

Spring 2009  
Wednesday 3:30–6:30  
College Hall 311A

## **DEATH IN MEDIEVAL JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY**

History 201-401/ Jewish Studies 201-401/ Religious Studies 233-401

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College Hall 306B  
Office Hours: By appointment only

The seminar compares Jewish and Christian traditions and practices of care for the dead. While Jews and Christians developed different mortuary and commemorative traditions, common origins, contact between Jews and Christians, and familiarity with norms and practices of the “other” make the comparative study of both traditions enlightening. The seminar includes such topics as burial rites and cemeteries, the care for the dead in times of violence, mourning and commemorative practices, and death and the afterlife.

### ***Requirements:***

The seminar includes four types of assignments:

- (1) Reading assigned material
- (2) Class presentations
- (3) Six 2–3 page commentary papers based on the reading. These short papers should not summarize books or articles; I assume you all can do that. Rather, the papers should be a reaction to the reading: anything that strikes you as particularly interesting, important, outrageous, or worth thinking about. I expect one paper every other week starting with either the first or second reading assignment. These papers are due at the end of the session at which the reading is discussed and should be submitted *via the digital drop box on Blackboard*. I may ask students with especially interesting papers to share with the whole seminar.
- (4) A final exercise – A final exercise will be distributed on the last day of the seminar. The due date will be announced during the semester. The exercise will require synthesizing ideas discussed in the readings and discussions and *not* additional reading or research.

### **Grading:**

Attendance and class participation	10%
Presentations	20%
Commentary papers	30%
Final Exercise	40%

## Course Outline (Bb=Blackboard)

### 1/14 **Introduction: Death in Judaism and Christianity**

### 1/21 **The Biblical Legacies**

Hallote, *Death, Burial, and Afterlife in the Biblical World*, 27–68.  
 Bloch-Smith, “The Cult of the Dead in Judah,” 213–224.  
 Chinitz, “Death in the Bible,” 98–103.

### 1/28 **The Rabbinic and Patristic Background**

Sources # 1, 2, 4  
 Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 94–104.  
 Hallote, “Death in Rabbinic Judaism,” 150–168.  
 Meyers, “Secondary Burials in Palestine,” 2–29.

### 2/4 **The Resurrection of the Dead and Afterlife**

Source # 6  
 Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 104–108; 200–25; 318–329.  
 ———, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 239–97.  
 Lieberman, “Some Aspects of Afterlife,” 495–532.  
 Friedberg, “Maimonides Reinterpretation,” 244–257.

### 2/11 **Medieval Death Culture**

Source # 17 [in Bb]  
 Ariès, *Western Attitudes Toward Death*, 1–52.  
 Binski, *Medieval Death*, 8–28.  
 Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages*, 119–128.  
 Horowitz, “The Jews of Europe and the Moment of Death,” 271–281.

### 2/18 **The Body of the Dead**

Sources # 7, 10  
 Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 69–85.  
 Geary, *Living with the Dead*, 95–115; 163–176; 177–193.  
 Brown, “Authority, the Family, and the Dead,” 803–832.  
 Bagliani, “The Corpse in the Middle Ages,” 327–341.  
 ———, *Pope’s Body*, 122–143, 301–312.  
 Shell, “The Holy Foreskin,” 345–359.  
 Fishman, “The Penitential System,” 201–229.

### 2/25 **Burial Rituals and Burial Societies**

Source # 11  
 Paxton, *Christianizing Death*, 19–27; 37–46.  
 Finucane, “Sacred Corpse, Profane Carrion,” 40–60.

Tucker, "Christian Rituals," 196–213.

Hoffman, "Rites of Death and Mourning in Judaism," 214–239.

#### 3/4 **Cemeteries**

Sources # 13, 14

Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, 29–82.

Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, 77–82.

Bar-Levav, "The Cemetery in Jewish Culture," 15–46.

McComish, "The Medieval Jewish Cemetery," 21–30.

Horowitz, "Speaking to the Dead," 303–317.

3/11 *Spring break*

#### 3/18 **Violent Death**

Source # 12

Merback, *The Thief, the Cross, and the Wheel*, 126–157.

Chazan, *European Jewry and the First Crusade*, 50–84; 309–317.

Cohn, "The Black Death and the Burning of Jews," 3–36.

#### 3/25 **The Living and the Dead I: Ghosts**

Source # 18 [in Bb]

Schmidt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages*, 35–58; 171–194.

Caciola, "Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture," 3–45.

Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic*, 61–68, 174–180, 284–285, 301–302.

#### 4/1 **The Living and the Dead II: Intercessions for the Dead**

Sources # 8, 9

Le Goff, *Birth of Purgatory*, 1–14; 130–153; 209–234; 375–377; 389–392.

McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, 24–54.

Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages*, 59–72.

Horowitz, "Speaking to the Dead," 303–317.

#### 4/8 **Death and Commemoration**

Sources # 15; 16, 17 [in Bb]

Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages*, 73–118.

McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, 55–101.

Wieseltier, *Kaddish*, vii–xi, 4–33; 546–585.

#### \*4/15 **Representations of Death in the Late Middle Ages** \*(Class to be rescheduled)\*

Binski, *Medieval Death*, 70–122.

Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, 9–29; 134–146.

Gurevich, "The Divine Comedy Before Dante," 104–152.

Bar Levav, "Leon Modena," 85–101.

#### 4/22 **Conclusions**