



## CEU Summer University

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### *Jews and Muslims in the Middle Ages*

July 12-23, 2004

Course director: **Mark R. Cohen**, Princeton University, USA  
Resource persons: **Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd**, University of Utrecht and Kairo  
**Gyöngyi Hegedűs**, University of Toronto and Budapest  
**Tzvi Langermann**, Bar-Ilan University  
**Gideon Libson**, Hebrew University  
**Raymond P. Scheindlin**, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York  
**Sarah Stroumsa**, Hebrew University

**Mark R. Cohen** The director of the course is Professor of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University and was in 2002-2003 a Fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. He is an historian of the political and social history of the Jews in the medieval Islamic world and an expert on the documents from the Cairo Geniza. Among his publications are *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages*, *Jewish Self-Government in Medieval Egypt*, and *Jewish Life in Medieval Egypt, 641-1382* (in Arabic).

**Gideon Libson** Professor in the Faculty of Law of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, he specializes in Jewish law in the Islamic world. He is the author of many articles and, most recently, of the book *Jewish and Islamic Law: A Comparative Study of Custom during the Geonic Period*.

**Tzvi Langermann** Professor in the Department of Arabic at Bar-Ilan University, he is an expert on Jewish and Arab science and medicine. His publications include *The Jews and the Sciences in the Middle Ages* and *The Exact Sciences among the Yemenite Jews* (in Hebrew).

**Sarah Stroumsa** Professor of Arabic at the Hebrew University, Professor Stroumsa is an expert on many aspects of Jewish-Muslim intellectual life. She has published numerous papers and several books, including *The Polemic of Nestor the Priest* and *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam*.

**Gyöngyi Hegedűs** Dr. Hegedűs has taught at the University of Szeged (Hungary) and is currently a Fellow in the Jewish Studies Program at the University of Toronto. She is a specialist on medieval Islamic and Jewish philosophy. Her articles include "Where is Paradise? Eschatology in Early Medieval Islamic and Judaic Thought." Her translation into Hungarian of the *Book of Beliefs and Opinions* by Saadya Gaon will soon be published.

**Raymond P. Scheindlin** Professor of medieval Hebrew literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (New York), he is an expert on the literature of the Jews in the Arab-Muslim Middle Ages. His many books include *Form and Structure in the Poetry of Al-Mu'tamid Ibn 'Abbad*, *Wine, Women, & Death: Medieval Hebrew Poems on the Good Life*, *The Gazelle: Medieval Hebrew Poems on God, Israel, and the Soul*, and he is one of the editors of *The Literature of Al-Andalus*.

#### **Course level, target audience**

The course is primarily intended for advanced graduate students and young faculty members in any field of the humanities or social sciences who are interested in the subject. No prior study of the field is required, though some familiarity with Islam or Judaism is useful.

#### **Course motivation and content**

Islam is of central interest on the international agenda in the Middle East, in Europe, and in the United States, and Jewish-Muslim relations, whether inside Israel or between Israel and her Muslim-Arab neighbors, occupy great attention. The course will offer an in-depth view of the history and culture of Jews living in Muslim lands in the Middle Ages, mainly during the classical centuries, from the rise of

Islam in the seventh century through about the thirteenth. It will present the state of the field, with emphasis on the research being done by some of the best scholars working on the subject. Symbolically, the course will take place in the same year that the world will be celebrating (with conferences, media attention, and publications) the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Moses Maimonides, the most famous Jew who lived under Islam in the Middle Ages.

The historiography of Jewish-Muslim relations is fraught with contradictions. In the past it was fashionable to speak of a "Golden Age," even of an "interfaith utopia." Later, this rosy view was extended by some to suggest that the harmony of the past was broken by the Zionist project and the creation of the State of Israel. More recently we hear from still others the claim that there never was a Golden Age at all. Rather, Jews have been persecuted by Islam since time immemorial, and contemporary troubles in Jewish-Arab relations are the result of an ancient and deeply-rooted Islamic hatred of the Jews.

Taking these historiographical issues as its starting point and paying attention to the policy implications that such a "medieval" subject has assumed in recent times, the course will branch out in interdisciplinary fashion to cover a broad range of topics in the Jewish-Muslim Middle Ages. Professor Abu Zayd will give lectures on the Qur'an and on Islam, providing a foundation for our further study of the relationship between Islam and Judaism. Professor Cohen will cover topics in Muslim-Jewish political relations, and social and economic life, and will also present one lecture on the Cairo Geniza and its importance for Jewish and Islamic history. Professor Libson will lead classes on such topics as legal sources in Jewish and Islamic law, methodological problems in determining the channels of mutual influence, early stages of Jewish influence upon Islamic law, and Muslim influence upon Jewish law. Professor Langermann's topics will include cosmology, major texts and issues in medicine, the debate concerning astrology, Jewish interest in Pythagorean arithmetic and astronomy, and Maimonides and the sciences.

The place of the Jews in the multi-religious, multi-cultural setting of the medieval Islamic world; Judaeo-Arabic linguistic symbiosis; Jewish-Muslim polemics; the Muslim image of the Jew; and Jewish sectarianism and the Karaite schism will be covered in the classes taught by Professor Stroumsa. Dr. Hegedus will introduce the large subject of Jewish theological and philosophical thought in the Islamic world. Topics will include the early development of rationalist theology in Judaism (beginning with Jewish adaptation of the Muslim Kalam), Saadya Gaon (d. 942 in Baghdad), the "founder" of Jewish philosophy in the Islamic world, and his oeuvre, the Karaite Kalam, comparison between Saadya's eschatology and that of the tenth-century Karaite thinker, al-Qirqisani, and later Islamic philosophical trends among the Jews. Professor Scheindlin will teach the literature unit of the course. This will include such topics as the emergence of the Judeo-Arabic intellectual in the tenth century; the rise of Judeo-Arabic literature and the new attitudes toward Hebrew; the revival of Hebrew poetry; the impact of Islamic mysticism and neoplatonism on Jewish literature and on the liturgy of the Jews; belletristic writing in Hebrew.

### **Teaching methods**

The format will vary from lectures to workshops discussing primary sources. Each resource person will compile a set of readings geared to his or her topics. These texts will be distributed in advance. At least one lecture will be illustrated (the lecture by Professor Cohen on the Cairo Geniza). An informal joint session or two is planned with the students and faculty in the course *Reconsidering Islamic Reformism – Comparative and Historical Perspectives*. A field trip to the famous David Kaufmann Cairo Geniza Collection in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and another to the Jewish quarter of Budapest are also being planned.

For more detailed biographies, updated course description, syllabus, reading lists please check <http://www.ceu.hu/sun/index.html>

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