Rabbinic Narrative 2015
JWST 345
Tuesday, Thursday 14:35

The Course introduces Rabbinic literature through its unique way of telling stories: concise, minimalist narratives that often leaves the reader with more questions than answers. The course will introduce different Rabbinic genres, textual and cultural context. We will read stories about religious learning and intimate relationships, stories about charity and about stories Biblical stories. We will learn methods of literary reading and cultural studies we will follow our stories change along the years and, reading these old stories in the 21st century, we will also compare these minimalist stories with contemporary digital writing. All reading materials will be available in English.

Requirements and grade breakdown.
1. Class Participation (15%)
2. Preparing a Text for Class (15%, every class)
3. Bibliographic Assignment (10%, tracing sources, due on February 3rd)
4. Presentation of a Secondary Text (15% every student will present his own text)
5. Short Midterm Paper or Creative Adaptation of a Story (10%, due on March 10th)
6. Oral Presentation of a Final Paper Draft (10% due on March 14th)
7. Final Paper (25%, due on April 9th)

Course Topics
1. Introduction.
   Texts
2. Mishnah: Law and Narrative
3. Mishnah and Tosefta: Text and Variation
4. Midrash
5. Talmud
6. Late Midrash and Anthologies.
   Genres
7. The Sermon
8. The Hermeneutic Story
9. The Fable
10. The Sage Story
Rabbinic Culture
11. Sages and Priests (Cohanim)
12. The Destruction of the Temple
13. Tradition and Change
14. Life of Study
Topics in Rabbinic Stories
15. Men and Women
16. Charity
17. Suffering
18. Respecting one’s Parents

Bibliography

Essays to be presented in Class

Anthologies
* A classical anthology made by the Hebrew National Poet (located in a different location than the other in the library). The stories’ phrasing was kept as close as possible to the origin. Reference to sources is dull.
* The legends that relate to the biblical narrative are edited to an epic story. In order to use this book as a way to study the stories, one has to use it with the comprehensive scholarly notes on volumes V-VI. Volume VII is an index edited by the author’s student ten years after the book’s publication.
* This is an academic edition of a mediaeval anthology of tales of righteous men (exampla). This edition contains an index of sources and the Hebrew/Aramaic source.
* 300 stories with a comprehensive Index of sources. Many stories in the book do not originate from classic Rabbinic literature but from later books. You can tell by the List of Sources.
* An anthology of more than fifty stories edited by the subject, by a leading researcher of Rabbinic narrative with brief annotation.
S. Steven Notley and Ze’ev Sfrai, Parables of the Sages: Jewish Wisdom from Jesus o Rav Ashi, Carta, Jerusalem 2011.
* An anthology of 450 annotated parables, edited historically by the times of the text from which they are taken.
* This anthology contains Jewish stories heavily edited by the romantic author Berdichevsky. The volumes are divided to National Tales (mainly Biblical subjects), Rligious Tales (mainly of Rabbinic origin), Folktales and Oriental Tales. Unfortunately, the book lacks an index.
Reference:

Recommended Research: