This course will introduce you to that great classic of Jewish culture, the Talmud. Part legal compendium, part ritual manual, part narrative anthology, the Talmud is an idiosyncratic, complex, profound and humorous meditation on many aspects of life including law, ritual, desire and God. Through an examination of the historical conditions of those who framed it and an in-depth introduction to its literary features, you will learn to analyze and read this ancient document produced in the first few centuries of the Common Era in Palestine and in Babylonia by the Jewish sages. In order to deepen our understanding of rabbinic culture, we will also study other important rabbinic sources such as the Mishnah and Midrash, as well as sources related to the Christian, Greco-Roman and Sasanian-Persian environments in which the rabbis lived.