

Shulamit Magnus Oberlin College

WOMEN AND GENDER IN JEWISH SOCIETY, ANTIQUITY TO MODERNITY

Jewish Studies/ History 237 Fall, 2006 Tues., Th. 3-4:15

Shulamit.Magnus@Oberlin.edu *IF IT IS TIME SENSITIVE DO NOT RELY ON EMAIL. Call the Jewish Studies office (775-8866)

Office: 310 Rice phone: 440-775-8529

Office hours: Wed. 10-noon and 1-2P.M. and by appointment; weekly sign up sheet on my door; please use this, not email, for appointments during office hours.

This course explores Jewish women's history and the construction and workings of gendered behavior in Jewish societies from antiquity to the twentieth century in cultural (Sephardic, Ashkenazic, Middle Eastern), and chronological context. It studies "normative" constructions of women's and men's roles and compares these to social realities. Topics include: gender and power relations in the family and society; women and organized religion; women's economic and communal functions, literacy, feminism; the construction and expression of "maleness" in traditional and modernizing Jewish societies. Sources include rabbinic texts; medieval communal ordinances, prenuptial and divorce documents; women's letters, memoirs, and rituals; biography; sociological and anthropological studies; and contemporary feminist writing. Basic questions will be: what was Jewish women's historical experience, and how and why did this differ from that of Jewish men? How is "Jewish history" conceptualized differently when women's experience is included?

This course may be taken for JWST, HIST, GWST, CD, and Wr credit.

This syllabus contains detailed information the course and its requirements, for which you are responsible. If you have any questions about anything on it, please ask me. If you lose your hard copy, you may obtain another from the Jewish Studies or History websites.

Course requirements:

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A. Class participation: 45% of the final grade:

1. Regular attendance, which will be noted. Students are responsible for obtaining notes, handouts, and/or announcements from other students for any missed classes.
2. Thoughtful preparation of all assigned readings for the class for which they are assigned. There is about 70 pages of reading, not including notes, illustrations, per class.
3. Active, informed participation in class. There will be a mix of lecture and informed

discussion, which is a crucial part of the course, not only for your own grade, but for what your participation contributes to the learning of others. If you are having trouble entering the discussion, see me. Please email me if you are unable to attend class.

4. One-page observation/ analysis papers on assigned readings for each class, unless I specify otherwise (required but not individually graded; submission and overall quality will count toward the final grade). These are to be substantive, informed observations, not summaries of the readings, nor simply reactions to them. Note what you think are the main themes raised in, and by, the readings, that you think should be raised in class discussion. Note what struck you in the readings – but also ask yourself why you were struck. What did you find important, surprising, contradictory; related to other, prior readings? The writing here need not be polished and can be in outline form as long as it makes sense to me and is substantive. I prefer typed but will read LEGIBLE handwritten submissions. Use your prepared observations for your participation in class, then hand them in to me at class' end. Make sure YOUR NAME AND THE DATE/ CLASS SESSION is on EACH observation paper.

5. One or more (depending on class size) 10-minute lead-off presentations on major themes for discussion. Do not read a summary of the readings; do not simply ask a list of questions, but, give us a thoughtful, informed presentation on major issues (same guidelines as for observation papers, above). Pace yourself; we will observe the time limit. If there is no lead off presenter for a session, we will begin class with a go-round in which each student states major issues for discussion, using the prepared observations. On the day you do a lead-off presentation, you do not have to hand in an observation paper. I will solicit sign up for these presentations but it is each student's responsibility to make sure you are signed up.

When a primary source is assigned (e.g., a memoir, a biblical, or rabbinic text), please bring that to class.

B. Written work: 55% of the final grade:

1. Two short (7-8 double-spaced, typed pages) essays based on assigned readings, choosing from essay topics I announce; you may be able to choose other topics in consultation with me. These essays must be substantive and analytical. Due dates as indicated on the syllabus. Essays must be handed in to me in class.

One 12-15 page (not including notes, bibliography, illustrations) paper on a topic of your choice, expanding on or related to one on the syllabus. You must consult with me and get approval for your topic and bibliography by Fall break. Deadline for submission of the paper will be the day and time set for the final exam for this course.

Do not exceed stated page limits for these assignments. Unless you have obtained my

consent to late submission in case of documented emergency, lateness in submission will result in 1/3 grade reduction per day of lateness (e.g., an A- paper becomes an B+).

There are no exams in this course

All written work must be submitted in hard copy only, no electronic submissions. All written work MUST be: dated, stapled, have your name on it, and (by College rules) be accompanied by a signed Honor Code declaration to be graded .

- Writing for the essays and paper must be substantive, organized, clear, composed in grammatically correct English, and use correct spelling. Writing quality will count heavily. Write simply, directly, concisely, and precisely. Avoid convoluted constructions, passive tense, slang, inflated prose. Do not use "impact" as a transitive verb unless you mean "collision" (say: "influence," "affect"); "its" is the possessive; "it's" is the contraction. History writing is a complex exercise; drafts and re-writes are essential, meaning of course, allotting sufficient time to rethink and rewrite. Do make use of the writing tutors the College makes available; I strongly urge you to consult one or more of the writing guides listed below; all are available in inexpensive, paperback editions. I am happy to discuss all assignments with you, and to read and comment on drafts submitted at least a day or two in advance of a deadline.

For the Paper, students MUST use standard source citation conventions presented in Rampolla, Benjamin, or Hacker (do NOT mix and match citation conventions). DO NOT use full footnotes or write a bibliography for the essay assignments; abbreviated citation in those will suffice (Kaplan, Making of the Jewish Middle Class, p.86). DO know how to distinguish between an article, chapter, and book citation even for the essays.

WRITING GUIDES:

Mary Lynn Rampolla, A Pocket Guide to Writing in History

Jules Benjamin, A Student's Guide to History

Diana Hacker, A Pocket Style Manual

William Strunk and E.B. White, The Elements of Style

Howard Becker, Writing for Social Scientists

- All work for this course, as in all at Oberlin, is done under the terms of the College Honor Code, adherence to all of whose provisions students are responsible. See the College website, any member of the Honor Code committee, reference librarians, me, for any Honor Code questions and help.

READING: ALL assigned reading for this course is on SHELF reserve in Mudd. This is the default option for doing assigned reading; there is no excused failure to obtain readings.

Assigned reading in titles NOT "Required for Purchase" is also on ERES (be sure to check in more than one way: under author, editor, and/or title).

If you have any problem locating material on any kind of reserve, ASK RESERVE ROOM STAFF, preferably the Supervisor, right away. Unless you tell me about such a problem at least a week before you need to do the reading, emailing me will not help (and will not excuse you from doing the reading).

Books we use heavily have been ordered in the College bookstore and are on the "Required for Purchase" list, meaning that it is impractical to rely on a reserve copy and that I expect you to be able bring a copy to class. Nothing in these titles is on eres. If purchase poses a financial problem, consider pairing with another student/s. You may also obtain readings through Ohio Link but be sure to budget sufficient time for material to arrive. Copies of some of this material may be available from the JWST office; see me.

It is each student's responsibility to prepare all assigned readings for the session for which they are assigned. There are no excused failures to OBTAIN readings. If for a valid reason (e.g. documented significant illness, emergency), you are not able to DO the readings, or any other requirement, contact me as soon as you are able.

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REQUIRED FOR PURCHASE:

Rachel Biale, Women in Jewish Law

Avraham Grossman, Pious and Rebellious, Jewish Women in Medieval Europe

The Memoirs of Gluckel of Hameln, Translated by Marvin Lowenthal

Marion Kaplan, The Making of the Jewish Middle Class

Susan Sered, Women as Ritual Experts

GRADING:

Class participation (45%): Observation papers: 10%; leadoff presentation/s: 10%; participation in class: sessions: 25% .Written work: (55%): First essay: 15%; second essay 20%; final paper: 20%

If a circumstance affects your ability to fulfill course requirements in an ongoing way, please speak with me sooner than later. I will do my utmost to help but can only do so if you alert me to the need promptly.

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Women and Gender in Jewish Society: Antiquity to Modernity

1. Introductory 9/5

Writing women out of Jewish history, writing them in; male experience as normative, or: "Of 'Jews' and 'Jewesses'"

in class: Sondra Henry and Emily Taitz, Written out of History; Our Jewish Foremothers

2. Rethinking and Unthinking Assumptions, Reading Texts 9/7

Paula Hyman, "Gender and Jewish History," Tikkun, (Jan., 1988), pp.35-38

Shulamit Magnus, "'Out of the Ghetto': Integrating the Study of Jewish Women Into the Study of 'the Jews'," Judaism, 39 (Winter, 1990), pp. 28-36

Genesis, chps. 1-3; 38 JPS translation preferred BRING THE TEXT TO CLASS

Phyllis Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," in Elizabeth Koltun, ed., The Jewish Woman, pp.217-240

3. Women in "the Rabbinic Period" 9/12

Ross Kraemer, "Jewish Women in the Diaspora World of Late Antiquity," in Baskin, ed., Jewish Women in Historical Perspective, pp.43-67 (N.B.: pagination as in the 1991 edition. If you read in a different edition, go by author/ title of assigned chapter.

Bernadette Brooten, Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue, Introduction, chps. 1, 4, 7, Conclusion, pp.1-39, 57-71, 139-147, 149-151 (on eres)

Lead off:

4. Women ("Woman") in Rabbinic Law 9/14

Judith Romney Wegner, "The Image and Status of Women in Classical Rabbinic Judaism," in Baskin ed., chp. 3, pp.68-93

Rachel Biale, Women and Jewish Law, chp.1, pp.10-43

Lead off:

5. Women in Rabbinic Law, continued 9/19

Biale, chps.2-3, pp.44-101

Lead off:

6. Law, continued 9/21

Biale, chps.4-6, pp. 102-174

Lead off:

7. Rabbinic Law, and Women's Experience and Agency 9/26

Charlotte Fonrobert, "Yalta's Ruse: Resistance Against Rabbinic Menstrual Authority in Talmudic Literature"; Shaye Cohen, "Purity, Piety, and Polemic: Medieval Rabbinic Denunciations of 'Incorrect' Purification Practices"; in Rahel Wasserfall, Women and Water, pp.60-100

Bella Chagall, Burning Lights, "Heritage," "The Bath," "Sabbath," "Sukkot" (Schocken ed.), pp.9-11, 25-62, 96-105 (memoir, easy read)

Tkhine: handout

Lead off:

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8. Medieval Jewish Women's Lives: Under Islam 9/28

S. D. Goitein, A Mediterranean Society, An Abridgement in One Volume, Introduction, pp. 9-27 only

S. D. Goitein, A Mediterranean Society, Volume 3: The Family, pp.47-95, 142-189 (up to "Social Safeguards")

9. Under Medieval Islam, continued 10/3

Goitein, pp.189-223, 312-359

Lead off:

FIRST ESSAY DUE

Remember: make an appointment to see me about your paper topic and preliminary bibliography before Fall break.

10. Medieval Jewish Women: Europe 10/5

Avraham Grossman, Pious and Rebellious, Jewish Women in Medieval Europe, Introduction, chps. 2-3, 5, pp.1-7, 33-67, 102-121

11. In Medieval Europe, continued 10/10

Grossman, chps.6-8, pp.123-197

12. In Medieval Europe, continued 10/12

Grossman, chps. 9-11, pp.198-252

Paper topic and preliminary bibliography due in class today. Be prepared to give a brief statement to the class. ** Revised version due 11/9.

FALL BREAK 10/ 15-21

13. Early Modernity: Glikl Hamel 10/24

SECOND ESSAY DUE IN CLASS TODAY

F. L. Carsten, "The Court Jews: A Prelude to Emancipation," Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook, 3 (1958): 140-156

The Memoirs of Gluckel of Hameln, Lowenthal ed., pp.1-108

N. B. We will read all of Glukl's memoirs. I have divided the reading over several sessions; read on as you wish but come prepared to discuss the pages assigned for each class. This is deceptively easy reading, that is, it IS easy reading, but also a very important historical source.

Lead off:

14. Glikl, continued 10/26

The Memoirs, pp.108-239

Lead off:

15. Glikl, conclusion; Assessing the Significance of Her Writing 10/31

The Memoirs, pp.239-277

Natalie Zemon Davis, Women on the Margins, pp.5-63

Lead off:

16. Jewish Women and Radical Assimilation 11/2

Michael Meyer, Origins of the Modern Jew, chp.4, pp.85-114

Deborah Hertz, "Emancipation Through Intermarriage in Old Berlin," in J. Baskin, ed., Jewish Women, pp.182-201

Heidi Thomann Tewarson, Rahel Levin Varnhagen, chp.1, pp.17-52

Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehudah Reinharz, The Jew in the Modern World, ed., pp.260-261

Lead off:

17. Modern Marriage and Family Patterns 11/7

Marion Kaplan, The Making of the Jewish Middle Class, Introduction, chp. 1, pp.3-63

Lead off:

18. Women and the Jewish Middle Class: Germany 11/9

Kaplan, Jewish Middle Class, chps. 2- 3, 5, pp.64-116, 137-152

Lead off:

REVISED PAPER TOPIC AND BIBLIOGRAPHY IN CLASS DUE TODAY

**19. Jewish Emancipation and Women's Emancipation in the Community: Germany
11/14**

Marion Kaplan, The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany, chps. 3,5, pp.59-102, 147-168

Lead off:

20. Women's Religion: Eastern Europe 11/16

Chava Weissler, Voices of the Matriarchs, chps. 1, 3-5, pp.3-35, 51-85

Tracy Gurn Klirs, ed., The Merit of Our Mothers, pp.12-45, 112-118 (half these pages are Yiddish)

Lead off:

NO CLASS 11/23 THANKSGIVING

21. Women's Religion: Middle East 11/21

Susan Sered, Women as Ritual Experts, Introduction, chps.1-5, pp.18-102

Lead off:

22. Jewish Modernity, Men, and Masculinity 11/28

Daniel Boyarin, Unheroic Conduct, The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man, Introduction, chp. 1, pp.1-80 (heavier than usual reading, less than usual next time...)

23. Modern Jewish Masculinity, continued 11/30

Boyarin, chps. 3-4, pp.127-185

24. Tradition and Assimilation: Eastern Europe 12/5

Paula Hyman, Gender and Assimilation, chp. 2, pp.50-92

Pauline Wengeroff, Memoirs of a Grandmother, trans. Shulamit Magnus (selections; pages TBA. MS. will circulate for reading out of the JWST office)

Shulamit Magnus, "Kol Isha: Women and Pauline Wengeroff's Writing of an Age," Nashim, 7 (Spring, 2004):28-64

Lead off:

25. Breaking the Mold: Rebellious 12/7

Isaac Bashevis Singer, Yentl, the Yeshiva Boy on shelf reserve, see me re: additional copies

Lucy Dawidowicz, ed., The Golden Tradition, pp.206-209, 388-393 (Sara Shenirer, Puh Rakowski)

Deborah Weissman, "Bais Yaakov: A Historical Model for Jewish Feminists," in Koltun, The Jewish Woman, pp.139-148

Lead off:

26. Jewish Feminism, Feminist Judaism 12/12

Shulamit Magnus, "Ritual," in Jewish Women in America, eds. Paula Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore, 2: 1150-1154

Hasia Diner and Beryl Lieff Benderly, Her Works Praise Her, A History of Jewish Women in America, chps. 15-16, pp.377-427

Lead off:

27. Summary discussion 12/14