Judaistik/Jüdische Studien

Weiter relevant für: Geschichte, Theologie, Religionswissenschaft, Religionspädagogik u. a.

Course: Jewish Studies
Group of courses: Humanities
Provided by: Prof. Dr. Birgit Klein
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Course objectives:

The goal is to enable students to recognize gender-specific constructions in all forms and occurrences of Jewish religion, history, and culture. Upon completing the curriculum, they will be able to place gender relations in a larger socio-political context by recognizing traditional Jewish concepts and images of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ as parts of a social classification pattern, and to connect these gender constructions and hierarchies to other social and cultural forms of organization. A further aim is to enable students to use their acquired knowledge in their professional practice.

Teaching content/subject-specific gender studies content:

The academic discipline of ‘Jewish Studies’ is dedicated to exploring the history, religion, and culture of the Jewish people and its languages – a history that spans more than 3,000 years. While seeking to map the big picture, researchers in this field simultaneously try to look at the diversity of Jewish manifestations and to identify continuity and change in the various historical periods and spaces, from the Second Temple period to contemporary history. In line with its complex subject, Jewish studies is comprised of a wide spectrum of subdisciplines: Bible study and Jewish Bible interpretation, rabbinic literature (e.g. Talmud and Midrash) and Halakha (Jewish law), history of the Jewish people, Jewish philosophy and intellectual history, Hebrew and Jewish literatures, Jewish art and music, Hebrew linguistics, Jewish religious education, and practical religious studies. This multiplicity of subdisciplines calls for an equally wide range of methodologies. Moreover, since Jewish religion and culture have always interacted with their surrounding societies, all findings generally need to be contextualized.

Until the late eighteenth century, as long as the values of traditional rabbinic culture continued to shape Jewish society, gender roles and power relations between men and women were defined in opposition to the concepts of masculinity that prevailed in the non-Jewish surrounding society – that is, by constructing the ideal of the gentle Jewish male, as epitomized by the Torah scholar. Inside the Jewish community, the study of traditional rabbinic literature served as a means for men to secure their dominance over women in rabbinic discourse; it thus fulfilled the same function as male physical dominance in other cultures. In pre-modern times, women could only engage in activities that were held in low esteem by the rabbinic value system, including various areas of profane education and certain forms of individual piety, but also housekeeping and trading. However, different gender roles were also attributed to men and women in the process of acculturation that occurred after the establishment of equal treatment before the law, as well as during the new social and political movements of the nineteenth and twentieth century. As a consequence, all forms and occurrences of Jewish religion, history, and culture need to be examined with regard to the gender relations expressed therein. Analysing gender constructions within the Jewish minority, in turn, allows for making statements about the respective surrounding society.

The following suggestions are meant as ideas on how to integrate gender research issues into the respective subdisciplines of Jewish studies:

- Bible study and Jewish Bible interpretation: How is gender constructed in Scripture – for example, in the stories of creation? Which roles do men and women assume? How were biblical gender roles reinforced by medieval commentators? How is contemporary female Bible interpretation different from male Bible interpretation?

- Rabbinic literature and Halakha: How are women and men represented in rabbinic literature?

What kinds of gender relations become manifest in Jewish marriage and inheritance law? To what extent are women and men assigned different spaces? What reasons are given, in terms of Halakha (religious law), for reserving certain mitzvoth (commandments) for women, for excluding women from the study of traditional rabbinic literature, and for excluding them from performing functions during religious services in the synagogue? To what extent do these traditional reasons reflect the attribution of gender roles? What is the present-day Halachic justification for the ordination of women as rabbis?

- History of the Jewish people: What was the meaning of the gender difference in situations of persecution, whether during the Crusades or under National Socialist tyranny in Germany? What were the effects of women's economic power on their legal status in the family and the community? Did the process of establishing equal status before the law produce different effects for each gender, and did women and men experience and shape it in different ways? To what extent did the bourgeois cult of domesticity entail a call upon women, as keepers of the home, to ensure the transmission of Jewish tradition? What factors led to a 'feminization' of Jewish community work? Why did the bourgeois attribution of gender roles remain in place even in the Zionist movement?

- Hebrew literature: Can the deluge of books published by female Israeli writers since the 1990s be seen as a kind of 'belated catching up' with a literary scene previously dominated by males (as novelists and poets, editors, publishers, and literary critics)? How is Hebrew literature penned by women, understood as a kind of 'letter from the hinterland' (Amalia Kahana-Carmon), different from the works of male authors? Is there mutual interplay between text and identity? Do Jewish women in the Diaspora write or read in different ways than Israeli women? Are oriental women, as writers and readers, different from Ashkenazic women, or orthodox women from secular women?

- Jewish philosophy and intellectual history: Is there anything like a feminist-Jewish political philosophy? Do we find similarities between Jewish-existentialist and feminist philosophical descriptions of the human condition? What conceptions of divine power have emerged in Jewish and feminist philosophy in the wake of the Shoah? How do feminist and rabbinic ideas of justice relate to one another? What is the role of Eros, Love, Death, and 'the Female' in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas?

Integration of gender studies content into the curriculum:

If possible, the gender perspective should be integrated into all modules and thematic fields as a cross-cutting theme; in addition, courses explicitly focused on gender issues may also be offered.

Degree Stage:

The abovementioned questions should be addressed during bachelor-level studies, and pursued in greater methodological depth during master-level studies, most importantly by going back to the original sources.

Basic Literature/Recommended Reading:

- Baader, Benjamin Maria (2006): Gender, Judaism, and Bourgeois Culture in Germany, 1800-1870. Bloomington, Ind. u.a.: Indiana University Press (Modern Jewish Experience).
- Baker, Cynthia M. (2002): Rebuilding the House of Israel: Architectures of Gender in Jewish Antiquity. Stanford, Ca: Stanford University Press.
- Baskin, Judith R. (Hrsg.) (1991): Jewish Women in Historical Perspective. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- dies. (2002): Midrashic Women: Formation of the Feminine in Rabbinic Literature. Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press and University Press of New England.
- Baumgarten, Elisheva (2004): Mothers and children: Jewish Family Life in Medieval Europe. Princeton, NJ u.a.: Princeton University Press.
- Berger, Ruth (2003): Sexualität, Ehe und Familienleben in der jüdischen Moralliteratur (900-1900). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz (Jüdische Kultur. Studien zur Geistesgeschichte, Religion und Literatur 10).
- Boyarin, Daniel (1997): Unheroic Conduct. The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man. Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press.
- Davidman, Lynn, Shelly Tenenbaum (Hrsg.) (1994): Feminist Perspectives on Jewish Studies. New Haven / London: Yale University Press.
- Domhardt, Yvonne, Esther Orlow und Eva Pruschy (Hrsg.) (2007): Kol Ischa. Jüdische Frauen lesen die Tora. Zürich: Chronos.
- Feinberg, Anat (Hrsg.) (1993): Rose unter Dornen. Frauenliteratur aus Israel. Gerlingen: Bleicher Verlag.
- Feldman, Yael S. (1999): No Room of Their Own: Gender and Nation in Israeli Women's Fiction. New York / Chichester: Columbia University Press.
- Grossmann, Susan, Rivka Haut (Hrsg.) (1992): Daughters of the King: Women and the Synagogue. Philadelphia/ Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society.
- Heinsohn, Kirsten, Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Hrsg.) (2006), Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte als Geschlechtergeschichte. Studien zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Göttingen: Wallstein.
- Hyman, Paula E. (1995): Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History. The Roles and Representation of Women. Seattle/ London: University of Washington Press.
- Ilan, Tal (1999): Integrating Women into Second Temple History. Tübingen: Mohr 1999 (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 76).
- dies. (1995): Jewish Women in Graeco-Roman Palestine. Tübingen: Mohr (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 44).
- dies. (1997): Mine and Yours are Hers. Retrieving Women's History from Rabbinic Literature. Leiden u.a.: Brill (Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 41).
- Klein, Birgit E.: „Erbinnen in Norm und Praxis: Fiktion und Realität im Erbstreit der Familien Liebmann – von Geldern", in: Andreas Gotzmann und Stephan Wendehorst (Hrsg.), Juden im Recht. Neue Zugänge zur Rechtsgeschichte der Juden im Alten Reich, Berlin 2007 (Beihefte der Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung 39), S. 175-205.
- Kratz-Ritter, Bettina (1995): Für „fromme Zionstöchter" und „gebildete Frauenzimmer". Andachtsliteratur für deutsch-jüdische Frauen. Hildesheim / Zürich / New York: Olms (Haskala. Wissenschaftliche Abhandlungen 13).
- Müller, Christiane E., und Andrea Schatz (Hrsg.) (2004): Der Differenz auf der Spur. Frauen und Gender in Aschkenas. Berlin: Metropol (minima judaica 4).
- Parush, Iris (2004): Reading Jewish Women. Marginality and Modernization in 19th-century Eastern European Jewish Society. Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press.
- Peskowitz, Miriam B. (1997): Spinning Fantasies. Rabbis, Gender, and History. Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press.
- Raphael, Marc Lee (Hrsg.) (2002): Gendering the Jewish Past. Introductory Essay by Pamela S. Nadell. Williamsburg, Virginia: Department of Religion, College of William and Mary.

- Richarz, Monika (Hrsg.) (2001): Die Hamburger Kauffrau Glikl – Jüdische Existenz in der frühen Neuzeit. Hamburg: Christians (Hamburger Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Juden 24).
- Rosen, Tova (2003): Unveiling Eve: Reading Gender in Medieval Hebrew Literature. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Rudavsky, Tamar M. (Hrsg.) (1995): Gender and Judaism. The Transformation of Tradition. New York / London: New York University Press.
- Sokoloff, Naomi, B., Anne Lapidus Lerner and Anita Norich (Hrsg.) (1992): Gender and Text in Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Literature. Cambridge, Mass. u.a.: Harvard University Press.
- Ulbrich, Claudia (1999): Shulamit und Margarete. Macht, Geschlecht und Religion in einer ländlichen Gesellschaft des 18. Jahrhunderts. Wien/ Köln/ Weimar: Böhlau (Aschkenas, Beiheft 4).
- Weissler, Chava (1998): Voices of the Matriarchs. Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women. Boston: Beacon Press.

Journals:

Nashim. A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues. Jerusalem, 1.1998-

Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal http://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/wjudaism, 1.1997