The next feast to be held after the “Trumpets” is the fast. Perhaps some of the perversely minded... will say, What sort of a feast is this in which there are no gatherings to eat and drink...

[Moses] gave [Yom Kippur] this name [i.e. feast] for many reasons...
To one who has learnt to disregard food and drink which are absolutely necessary, are there any among the superfluities of life which [one] can fail to despise...
Secondly, because the holy-day is entirely devoted to prayers...

This course is focused on furthering, but also building on, the technical skills that students have already acquired in reading and understanding Talmudic pericopae and commentaries, with the goal of moving from simply understanding and repeating texts to synthesizing, analyzing, and making an argument about what the text teaches—explicitly or implicitly, intentionally or unintentionally. We will also work to be explicit about how technical arguments about the structure of a sugya, legal details, or literary techniques translate into practical religious meaning.

With these goals in mind, we will be doing two different things at the same time this semester, and trying to relate these two components of our work to each other. We will be engaged in close reading of the first half of the eighth סדר מועד [maschita], and we will also be reading articles by scholars on various סוגיות from throughout סדר מועד. Some weeks the connection between this work will be more natural, and others it will simply be the result of trying to get both in, but I hope that over the course of the semester these two tracks will come together and strengthen each other. In both cases, our work is to think about arguments one can/should make about what a text is teaching us, both explicitly and (especially) implicitly, and to articulate what meaning that has for our religious lives.

Objectives
1) To increase our facility in reading, translating, and understanding the text of the Talmud, with an emphasis on reading with speed.
2) To develop our ability to use prestamim, collections of midrash, Yerushalmi, ראשונים and אחרונים, dictionaries, and manuscripts to make sense of challenging moments in the text of the בבלי
3) To develop an appreciation for the legal/religious thinking of ראשונים and אחרונים independent of the Talmud text and to think about how their views about boundaries differ from each other and from those of the Rabbis
4) To develop the ability to make a clear and sustained argument about a text or topic.
5) To increase our ability to draw out underlying concerns/religious impulses in the Talmudic text and analyze the ways in which Talmudic language illuminates and/or obscures those underlying concerns/religious impulses
6) To think about different approaches to Talmud study and what they offer (and what they obscure).
**Required texts**

*Massekhet Yoma.* We will be studying the first half of the eighth *perek* of *massekhet Yoma.* We may, from time to time, explore passages in the tractate that were not assigned prior to class, so bringing photocopies or printouts from Bar-Ilan is not sufficient. You should have a copy of the “Vilna Shas” edition with the “boys in the back,” e.g. Rosh, Rif, Mordokhai, etc. I highly recommend getting the Oz Vehadar edition (ideally) or the Shas Vilna Hadash (less so), which are more expensive, but any edition with commentators in the back will do in a pinch.

**Recommended texts**

*Peirush haRitva Massekhet Avodah Zarah, Mossad haRav Kook edition.* I actually don’t intend to make so much use of the Ritva in this course. However, the *Mossad haRav Kook* edition of the Ritva is an extremely useful, relatively affordable volume to own because of the footnotes. Thus, in general, if one is looking to buy useful resources on a limited budget, I recommend this as a first place to start. (If cost is less of an issue, there are often more useful, but also more expensive routes to go; I’m happy to talk about options face-to-face).

**Triggers**

There’s been a lot of talk in education recently about “triggers,” topics that may make a student in a class feel unsafe, especially for students who have had personal experiences that may make them more sensitive to problematic aspects of a text. I personally have mixed feelings about the growing practice of providing “trigger warnings,” advance notice of such a topic in a text (and I’m happy to talk outside of class about why my feelings on this are mixed), but one of my main hesitations is how hard it can be to predict what will trigger someone else. Therefore, I’m trying something new for this course, and I hope you will help me out with this. I have created a google document—you can find it at the following url: http://tinyurl.com/nw53u3a

If there are certain topics that you know make you feel unsafe and for which you’d like warning, I hope that you will feel secure to let me (and/or your classmates) know in one of two ways:

1) Anonymously (or not; if it helps you, you could certainly “sign” with your name) put it into the google doc linked above. Just write what your trigger(s) is(are). The advantage of doing this is that not only do I know that someone in the class has this trigger, but so do your classmates, such that all of us know to treat this conversation with even greater kindness and sensitivity if it comes up in classroom conversation.

2) Email me if you’d like for me to know but are uncomfortable putting it up on a google doc.

This is an experiment for me this year, and I must be honest and admit that I don’t know how it will go. I am committed to trying it out, but I will happily hear feedback from you about how to improve this system (or whether to jettison it) as the semester goes on.

**Course Requirements**

1) Class participation/preparation (35%). Attendance is required; if you know that you must miss a class, please notify me in advance. When you miss class, you are expected find out what you missed from your hevruta and/or me and to submit, within a week of the missed class, one page (or more) summarizing your understanding of what was discussed that day. Each class, I will ask one student to summarize the argument of the secondary reading assigned. You will be
regularly called on, and your ability to read and explain the text will be a primary component of this grade. Please be aware that many people can read fluently without understanding what they are reading, while others may stutter and sound unprepared despite complete comprehension. You will be graded based on your comprehension and ability to explain, not your charismatic (or uncharismatic) reading style.

2) Outlines (15%). You will sometimes be asked to prepare, in English or in Hebrew, outlines of passages in the assigned סוגיא/ראשונים and/or אחרונים, to be turned in. The outline should paraphrase each step of the סוגיא/ראשון/אחרון and describe what function that step plays in the larger structure (e.g. attack, resolution, question, etc.).

4) Final paper (50%). You will write a paper about a סוגיא, not discussed in class, in סדר מועד. You are to translate the סוגיא, and to translate and make use of at least three different kinds of methodological tools discussed in class (e.g. different ראשונים or אחרונים other than Rashi, a manuscript, a parallel text, etc.) to help explain what is difficult, intriguing, troubling, etc. about your סוגיא. You are to make an argument about your סוגיא in this paper, and to articulate why it is religiously relevant. You will be evaluated primarily based on the accuracy of translations and thoughtfulness of analysis, but I will also provide feedback on your writing; failure to improve one’s writing between drafts based on my feedback will affect your evaluation.

1. You must have a סוגיא selected and approved by me by 20 October. Please schedule time to meet with me to begin discussing this well before this date, especially if you have no idea how to go about choosing such a סוגיא.

2. By 3 November, please share with me, either via email or through an in-person meeting, your initial thoughts about the סוגיא you’ve chosen and what tools you plan on using in writing your paper.

3. By 24 November, please submit the argument of your paper and an outline of what you intend to do. (If you have parts already written, by all means feel free to submit those as well).

4. By 5 December, please submit a rough draft of your paper. I will return this to you with comments by 12 December. This leaves you with only one week to revise; that is by design. The bulk of your work should be done by this point, and your arguments and use of tools already approved by me as a result of the earlier steps in this process. Most of the revisions here should be of style.

5. The paper is due 19 December (the last day of the semester).

6. Evaluation of the paper will be by the following rubric:
   1. On-time completion of steps 1–4: 5% each (for a total of 20%)
   2. Accuracy of translations of סוגיא and other Hebrew/Aramaic tools used: 25%
   3. Selection of a variety of sources: 15%
   4. Coherency of argument: 15%
   5. Articulation of religious relevance: 15%
   6. : 10%