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## Course Syllabus (Spring 2008)

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RELS 6603

Seminar in Early Judaism

W 6:30-9:15

Dr. John C. Reeves

Macy 204B

Office hours: TR 3:30-4:30; W 5:00-6:00; or by appointment

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### Course Description

‘Current and seminal issues related to the historical-critical study of early Judaism and its literature.’ The topic this semester will be **issues in the study of early Judaism** as construed chronologically from the beginning of the Second Temple to the Arab conquest of Syria-Palestine.

### Required Textbooks

Robert A. Kraft and George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1986).

Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

Jack N. Lightstone, *The Commerce of the Sacred: Mediation of the Divine Among Jews in the Greco-Roman World* (new ed.; New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

Some primary sources (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Syriac) in English translation may be assigned and/or distributed by the instructor.

Some additional secondary essays and articles may be distributed or assigned by the instructor.

## Course Requirements

a. *Research project.* One (1) formal research project will be presented in oral and written form (at least 20 double-spaced pages, exclusive of notes and list of sources) that focuses upon a particular topic relevant to the study of early Judaism. In consultation with the instructor, the student should select a topic of individual interest that permits such an extended exposition, analysis and/or evaluation. The project will be expounded orally at the final class meeting (April 23); the written papers are due by 12:00 PM one week later (April 30). The research project accounts for 50% of the course grade.

b. *Seminar presentations.* Excepting our first and final meetings, students will bear the primary responsibility for leading our discussion during the first portion of each class meeting. Preparation for these discussions is based upon, but not necessarily limited to, all the readings assigned for that class meeting from the primary and/or secondary resources found in *EJMI*, Schwartz, Lightstone, other assigned texts, and materials uncovered during the course of research.

c. *Individual involvement.* Almost perfect attendance (see below) is an essential requirement for this course. Each class meeting builds upon the knowledge gained during previous meetings. Moreover, in-class discussion, close reading, and analysis by both the instructor and class members comprise the bulk of every class meeting. Preparation for every class usually involves the completion of a series of required readings and/or written assignment(s), and individual students are often asked to initiate our collective examination and discussion of the weekly topics. Students are expected to contribute in an informed manner to the public analysis and discussion of any assigned topic. The instructor's collective assessment of one's attendance, weekly class preparation, seminar presentations, and oral contributions will constitute 50% of the final course grade.

d. *Zakhor* (Remember!): Mastery of the assigned readings, the timely completion of any written assignments, and diligent class attendance are necessary prerequisites for the successful completion of this course. Each student is responsible for all lectures, class discussions, hand-outs, assignments, and announcements, whether or not he/she is present when they occur.

## Miscellaneous Information

a. The grading scale used in this course is as follows:

- 91-95+ A = demonstrable mastery of material—outstanding performance
- 81-90 B = satisfactory performance of assignments
- 71-80 C = inadequate and/or faulty understanding of material
- 0-70 U = unacceptable graduate-level work

b. One of the requirements of this course is to complete the work of the course on time. Sometimes there are legitimate reasons for late work—an illness or other emergency. 'Emergency,' however, does not include your social involvements, travel plans, job schedule, disk and/or printer failures, the state of your love life, your

obligations to other courses, or general malaise over the state of the world. The world has been in a mess as long as anyone can remember, and most of the world's work is done by people whose lives are a mass of futility and discontent. If you haven't learned yet, you had better learn now to work under the conditions of the world as it is. **Therefore:**

- 1) All missing work is averaged as a 0 in the computation of the course grade.
- 2) All written work falls due on the dates scheduled in the syllabus, or on the date announced by the instructor in class (usually the next class meeting). 'Late' work will not be accepted from students who were privy to its oral evaluation and discussion (i.e., you were present while we 'went over it' but you neglected to do it beforehand). In the event of one's absence, 'late' submissions bear the following penalties: one day late/one letter grade; two days late/two letter grades; three or more days late/U. Please note: these 'days' are calendar days, not class meeting days. For accounting purposes, letter grades bear the following values: A=95; A-=92; B+=88; B=85; B-=82; C+=78; C=75; C-=72; U=35. An untyped written assignment, seminar paper, or final project automatically receives the grade U, as do those typed submissions which violate the required parameters or which the instructor deems physically unacceptable and/or grammatically incomprehensible.
- 3) Since your diligent physical participation is critical for the success of this course, attendance at class meetings will be monitored by the instructor. One absence is regrettable; two absences are the limit of tolerability. Three (3) or more absences will result in an automatic U for the course. Please note that the instructor does not distinguish 'excused' from 'unexcused' absences. Unsanctioned late arrivals and early departures will be tallied as absences.
- 4) Policy regarding Audits: the instructor expects auditors (whether formally enrolled as such or not) to meet the same attendance, preparation, and oral participation standards as those students who are taking the course for credit. The instructor does not expect auditors to prepare and submit any written assignments.

c. Assistance and solicitation of criticism is your right as a member of the class. It is not a privilege to be granted or withheld. Do not hesitate to request it nor wait too late in the course for it to be of help.

## **Rough Course Outline**

**Jan 9**

Introduction

**Required:**

*EJMI*: "Editors' Preface" (xi-xiii) and "Introduction: The Modern Study of Early Judaism" (1-30).

Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 1-16.

**Jan 16**

Inscribing the history of 'early Judaism'

**Required:**

*EJMI*, 33-56; 311-43.

Steve Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,"  
*Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38 (2007): 457-512.

### **Jan 23**

Types of 'early Judaism'

**Required:**

*EJMI*, 57-116; 437-77.

### **Jan 30**

Material evidence

**Required:**

*EJMI*, 157-220.

### **Feb 6**

Literature, Part One

**Required:**

*EJMI*, 119-73; 223-58.

### **Feb 13**

Literature, Part Two

**Required:**

*EJMI*, 259-343.

### **Feb 20**

Literature, Part Three

**Required:**

*EJMI*, 345-436.

### **Feb 27**

Literature, Part Four

**Required:**

*EJMI*, 437-77.

### **March 5**

No class (spring break)

## **March 12**

Lightstone, Part One

### **Required:**

Lightstone, *Commerce*, 1-62.

## **March 19**

Lightstone, Part Two

### **Required:**

Lightstone, *Commerce*, 63-97.

## **March 26**

Lightstone, Part Three

### **Required:**

Lightstone, *Commerce*, 98-129.

## **Apr 2**

Schwartz, Part One

### **Required:**

Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 19-99.

## **Apr 9**

Schwartz, Part Two

### **Required:**

Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 103-176.

## **Apr 16**

Schwartz, Part Three

### **Required:**

Schwartz, *Imperialism*, 179-292.

## **Apr 23**

Research projects and concluding business

## **Supplemental Bibliography for RELS 6603**

Study of the history and literature of early Judaism has spawned a tremendous amount of secondary scholarship, and I am hesitant to distill this work into a short list of 'approved' or 'canonical' treatments;

nevertheless, students need to begin somewhere. There are two important reference works which every student of Jewish studies should frequently consult: the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (16 vols. + supplements; Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), now newly revised (2007) and available online through the Atkins Library catalogue; and H. L. Strack and Gunter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991). These works provide numerous bibliographical suggestions for further reading, and I encourage everyone to learn how to use each of these resources.