About the UCLA Center for Jewish Studies:

The Center for Jewish Studies at UCLA explores the riches of Jewish history, religion, and culture through rigorous academic research, high-quality teaching, and a wide array of scholarly and public programs. Through its first-rate faculty expertise, the Center cultivates a lush garden of Jewish culture that extends from Iran to Italy, from Jerusalem to Los Angeles. Located in the heart of Los Angeles, the Center embodies the flourishing, multi-faceted Jewish culture and history of the city itself.

About the Program of Iranian Studies at UCLA:

The Program of Iranian Studies at UCLA is one of the few programs in the Americas that covers the entire spectrum of Iranian Studies, and offers courses embracing the languages and cultures of Pre-Islamic and Muslim Iran. Among the distinctive strengths of the Program of Iranian Studies at UCLA is the focus on medieval Persian and Arabic philosophy, the study of Old and Middle Iranian philology, as well as of Ancient Iranian history. The Program further concentrates on Judeo-Persian literature, which is regularly read, and most recently, in conjunction with the Program of Jewish Studies at UCLA, on Iranian and Jewish interactions.
For several decades, scholars of rabbinic literature have looked towards Rome, and Greco-Roman culture more generally, in order to provide a framework for understanding rabbinic texts of Palestinian provenance. This attempt to reach beyond the strictures of the literature itself has opened up avenues of inquiry and has yielded a more nuanced understanding of how Jews as a minority participated within the Greco-Roman world. More recently, scholars of the Babylonian Talmud have turned to the orbit of the Iranian civilization. Undoubtedly, the notion that the rabbis of the Talmud may have been exposed to the theological and liturgical discourse of the Zoroastrian religion, or more directly affected by Sasanian legal practices, has many significant implications for scholars of Rabbinics, as well as for Iranists. On this rare occasion, scholars within the two disciplines—Talmudic and Iranian Studies—shall be working in concert to examine the interaction between Jewish and Iranian cultures in terms of legal exegesis, literature, and religious thought.

In order to facilitate this long neglected, but crucial, discourse, we are convening a symposium devoted to “The Iranian Context of the Babylonian Talmud.” This gathering of prominent scholars in both fields shall, as we hope, contribute, to the ongoing conversation on the nexus between Sasanian and Rabbinic law, and the interrelationship between religion and literature in both traditions.

SUNDAY, MAY 6, 2007 | 314 Royce Hall, UCLA

4:00 pm — Junior Scholars Session
The Road Ahead
Chair: Dvora Weisberg (Hebrew Union College)

Participants:
In Search of the Zand’s Stam: The Application of Critical Talmudic Methodology to Middle Iranian Studies
Shai Secunda (Yeshiva University)

Rabbinic Depictions of the Achaemenid Kings Cyrus and Darius
Jason Mokhtarian (UCLA)

Intertextuality, OmnисIgnificance, and Zoroastrian Interpretation
Yuhan Vaivana (Harvard University)

Respondent:
Prods Oktor Skjaervo (Harvard University)

7:30 pm — Evening Plenary
At the Crossroads of Talmudic and Iranian Studies
Chair: Carol Bakhos (UCLA)

Participants:
A Generation of Talmudic Studies
David Goodblatt (UCSD)

The Stokes for Iranian Studies
M. Rahim Shayegan (UCLA)

MONDAY, MAY 7, 2007 | UCLA Faculty Center

9:30 am
Babylonian Talmud in Light of Iranian Evidence
Chair: Gail Labovitz (University of Judaism)

Participants:
Persia in Light of the Babylonian Talmud: Echoes of Contemporary Religion and Politics
Geoffrey Herrmann (The Jewish Theological Seminary)

Talmudic Attitudes toward Dreams and Dream Interpreters in Their Cultural Context
Richard Kalmin (The Jewish Theological Seminary)

Robin Hood Is Out of the Barn!
James Russell (Harvard University)

Respondent:
Isaiah Gafni (Hebrew University, Jerusalem)

1:00 pm
Zoroastrian Practices, Sasanian Jurisprudence, and the Talmud
Chair: Hossein Ziai (UCLA)

Participants:
Allusions to Sasanian Law in the Babylonian Talmud
Maria Macuch (Freie Universität Berlin)

On Style and Religious Terminology in the Pahlavi Literature
Prods Oktor Skjaervo (Harvard University)

The Babylonian Talmud, the Magic Bowls, and the Iranian Background
Shaui Shaked (Hebrew University, Jerusalem)

At the Cusp of a Sasanian Legal Development: Herbedestan 8-9
Yakov Elman (Yeshiva University)

Respondent:
Carlo Cereti (Università di Roma “La Sapienza”)

3:15 pm — Coffee Break

3:30 pm — Roundtable Discussion
Past Achievements and New Directions
Chair: Carol Bakhos (UCLA)

Participants:
Touraj Daryaee (Cal State, Fullerton)
Clarisse Herrenschmidt (Centre National de La Recherche Scientifique, Paris)
Aryeh Cohen (University of Judaism)
Steven Fraade (Yale University)

Additional Information:
The lecture is free. Advance Registration is required. To RSVP, please email the Center at cjsrsvp@humnet.ucla.edu or call the RSVP line at (310) 267-3327.

Please note that seating is limited and will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Changes may occur; please visit www.cjs.ucla.edu for updates and information.

VENUE: Sunday’s session will meet in 314 Royce Hall. Monday’s session will meet in the California Room in the Faculty Center. For a campus map, please visit www.ucla.edu/map.

PARKING: To purchase a parking permit stop by the kiosk at the corner of Westholme and Hilgard Avenue. Attendees will direct you to the nearest available parking structure.