

Spring 2010
Wednesday 3:30–6:30
Goddard Labs 103

EVERYDAY JEWISH LIFE IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

History 201-304/ Jewish Studies 201-40/ Religious Studies 233/ Comparative Literature 207

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Office Hours: by appointment only

What was the reality of everyday Jewish life in Europe during the Middle Ages? How did medieval Jews trade, prepare food, celebrate festivals, and conduct community affairs? The seminar explores everyday Jewish life in Western Europe during the High and Late Middle Ages.

Requirements:

The seminar includes four types of assignments:

- (1) Reading assigned material
- (2) Class presentations
- (3) Five commentary papers (2–3 pages each) 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 readings: anything that strikes you as particularly interesting, important, outrageous, or worth thinking about. Please email me your papers *before* class. I may ask students with especially interesting papers to share with the whole seminar.
- (4) A final exercise (7–8 pages) requires synthesizing ideas discussed in the readings and discussions and *not* additional reading or research.

Grading:

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

Course Outline (items with asterisk are required readings)

BACKGROUND

- 1/13 **Introduction: Medieval Jewish History in Western Christendom**
Biale, *Cultures of the Jews*, 312–516
Chazan, *The Jews of Medieval Western Christendom*
Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*
Stow, *Alienated Minority*
- 1/20 **Writing the History of Medieval Jews in the Modern Era: Historiographical Trends**
*Graetz, *History of the Jews*, 494–521
*Abrahams, *Jewish Life*, 129–155
*Baron, “Ghetto and Emancipation”
Horowitz, “Jewish Life in the Middle Ages”
Ruderman, “The Cultural Significance of the Ghetto”
Ruderman, “The Ghetto and Jewish Cultural Formation”
Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*
Schorsch, “Ideology and History”
- 1/27 **Everyday Jewish Life in the Medieval Muslim World**
Sources: Goitein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*, 145–174
*Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, 226–253; 261–269
*Menahem Ben-Sasson, “Cairo Genizah treasures
*Reif, “The Cairo Genizah”
Cohen, Mark R. “Feeding the Poor and Clothing the Naked”
Weiss-Rosmarin, “Shlomo Dov Goitein”

PAPER # 1 DUE

TOPICS

- 2/3 **Marriage and Family**
Sources: *Sheva Berachot*; images
*Stow, “The Jewish Family”
*Cohen and Horowitz, “In Search of the Sacred”
Baumgarten, 21–54; 92–118; 119–153
Grossman, 50; 102–122
Horowitz, “The Way We Were”
- 2/10 **Education**
*Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, 18–34
*Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education*, 66–85
*Yom Tov Assis, *The Golden Age*, 237–296
PAPER # 2 DUE
- 2/17 **Religious Rituals I: Sabbath and Holiday**
Sources: Biblical passages; *Mishnah* Shabbat; liturgical poems, Heine’s poem
*Horowitz, “Sabbath delights”

- 2/24 **Religious Rituals II: Life-cycle Events**
 Sources: Text on circumcision, Texts on death
 *Marcus, *The Jewish Life Cycle*, 30–81
 *Schauss, *The Lifetime of a Jew*, 31–50; 250–257
 Horowitz, “The Eve of the Circumcision”
 PAPER # 3 DUE
- 3/3 **Leisure and Entertainment**
 Sources: stories; al-Ḥarizi’s *Taḥkemoni* (selections)
 * Yasif, “Rashi Legends”
- 3/10 *Spring break*
- 3/17 **Commerce and Trade**
 *Shatzmiller, “Church Articles”
 *Toch, “Jews and commerce”
 Shatzmiller, *Shylock Reconsidered*
 Toch, “Between Impotence and Power”
 Toch, “Economic Activities of German Jews”
 Jordan, “Jews on Top”
 Soloveitchik, “Pawnbroking”
 PAPER # 4 DUE
- 3/24 **Food and Clothing**
 *Roth, *Medieval Jewish Civilization*, 256–264; 172–176
 Kraemer, “Problematic Mixings”
 Freidenreich, “Sharing Meals”
- 3/31 **Medicine** *(Class to be rescheduled)*
 Source: Sefer Assaf
 *Jankrift, “Jews in Medieval European Medicine”
 *Assis, “Jewish Physicians”
 Pop, “Aspects of Jewish Medieval Medical Thought”
 Shatzmiller, “Doctors and medical practice...Sefer Hasidim”
 ———, “Doctors and medical practice...Sefer Asaph”
 ———, “Jewish physicians in Sicily”
 ———, *Jews, Medicine, and Medieval Society*
 PAPER # 5 DUE
- 4/7 **Dangers**
 Sources: Poems
 *Roth, *Daily Life of the Jews*, 173–198
 *Stow, *Alienated Minority*, 231–308
 Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 162–194

4/14 **Coexistence**

*Roth, *Daily Life of the Jews*, 199–212

*Sapir Abulafia. “Jewish-Christian Coexistence”

Elukin, *Living Together, Living Apart*

4/21 **Conclusion: The Medieval Jewish Legacy**

FINAL EXERCISE DUE

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Elukin, Jonathan. *Living Together, Living Apart: Rethinking Jewish-Christian Relations in the Middle Ages*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Freidenreich, David M. "Sharing Meals with non-Christians in Canon law Commentaries, circa 1160–1260: a Case Study in Legal Development." *Medieval Encounters* 14:1 (2008), 41–77.

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