Professor Kwall
Office #826—hours are Monday/Wednesday from 2:00-2:30 and 3:45-4:15
(and by appointment)
312-362-8131
rkwall@depaul.edu

Ellen LeVee, PhD
Office hours by appointment
elevee@depaul.edu

Course Description

Women and Jewish Law will examine the primary issues of Jewish Law affecting
women, particularly as they pertain to Family Law. Among the topics that will be
highlighted are marriage, divorce, sexual relations, and child rearing responsibilities. The
course will involve an examination of both the classical Jewish law texts on these topics
(in English) as well as a discussion of more current positions on the issues covered.
There are no prerequisites and students need not have any background or religious
affiliation to take this class.

Course Materials

Women and Jewish Law: The Essential Texts, Their History, and Their Relevance
for Today by Rachel Biale (“WJL”)

Feminism Encounters Traditional Judaism, Tova Hartman (“Encounters”)

Handouts (articles, cases)

Grading (Please read carefully)

The class grade will be based on two 5 page reflections papers addressing two of
the course topics (20%) and a research paper on a relevant topic of the students’ choice
consisting of 20 double spaced pages, plus footnotes (80%). Students can choose which
of the topics to write about for the reflection papers. Grading will be based on content,
research, and writing.

Unexcused absences or lack of preparation will result in a lowering of the
final grade. In addition, the rule on absenteeism in the College of Law Bulletin
(p.32) provides that excessive unexcused absences will result in an involuntary
withdrawal. If a student is involuntarily withdrawn from a class, full tuition is due and
the student will receive a grade of "FX" in the course. "FX" is a grade for non-credit
performance based on excessive absences with no withdrawal. It affects the student's
grade point just like a grade of an "F".
WORKING ASSIGNMENT SHEET

Class 1 – January 12: INTRODUCTION


Class 2 – January 19: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS (halakhic considerations)


Class 3 – January 26: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS (feminist considerations I)

Cynthia Ozick, “Notes toward Finding the Right Question” in *On Being a Jewish Feminist*, pp. 120-151.


Class 4 – February 2: GUEST LECTURE: PROFESSOR CLAIRE SUFRIN (feminist considerations II)

Claire Sufrin, “The Legal Turn in Jewish Feminist Thought.”


Class 5 – February 9: WOMEN’S PUBLIC RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

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WJL, pp. 10-43.

Daniel Sperber- On Women in Rabbinic Leadership Positions, 8 Meorot, pp. 1-12.

Elliot Dorff, Ordination of Women, in Unfolding Tradition, pp. 487-494.

RCA 2010 Convention Resolution on Women’s Communal Roles in Orthodox Jewish Life

Class 6 – February 16: MARRIAGE

WJL, pp. 44-69.

Judith Hauptman, Rereading the Rabbis, pp. 60-74.


Class 7 – February 23: NIDDAH

WJL, pp. 147-174.

Encounters, pp. 81-98.

Class 8 – March 2: RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SEXES

WJL, pp. 121-146.


Encounters, pp. 45-61.

Class 9 – March 9: ISSUES OF PROCREATION

WJL, pp. 198-218, 219-238.


Dorff, Unfolding Tradition, 499-504.

Class 10 – March 16: (to be rescheduled for March 28th at noon):

RAPE

WJL, pp. 239-255.
Class 11 – March 30: **DIVORCE**

*WJL*, pp. 70-101.


The Semel Case--handout

Class 12 – April 6: **THE AGUNAH AND YEVAMAH**

*WJL*, pp. 102-120.


Class 13 – April 13: **AT THE INTERSECTION OF JEWISH AND AMERICAN LAW & EPILOGUE**


*WJL*, pp. 256-266.

*Encounters*, 99-133.