

Date: Sep. 2024

Syllabus - Teaching Program for the Course

**Topics in Talmud**

**Rabbi Akiva Dovid Weiss**Course No

07-942-02/ 07-1314-01

07-952-02 / 07-1315-02

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| **Course Type:** | Lecture |
| **Scope of credits:** | 1 |
| **Year of study:** | 2025-2026 |
| **Semester:** | Fall and Spring |
| **Day & Time:** | Thursdays 9:00-10:20; 10:30-11:50 |
| **Reception Time:** | Upon appointment |
| **Lecturer Email:** | ravakivaw@gmail.com |
| **Moodle Site:** | \_\_\_ |

**Course description and learning goals.**

**Course Abstract**

Students will gain a familiarization of central Talmudic passages covering marquee topics in Jewish thought, practice, and Rabbinic literature and which cumulatively will help create a basic Talmudic literacy. Topics range from Halakhic (Jewish Law) to Aggadic (philosophical) with practical applications.

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**Learning objectives**

Deconstructing and constructing Talmudic passages with an eye towards practical and ethical constructs. Primary sources as well as secondary sources will be classified, utilized and analyzed with an eye towards discerning the underlying theme and values being discussed by the texts.

**Knowledge**

1. Learners will analyze primary texts, familiar debates, and study core Talmudic concepts.
2. Learners will analyze primary texts and secondary literature to gain context and perspective on the subject material.
3. Learners will write summaries of the texts and main arguments and submit written practical “takeaways” from each lesson.

**Skills**

The ability to reach a product or result effectively using the knowledge that has developed.

1. Learners will analyze key primary and secondary Talmudic texts.
2. Learners will evaluate arguments and compare them to modern socio-religious narratives and practice.

**Active learning –** **lessons plan:**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Semester 1 | Topic | Active learning | Required reading | Assessment |
| 1 | Lying to save a relationship: When is it permitted? | Collaborative learning | Bavli Ketubot 16b  Genesis 18  Genesis Rabbah 8:5 |  |
| 2 | Consoling Mourners and the laws of a Shiva House | Collaborative learning | Bavli Makot 24b  Avot D’Rebbe Nathan 14:6  Mishna Middot 2:7  SA YD 376 |  |
| 3 | Omens, Karma, and Superstition | Collaborative learning | Bavli Keritut 5b  Bavli Horiyot 12a  Tur 583 |  |
| 4 | Laws surrounding the Evil Eye | Collaborative learning | Bavli Brakhot 55b |  |
| 5 | The Angel of Death | Collaborative learning | Bavli Ketubot 77b  Bavli Hagigah 4b  Bavli Sukkah 53a |  |
| 6 | Dream Interpretation, Meaning, and Implications | Collaborative learning | Bavli Berakhot 55b-57b |  |
| 7 | Understanding Tests and Trials | Collaborative learning | Genesis 22  Numbers 21:4-9  Bavli Sotah 36b |  |
| 8 | Nature vs Nurture and Why bad things happen to good people | Collaborative learning | Bavli Berachot 5b  Berakhot 7a |  |
| 9 | Astrology, Fate, and Destiny: and Free Will | Collaborative learning | Sanhedrin 107a  Berakhot 10a  Shabbat 136a |  |
| Semester 2 |  |  |  |  |
| 1 | Do people follow rabbis or do rabbis follow people? Rescinding Laws that are too hard to keep | Collaborative learning | Bava Batra 60b  Bava Kama 82b |  |
| 2 | “Give me Yavneh and its Sages” | Collaborative learning | Gittin 56a |  |
| 3 | Are there really 613 commandments? | Collaborative learning | Makkot 23b |  |
| 4 | Wise Prostitutes of the Talmud | Collaborative learning | Avodah Zara 17a  Menahot 44a |  |
| 5 | Sex and Sexuality in Judaism | Collaborative learning | Nedarim 20a-b |  |
| 6 | Politics and the Rabbinate | Collaborative learning | Berakhot 27b |  |
| 7 | When Jerusalem was Destroyed… | Collaborative learning | Gittin 57a |  |
| 8 | Choni the Circle Maker: Progress vs. Process | Collaborative learning | Taanit 23a |  |
| 9 | 4 Questions you are asked when you die | Collaborative learning | Bavli Yoma 35b |  |

(In a course that lasts a whole year, the additional sessions should be added)

\* There may be changes in the syllabus depending on learning progress and effectiveness

**Final grade**

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| Description of the learning product | Weight in the final score |
| Writing a literary blog | Will account for 20% of the final grade |
| Group Presentation of a Solution to a Complex Case | 60% of final grade |
| Analysis of symptomatic description for possible diagnoses |  |
| Coding a component for a specific function in the system |  |

**Course** requirements

Weekly assignments will be given in the form of written analysis, summaries, and application of lessons through reflective writing and will constitute 40% of the course grade.

A course final representing 50% of the final grade will be administered at the end of the semester. Classroom participation and in-class presentations will account for 10% of the semester grade.

Attendance is mandatory, with 80% attendance as a minimum before negatively affecting final grade. Attendance below 50% will result in an incomplete or fail of the course.

 **Prerequisites**

Ability to read texts or translation of texts.

**Bibliography:**

**Suggested Readings**

Semester 1

Black, Jeremy; Green, Anthony (1992). *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press

Thompson, R. (1930) *The Epic of Gilgamesh.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Freud, Sigmund. "The Interpretation of Dreams". *Classics in the History of Psychology*

Jacobi, J. (1973) *The Psychology of C. G. Jung.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

Telushkin, Joseph (1991). *Jewish Literacy*. New York: William Morrow and Co.

Semester 2

*War of the Jews* Book V, sect. 99

Ben-Ami, Doron; Tchekhanovets, Yana (2011). "The Lower City of Jerusalem on the Eve of Its Destruction, 70 CE: A View From Hanyon Givati". *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. **364**: 61–85.

Katz, Steven T., ed. (2006). *The Cambridge History of Judaism: Volume 4: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*. Vol. 4. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goldenberg, Robert (1977). "The Broken Axis: Rabbinic Judaism and the Fall of Jerusalem". *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*.

Locke, J. (1689). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1998, ed). Book II, Chap. XXI, Sec. 17. Penguin Classics, Toronto

Nichols, Shaun; Joshua Knobe (2007-12-01). "Moral Responsibility and Determinism: The Cognitive Science of Folk Intuitions".

Kane, Robert; John Martin Fischer; Derk Pereboom; Manuel Vargas (2007). *Four Views on Free Will (Libertarianism)*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing

Fischer, R.M. (1994). *The Metaphysics of Free Will*. Oxford: Blackwell

Boyarin, Daniel (1995) *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture.* University of California Press