

REL 3938 (15GD) / JST 3930 (15GB) / WST 3930 (15GO)

THE HEBREW GODDESS

Fall 2013

MWF 5<sup>th</sup>, WM 202

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**Gordon Rule 4000**

This course investigates the Goddess in Ancient Israelite religion as it moves from inclusion of both feminine and masculine aspects of the Divine to a strict form of monotheism associated with only a masculine God. There is less debate about the role of the Goddess or the feminine aspect of the Divine in other religions of the Ancient world. However, in part because of the political climate today, the topic of the Hebrew Goddess remains controversial. We will analyze some of these controversies as well as the evidence for the feminine aspect of the Divine in Ancient Israel.

The course centers on reading and analysis of texts. Course will include lecture and significant participation on the part of students.

**Grade Distribution:**

25% Abstracts (7)

30% Exam I (in-class and formal take home essays)

35% Exam II (in-class and formal take home essays)

10% Participation in active classroom discussion of texts, and in-class study-group activities

**Texts:**

Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*. Wayne State University Press, 1990.

Carol Meyers, *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*. Oxford University Press, 2012.

Selected chapters from other texts, available on e-reserves.

**Reading Schedule:**

I. **Myth as a Cross-Cultural Phenomenon**

Patai, "Introduction"



Mircea Eliade, "Sacred Space and Making the World Sacred" in *The Sacred and the Profane*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1957.

**II. Myth as a Cross-Cultural Phenomenon**

Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System" in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Perseus, 1973.

Jackson Lee Ice and John J. Carey, "Introduction" in *The Death of God Debate*. Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1967.

**III. The Hebrew Goddess**

Judith Plaskow, "Setting the Problem, Laying the Groundwork" in *Standing Again At Sinai*. New York: HarperCollins, 1991.

Patai, "The Goddess Ashera"

**IV. The Hebrew Goddess**

Patai, "Astarte-Anath" and parts 1-4 of "The Cherubim"

**V. The Hebrew Goddess**

Patai, parts 5-10 of "The Cherubim" and "The Shekhina"

**VI. The Hebrew Goddess**

Patai, "The Kabbalistic Tetrad" and

Beth Ellen Roberts, "The Female God of Isaac Rosenberg: A Muse for Wartime" on e-reserves

**VII. The Hebrew Goddess**

Patai, "The Myth of God and the Shekhina" and "The Shekhina as Maggid and Vision"

**VIII. The Hebrew Goddess**

Patai, "Lilith"

*Exam I – Friday, October 11<sup>th</sup>*

**IX. The Hebrew Goddess**

Patai, "The Sabbath – Virgin, Bride, Queen, and Goddess"

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- X.     **The Hebrew Goddess**  
Patai, "The Goddess in the Dura Synagogue?"
- XI.    **Rediscovering Eve**  
Meyers, Chapters 1 and 2
- XII.   **Rediscovering Eve**  
Meyers, Chapters 3 and 4
- XIII.  **Rediscovering Eve**  
Meyers, Chapter 5 and 6
- XIV.   **Rediscovering Eve**  
Meyers, Chapters 7 and 8
- XV.    **Rediscovering Eve**  
Chapters 9 and 10
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***NOTE ON ABSTRACTS:***

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**Abstracts**

Each student will submit seven typed, double-spaced abstracts of 5-7 sentences for seven readings of his or her choice. Abstracts are due on the day for which the



reading is assigned and must be turned in at the beginning of class. Abstracts should *explain*, in the space allotted, the central argument of the reading through three major pieces of evidence offered by the author. You can turn in **one** abstract per class session. Your abstract should be about the reading we are discussing that day. (You cannot do an abstract on a reading we have already analyzed in class.)

In writing, you are striving to make a balance between being direct and concise, and being substantive enough to explain the central argument. I prefer direct language and active voice. Avoid generalizations. Stick to direct, simple language that explains the central argument; the arguments and issues themselves can be complicated enough!

