

JEWISHST 256: Jews and Muslims, Judaism and Islam, Spring 2015.

Cross listing: AMES 216, HISTORY 294, MEDREN 357, RELIGION 212

Areas of Knowledge: CZ

Modes of Inquiry: CCI, EI

Instructor: Oded Zinger

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Meeting time: Tu and Th, 10:05-11:20am.

Location: Languages 312

Office hours: Gray Building 322, Wednesday 10:00-11:00 (or by appointment).

Course description:

While today Jews and Muslims seem to be locked in an insoluble conflict, this was not always the case. It has long been recognized that many elements in Islam have unmistakable parallels in Judaism and that most of the features we associate today with rabbinic Judaism took their final shape under the rule of Islam. Various scholars have characterized the relationship between medieval Judaism and Islam in different ways, ranging from interfaith utopia to woeful discrimination. In this course, we will attempt to disentangle the complex relationship of Judaism and Islam from the beginning of Islam until the 13th century, a period in which the vast majority of Jews in the world lived under Islamic rule. The course will attempt to strike a balance between the examination of the relationship between these two rich religious traditions and the investigation into the historical experiences of Jews under Islamic rule. This balance will be reached by covering a wide range of topics through an equally large range of sources. We will begin from the initial encounter between Muhammad and the Jews in Medina and move on to examine shared cultural heritage of the two religions, the legal position of Jews in Islam and medieval works of polemics. Through the unique documents of the Cairo Geniza, we will explore the everyday realities of Jews who were thoroughly embedded in the surrounding Islamic and Arab culture.

Course structure and method:

The first half of the course will focus on the historical encounter between Jews and Muslims, while the second half will concentrate on the complex relationship between Judaism and Islam as religious traditions through the study of key texts. In both parts of the course, we will combine close reading of primary sources with secondary literature that will place the primary sources in their proper context. The primary sources are selected from a wide variety of genres, ranging from religious texts, works of *belles-letters*, historical accounts and private documents of everyday life. Such a broad range of sources will help us illuminate different aspects of Jewish-Muslim relations in the medieval Islamic world. The reading load will be less than 100 pages a week and toward the end of the course the amount of reading will drop as you will be preparing your final papers. The weekly instruction emails will also clarify what to look for in each reading assignment.

A note about reading primary sources:

Primary sources are never easy to understand as they were composed by people living in times, places, and cultures far removed from our own. This means that these texts demand an

imaginative leap and a willingness to understand other perspectives. Yet the effort has its reward, for these primary sources allow us to enter, however briefly, the lives of people who lived in times and places quite distant from our own and empathize with their ideas, fears, and aspirations.

Course requirements:

No knowledge of Arabic, Hebrew or previous familiarity with Islam or Judaism is necessary. We will meet twice a week. The first portion of each meeting will be devoted to a lecture and the second portion will be devoted to discussing the week's readings. I will post guiding questions for each week's readings in advance and students are required to post short answers before class. The purpose of these questions and answers is to discern which of the reading posed problems and to address these difficulties in the class discussion. A take home mid-term exam will be due on Week 6 and an 8-10 pages final paper will be due in the end of the class. The topic of the final paper will be decided by the student (in consultation with me). The final paper will require readings beyond those discussed in class.

Grading:

Final paper – 40%

Midterm – 20%

Class participation – 30%

Weekly questions – 10%

Textbooks:

Students should purchase the following book:

Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton UP, second edition: 2008). – Should be available at the Duke store. Also available as an electronic resource from the library: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.00003.0001.001>.

The rest of the readings will be uploaded to SAKAI.

We will also be making use of many chapters from Meddeb, Abdelwahab and Benjamin Stora, eds. *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations: From the Origins to the Present Day* (Princeton UP: Princeton, 2013) – abbreviated in the course outline below as *HJMR*. This book is under reserve in the Library and is also accessible online through the library. The relevant chapters will be uploaded to SAKAI.

Course Outline:

January 8: Introduction. Crash course in Middle Eastern history.

Week 1: Jan 13 and 15: The Quran.

- ❖ Session 1: The terms of the debate. Jews and Judaism in the Quran.
- ❖ Session 2: Jews and Judaism in the Quran (continuation).

Reading:

Primary sources:

- Selections from the Quran (Muhammad Abdel Haleem's translation).
- A few more quotations from the Quran (from Stillman).

Secondary sources:

- A debate on the pages of Tikkun (Mark Cohen, Norman Stillman and Avi Yonah)
- Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross*, 3-14 and 271-286.
- Fred Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, Chap. 2.

Week 2: Jan 20 and 22: Muhammad and the Jews of Medina.

- ❖ **Session 1: Pre-Islamic Arabia. Muhammad in Mecca. Early time in Medina.**
- ❖ **Session 2: Muhammad in Medina. The struggle and victory against Mecca.**

Primary sources:

- Two pre-Islamic Arab Poets
- A selection from Ibn Ishāq, *The Life of Muhammad*, trans. A Guillaume.
- The so called "Constitution of Medina" (translated by Michael Lecker).

Secondary sources:

- Al-Samawal ibn 'Adiya – a pre-Islamic Jewish Poet, *HJMR*, 940-942. .
- Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross*, 17-29.
- Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and a Source Book*, 3-21.

Week 3: Jan 27 and 29: The conquests and the legal position of the Jews under Islam.

- ❖ **Session 1:** The conquests.
- ❖ **Session 2:** The Pact of Umar.

Primary sources:

- The conquest of Jerusalem in the history of al-Ṭabarī.
- A conquest treaty from Spain, 208-209.
- A few extracts on Jews and the Arab conquests (Stillman, 152-156).
- Apocalypse Now (From Hoyland, ed. *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, 307-316).
- Al-Ṭurtūshī's version of the Pact of Umar.
- Al-Shāfi'ī's version of the pact to be accorded non-Muslims.
- A Jewish version of the Pact of Umar.

Secondary sources:

- Cohen, *Under Crescent & Cross*, 52-74 and 107-120.
- Milka Levy-Rubin, "Shurūṭ 'Umar: From Early Harbingers to Systematic Enforcement," 30-43.

Week 4: Feb 3 and 5: Economic and Social Considerations:

- ❖ **Session 1: The Cairo Geniza.**
- ❖ **Session 2: Economic and Social ties in Everyday Life.**

Primary Sources:

- The account of the Radhanite merchants.
- A responsum from Maimonides on a Jewish-Muslim workshop.

- Market Regulations in Muslim Seville – from Olivia Remie Constable, ed. *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim and Jewish Sources*, 227-231.
- Three Geniza merchant letters.
- Al-Jāhiz on the Jews.

Secondary sources:

- Mark Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, 77-106.
- Marina Rustow, "Jews and Muslims in the Eastern Islamic World," *HJMR*, 75-105.

Week 5: Feb 10 and 12: Jews and the Islamic State

- ❖ **Session 1: Jews as viziers, officials and physicians.**
- ❖ **Session 2: Jews in the Islamic legal Arena.**

Primary sources:

- Letter of appointment of a Head of the Palestinian Yeshiva (Halper 354)
- Letter of appointment of the Catholicos (from Lawrence I. Conrad, "A Nestorian Diploma of Investiture" in *Studia Arabica & Islamica*, 95-98).
- Cairo Geniza documents on Jews in Muslims courts.
- A petition to a court Jew.
- Two questions to Muftis on Abraham Maimonides' prayer reforms.

Secondary sources:

- Shi'ism and Judaism, Ismailism and Medieval Jewish thought - Amir Moezzi and Smet, *HJMR*, 816-827.
- Persecutions under al-Hakim, *HJMR*, 106-107.

Week 6: Feb 17 and 19: Jewish Family Life under Islam.

Primary sources:

- Geniza letters and court cases on married life.

Secondary sources:

- Joel Kraemer, "Women Speak for themselves," 189-216.
- Mordechai Akiva Friedman, "The Ethics of Medieval Jewish Marriage," 83-101.

A take-home mid-term exam will be due Wednesday, February 18 at 5pm.

Week 7: Feb 24 and 26. Shared heritage?

On cultural borrowing, symbiosis, convivencia, cross-pollination and commensurability.

- Session 1: The theoretical question.
- Session 2: Two test cases: the story of the flood and Abraham visiting Ishmael.

Primary Sources:

- Gilgamesh, Noah and Nūḥ - three versions of the flood, with Jewish Midrash and Christian sources.
- Abraham visiting Ishmael: *Ps. Jonathan* for Genesis 21: 9-21, *The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer* and al-Kisa'i, *Qisas Al-Anbiya*.

Secondary Literature:

(We will divide these readings to different people in class – to alleviate the burden).

- Abraham Geiger, *Judaism and Islam*, 1-17 (originally: *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judentume aufgenommen?* Bonn, 1833).
- Goitein, *Jews and Arabs*, 46-61 and 125-140.
- Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*, 67-106 ("The Judeo-Islamic Tradition").
- Steven Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam*, 3-12 and 206-237 (this is a challenging reading).
- Norman Stillman, "The Judeo-Islamic Historical Encounter: Visions and Revisions," 1-10 and "Judaism and Islam: Fourteen Hundred Years of Intertwined Destiny? An Overview," 10-20.
- James Montgomery, "Islamic Crosspollinations," 148-175.

Week 8: March 3 and 5: The Karaite alternative.

Primary Sources:

- Jacob al-Qirqisānī on the history of Jewish Sects and principles of Biblical Exegesis (from Leon Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 42-68).
- Solomon b. Jeroham's refutation of Sa'adya (from Leon Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*, 69-82)

Secondary Literature:

- Polliack – Medieval Karaism. 295-322
- Rina Drori, *Models and Contacts*, 126-157.
- Fred Astern, "Islamic Contexts of Medieval Karaism," 145-173.

- Spring recess –

Week 9: March 17 and 19: The Golden Age of al-Andalus – an exception or a myth?

Primary Sources:

- The Story of the Four Captives from *Sefer ha-Qabbala*, 63-66.
- A Jewish Warrior Poet – *Medieval Iberia*, 110-116
- Two Jewish Vizier in Granda – *Medieval Iberia*, 117-130
- Abraham Ibn Ezra's lament for Sefarad in the wake of almohad persecutions – *Medieval Iberia*, 265-266.

Secondary Literature:

- Menahem Ben-Sasson, "Al-Andalus : the so-called "Golden Age" of Spanish Jewry – a critical view," 123-137
- Mercedes Garcia-Arenal, "The Jews of al-Andalus," *HJMR*, 111-129.
- Samuel ibn Naghrela and Hisdai Ibn Shaprut, *HJMR*, 132-135.

Week 10: March 24 and 26: New Horizons (I): Philosophy, Mysticism and Medicine.

- Al-Qiftī and ‘Abd al-Latīf al-Baghdādī's descriptions of Maimonides.
- Maimonides' letter to his student Joseph about the proper study curriculum.
- A taste of Ibn Paquda's *Duties of the Hearts*.
- A selection from Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*.
- A Jewish husband who joined a Sufi group.

Secondary Literature:

- Steven Harvey, "Jewish and Muslim Philosophy: Similarities and Differences," *HJMR* 737-761.

Week 11: March 31 and April 2: New Horizons (II): Literature.

- A selection of poems of the Spanish tradition.
- The story of the Astrologer – *Medieval Iberia*, 260-264.
- Ten pieces of advice from a mother to her daughter upon the latter's marriage.

Week 12: April 7 and 9: Polemics and conversions.

- ❖ Session 1: Polemics.
- ❖ Session 2: Conversion.

Primary sources:

- Maimonides, "Epistle to Yemen."
- Maimonides, "Letter to Obadiah the Proselyte."
- Selection from Samawal al-Maghribī, *Ifḥām al-Yahūd*.
- Al-Humaydi horrified at interfaith majlis in Baghdad.

Secondary sources:

- M.R. Cohen and S. Somekh, "Interreligious Majālis in Early Fatimid Egypt" 128-136.
- Moshe Perlmann, "The Medieval Polemics between Islam and Judaism," 103-138.

Week 13: April 14 and 16: The great decline? Jews, Arabs and Islam today.

- ❖ Session 1: After 1250CE.
- ❖ Session 2: Today.

Secondary Literature:

- Mark Cohen, "The Crisis of 1442 (A Geniza Study)," 425-448.
- Tamer El-Leithy, "Sufi, Copts and the Politics of Piety: Moral Regulation in Fourteenth-Century Upper Egypt," 75-118.

Last class: April 21: Conclusion.

Resources:

*under reserve at Perkins Library, #under reserve at Divinity Library.

General reference:

Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World (5 vols.) Ed. Norman Stillman. Available online at:
<http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world>

Encyclopedia of Islam. 2nd Edition. Available online at:
<http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2>

*Meddeb, Abdelwahab and Benjamin Stora, eds. *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations: From the Origins to the Present Day* (Princeton UP: Princeton, 2013) – A useful and accessible survey.

For Islamic history these three works are useful:

Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (Pearson Education: Edinburgh, 1986, second edition: 2004).

Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1988, Second Edition: 2002).

Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Warner Books: New York, 1991).

More books of note:

*S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs: A Concise History of Their Social and Cultural Relations* (Mineola: Dover, 2005). Originally published in 1955, the 2005 Dover edition is a reprint of the 1974 third revised edition with a new introduction by Mark R. Cohen.

#Norman A. Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book* (Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia, 1979)

#Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1984.

#Heribert Busse, *Islam, Judaism and Christianity: Theological and Historical Affiliations* Markus Wiener Publishers: Princeton, 1988.

#F. E. Peters, *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, A new Edition*. Princeton UP: Princeton, 2004).

#F. E. Peters. *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: The Classical Texts and Their Interpretation*. Princeton UP: Princeton, 1990.

Jacob Lassner, *Jews, Christians and the Abode of Islam: Modern Scholarship, Medieval Realities*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2012.

David Nirenberg, *Neighboring Faiths: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the Middle Ages and Today*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 2014.

Note

Useful translations of Cairo Geniza documents:

*S. D. Goitein, *Letters of medieval Jewish traders*. Princeton UP: Princeton, 1973.

#S. D. Goitein and Mordechai Akiva Friedman. *India Traders of the Middle Ages: Documents from the Cairo Geniza*. Brill: Leiden, 2008.

*Shlomo Simonsohn, *The Jews in Sicily*. Brill: Leiden, 1997.

*Mark R. Cohen, *The Voice of the Poor in the Middle Ages*. Princeton UP: Princeton, 2005.