Spirituality (revised edition); Rachel Calof’s Story: Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains; Gerda Weismann Klein, All But My Life, as well as supplementary materials on Blackboard.

Students are required to 1) observe one of the religious services offered in the Jewish community and to write a one-page reflection paper; 2) watch one out-of-class video and write a two-page review [Yentl is on course reserve in Hodges Library; Aimee and Jaguar is in the Hodges Library Media Center]; and 3) attend one of the lectures offered by the Judaic Studies Program and write a two-page report.

At the two-thirds mark of the semester, a 5-page research paper about a Jewish woman of your choice will be due. For possibilities, please see http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org. Click on left bar “The Library,” then click on “Women,” and choose “Biographies of Jewish Women.” Have fun! You can also search http://jwa.org, the Jewish Women’s Archive. Complete your selection for class either on 2/3 or 2/5.

There will be a comprehensive final exam.
This is a writing-emphasis course. You are graded on your writing. Please write with care and proofread your reports before turning them in.

Grading will be based on the following criteria:

1. Attendance and class participation 20%. **Two** unexcused absences are allowed, any illnesses must be documented with a written doctor’s excuse. Additional unexcused absences will subtract 3 points each from the attendance grade. Participation is defined as contributing to the class discussion on the assigned readings.
2. One short-essay test 20%.
3. One 5-page research paper on a Jewish woman of your choice 20%.
4. Service reflection paper, video review, and lecture report 20%.
5. Final exam 20%.

**Make-up policy:** If a student has three exams in one day, he/she may choose to move one of the exams to a different day. This need as well as any other irregularities must be discussed with the professor in advance of the scheduled exam date.

For table of grades and conversion from numerical to letter grades, see **Blackboard**.

Please check your email regularly for any messages sent via **Blackboard**.

For study aids, academic integrity, and disability information, please see the campus syllabus on the **Blackboard** site.

**Discrimination is not permitted:**

The University of Tennessee prohibits discrimination against employees and students “on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including sexual harassment, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, parental status), national origin, age, disability, or protected veteran status.”

**Week I:**

1/8 Introduction, books, **Blackboard**, requirements. Watch in-class video on Manny Steinfeld (Victim and Victor) (Ashley).

**Reminder:** Attend synagogue or temple service before April 9.

**Week II:**


**Please note:** video will be shown in Hodges Library, room 253.

1/15 Discuss “Eshet Chayil” prayer. Overview of Judaism: history, holidays, life cycle events. Jewish calendar (handout). Reading: “Chronology of Jewish History” on Blackboard, and David J. Goldberg and John D. Rayner, The Jewish People: Their History and Their Religion, 335-382 (Jewish year and life cycle events), on
Blackboard. See reserve copy in Hodges Library as a reference work.

Reminder: Out of class, watch either Yentl or Aimee and Jaguar before February 5.

Week III: 1/20 Overview of Judaism cont’d.

1/22 Read “Eve” (Amir), 170-72, “Eve” (Oren), 229, and “The Coming of Lilith” (Plaskow), 324-26, in Four Centuries of Jewish Women’s Spirituality. “

Week IV: 1/27 Read “Lot’s Wife” (Amir), 172-74, “Lot’s Wife” (Gemson), 233, and “Re-Visioning Sarah” (Umansky), 319, in Four Centuries of Jewish Women’s Spirituality.

1/29 Read Part I, Earlier Voices 1355-1523, 39-44, in Four Centuries.

Week V: 2/3 Choose a Jewish woman for a paper topic and report to class (A-M).
Read Part II, Traditional Voices 1560-1865, 47-67, and 71-80 in Four Centuries.

2/5 Choose a Jewish woman for a paper topic and report to class (N-Z).
Read Part II 1560-1865 continued, 83-89, 92-98 in Four Centuries. Two-page video review is due today.

Week VI: 2/10 Read Part III, Innovative Voices 1842-1934, 101-121, and 127-137 in Four Centuries.

2/12 Part III 1842-1934 continued. Read texts on 138-141, 146-152, and 157-164 in Four Centuries.

Week VII: 2/17 Read Rachel Calof’s Story, 1-53 (105-133 as background).

2/19 Read Rachel Calof’s Story, 54-103 (135-153 as background).

Week VIII: 2/24 Review for Test.

2/26 Test.

Tonight, 6 PM, showing of Searching for Baghdad: A Daughter’s Journey in Hodges Library Auditorium.
Sunday, March 1, showing of “The Last Jews of Baghdad,” at 12:30 PM at the AJCC.

One of these is required for lecture assignment, due March 12.


Two-page lecture report is due today.

Week XI: 3/17 Spring break. No class.

3/19 Spring break. No class.

Week XII: 3/24 The Jewish National Home. Read Hannah Senesh, 203-06, in Four Centuries. In-class video on Hannah Senesh, Blessed is the Match.


Week XIII: 3/31 Read Gerda Weissmann Klein, All But My Life, 3-64.

4/2 Read Gerda Weissmann Klein, All But My Life, 65-134.

Week XIV: 4/7 Read Gerda Weissmann Klein, All But My Life, 135-206.

Today a five-page research paper on a Jewish woman of your choice is due.

4/9 Read Gerda Weissmann Klein, All But My Life, 207-246.
One-page synagogue reflection paper due today.


4/23 Last class. Review for final.

**Final: Thursday, April 30, 8-10 AM in the classroom.**

Have a great summer!