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Jews and Muslims in the Middle Ages *Final Syllabus*

July 12-23, 2004

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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

- **Monday July 12**

- 1. Organizational meeting**

- 2. Jews and Muslims in history: the problematic (Cohen) (discussion)**

The “myth of the interfaith utopia and the “countermyth of Islamic persecution. How the subject of Jewish-Muslim relations in past time has become politicized by Jewish and by Arab writers and journalists in modern and contemporary times

- 3. Texts from the historiography of Jewish-Muslim relations (Cohen) (workshop)**

A selection of representative readings from Jewish and Arabist historiography will be read and discussed

- 4. Historical survey (Cohen) (lecture)**

A quick overview of Jewish history in the context of medieval Islamic history up to about the 13th century.

- 5. Political status of the Jews (Cohen) (workshop)**

The Islamic sources for non-Muslim political (legal) status, their origins and application. What was the Pact of `Umar? Discussion of the actual texts.

- **Tuesday, July 13**

- 6. The sectarian milieu (Stroumsa) (lecture)**

Introduction to the place of the Jews in the multi-religious, multi-cultural setting of the medieval Islamic world

- 7. The Language of Symbiosis (Stroumsa) (lecture)**

Judaeo-Arabic, Christian-Arabic. How much acquaintance with the Other's Scriptures? Terminology as evidence of influence.

- 8. Jewish-Muslim Polemics (Stroumsa) (lecture/discussion)**

The texts (*status questionis* before the opening up of the Russian Firkovich Collection); prophetology; exegetical concerns; Jewish converts to Islam

9-10. Legal sources of Jewish and Islamic law (Libson) (lecture)

Discussion of the sources of law in Judaism and in Islam

- Wednesday, July 14

11. Is the Qur'an a "Text" or a "Discourse?" (Abu Zayd) (workshop)

12. Methodology of Interpretation of Islamic Religious Texts: Historical Survey (Abu Zayd) (lecture)

13. The Cairo Geniza (Cohen) (illustrated lecture)

What was the Cairo Geniza? Its discovery and contents. What we can learn from it for Jewish and for Muslim history and culture. What is "Islamic geniza?"

14-15. Panel: Faculty: "Jewish and Islamic Hermeneutics"

E.g., the Islamic and Jewish story of the "sacrifice" of the son of Abraham/Ibrahim in Scripture and commentary: how the two religions understood this story in the light of their respective histories and belief systems.

Field Trip to Kaufmann Geniza Collection, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

- Thursday, July 15

16. Is the Sunna a Foundational Text Equal to the Qur'an? (Abu Zayd) (lecture)

17. The despised other (Stroumsa) (lecture/discussion)

Polemical theologoumena; abrogation of the law (*naskh*); distortion of revelation (*tahrif*); polemical stereotypes of the Jews; Qur'anic exegesis and as reflecting an inter-religious reality

18. Jewish-Christian polemics: a comparison (Stroumsa) (lecture/discussion)

Texts; Christology; trinitarianism; exegetical concerns

19. Jewish heresiography: pre-Islamic and early Islamic period (Stroumsa) (lecture/discussion)

The genre: Christian heresiography (the Church Fathers, John of Damascus; Islamic heresiography (al-Warraq, the mu`tazila, "the 72 sects" tradition); Jewish heresiography and its goals: Karaite (Qirqisani [10th century]) and Rabbanite (Ibn Daud [12th century]); pre-Islamic period: Sadducees, Maghariyya, Samaritans; early Islamic period: Isawiyya, Hiwi of Balkh.

20. Ananites, Karaites, Rabbanites (Stroumsa) (lecture/discussion)

The height of the debate in the tenth century; the scholarly debate on the origins of Karaism; Karaism in Palestine, Egypt, the Iberian Peninsula, Byzantium, Eastern Europe

Field trip to Jewish quarter of Budapest

- **Friday, July 16**

21. Methodological problems in determining channels of mutual influence (Libson) (lecture)
How can we determine who influenced whom? What are the methodological problems?

22. Early stages of Jewish influence upon Islamic law: Bible and Qur'an (Libson) (lecture)
How, in the early Islamic period, Jewish texts and ideas influenced nascent Islamic law.

23. Poverty and Charity in the Geniza period (Cohen) (workshop)
A case-study of how the Geniza is used for social history and for illuminating, not only Jewish society, but also, by comparison, Islamic society. With unpublished texts from the instructor's recently completed project in hand.

24. Geonic Period: Muslim influence upon Jewish law against a social, economic, and legal background (Libson) (lecture)
How, as Islam matured, influence flowed primarily from Islam to Judaism.

25. Selected topics of Muslim influence upon Jewish law (Libson)
Examples (with illustrative texts) of Islamic influence upon Jewish law: in family law; in private law; and in legal procedure with regard to oaths

- **Monday, July 19**

26. Methods of interpretation in Judaism in the Middle Ages (Hegedus) (lecture)
A methodological introduction to Scriptural exegesis, rational theology (*kalam*), philosophy (the Greek type of thinking), and mysticism.

27. Saadya Gaon and the rise of Judaeo-Arabic culture (Scheindlin) (lecture)
The early Geonic period; Saadya's career; the tenth-century revolution in Jewish literature; Arabic as a Jewish language and the changing role of Hebrew.

28. Maimonides and Islamic law (Libson)
Islamic influences that can be detected in the great Code of Jewish Law (*Mishneh Torah*, completed ca. 1180) of Maimonides

29-30. Group discussion; research reports

- **Tuesday, July 20**

31. What is rationalist theology? (Hegedus) (lecture)
The main topics addressed by the *kalam*, based on texts of Saadya Gaon, Qirqisani, and the Mughni of `Abd al-Jabbar.

32. The circle of Hasdai ibn Shaprut (10th century al-Andalus) (Scheindlin) (lecture)
Literature as a feature of leadership; Ibn Shaprut's protégés: Menahem, Dunash, and their disciples; the introduction of Arabic metrics; the linguistic controversy.

33. The literary achievement of Samuel the Nagid (11th century al-Andalus) (Scheindlin)
The Nagid's public career; the Nagid as the first major Hebrew poet of the Judeo-Arabic age; his three diwans.

34. The Kitab al-Amanat wa'l-I'tiqadat of Saadya Gaon (Hegedus) (workshop)

Structure, epistemology, and ontology in this classic work of Jewish *kalam*

35. Canonizing Cosmology (Langermann) (lecture)

Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Basic Laws of the Torah*, chapters 1-4. (A close reading of Maimonides' succinct presentation of the basic structures and rules of the cosmos and its relationship to the scientific consensus of his day.)

- **Wednesday, July 21**

36. Major texts and issues in medicine (Langermann) (lecture)

A survey part bibliographic and part topical; description of the major medical texts read and produced by Jews in Arabic speaking lands, with special emphasis upon Ibn Sina's *al-Qanun fi 'l-Tibb* and its satellite literature; and a discussion of some the major controversies, especially those in which the views of two great Greek authorities, Aristotle and Galen, are pitted one against the other) (with some transparencies)

37. The faylasuf as poet (Scheindlin) (lecture)

Neoplatonism as a force for liturgical renewal; Ibn Gabirol's liturgical poetry; his poetic persona.

38. Reaction to the Golden Age: Judah ha-Levi (lecture)

Anxiety about the Judeo-Arabic symbiosis: Halevi's turn to piety; his pilgrimage; his poetry

39. The debate concerning astrology (Langermann) (lecture)

Discussion of scientific, philosophical, and theological aspects of the debate.

40. Sefer Yetzira: Arabic commentaries to an ancient (?) Hebrew text (Langermann) (workshop)

Debate still ranges as to the proper dating of *Sefer Yetzira*. For our purposes, however, the key point is that students of that book in the Islamic world saw it to be an ancient repository of true—that is to say, congruent with the current consensus—science, and, from this point of view, sought to ferret out its scientific teachings

- **Thursday, July 22**

41. Saadya's philosophical commentary on the Sefer Yetzirah ("Book of Creation") (Hegedus) (lecture)

An attempt to demonstrate that while composing a commentary on the *Sefer Yetzira* Saadya made use of a philosophical terminology different from the language of the *kalam*.

42. Karaite Kalam (Hegedus) (lecture)

The *Kitab al-Anwar wa'i-maraqib* ("Book of Lights and Watchtowers") of Ya'qub al-Qirqisani.

43. Pythagoreanism (Langermann) (lecture)

Jewish interest in Pythagorean arithmetic and astronomy, and a general assessment of the place of Pythagoreanism within the history of mathematics in Islamic lands.

44. Ibn Kammuna and the "New Wisdom" (Langermann) (workshop)

A study of new directions in medicine, physics, and astronomy in the wake of the Mongol conquests of the thirteenth century, as these are reflected in the writings of the Jewish savant Sa'd ibn Mansur Ibn Kammuna (13th century, Baghdad).

45. Poems of Judah ha-Levi (Scheindlin) (workshop)

Reading of some of Halevi's pilgrimage poems.

- **Friday, July 23**

46. Judah al-Harizi and the Maqama (Scheindlin) (lecture)

Literature of entertainment in prose; the Arabic and the Hebrew maqama; al-Harizi's achievement

47. Maimonides and Saadya (Hegedus) (lecture)

A comparison between the Aristotelian method of Maimonides and the *kalam* method of Saadya.

48. Maimonides and the sciences (Langermann) (lecture)

Jewish interest and attitudes towards the various scientific disciplines, and the scientific enterprise as a whole, as these are reflected in, and shaped for later generations by, the thought of Moses Maimonides.

Summation: faculty and students

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