JUDAIC STUDIES

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Associate Professors  Elli Stern (Religious Studies; History), Marci Shore (History)

Assistant Professor  Jacqueline Vayntrub (Divinity)

Senior Research Scholar  Margaret Olin (Divinity; History of Art; Religious Studies)

Senior Lecturer  Peter Cole (Comparative Literature)

Senior Lecturer II  Shiri Goren (Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations)

Senior Lecturer I  Dina Roginsky (Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations)

Lectors  Josh Price, Orit Yeret (Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations)

Judaic Studies offers an interdisciplinary approach to the critical study of the culture, history, languages, literature, religion, and thought of the Jews. Jewish institutions, philosophies, societies, and texts are studied critically and in comparative historical perspective in relation to the surrounding societies and cultures.

Graduate-level programs are available through the following departments: Comparative Literature (Hebrew and Comparative Literature), History (Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Jewish History), Religious Studies (History and Literature of Ancient Judaism, Medieval and Modern Jewish History, Philosophy of Religion), Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (Northwest Semitic, Hebrew Language and Literature), and Philosophy. Applications are made to a specific department, and programs of study are governed by the degree requirements of that department.

Other resources include the Judaica collection of Sterling Memorial Library and its Judaica bibliographer, the Fortunoff Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, the biweekly faculty/graduate student Judaic Studies Seminar, several lecture series, postdoctoral fellowships, and graduate fellowships in Judaic Studies.

Additional information is available on request to the director of graduate studies of the department of intended specialization, or to the Chair, Program of Judaic Studies, Yale University, PO Box 208282, New Haven CT 06520-8282, and at http://judaicstudies.yale.edu.

COURSES

For course offerings in the Hebrew language and in Israeli society and culture, see Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

JDST 674b / HEBR 578b, Languages in Dialogue: Hebrew and Arabic  Dina Roginsky

Hebrew and Arabic are closely related as sister Semitic languages. They have a great degree of grammatical, morphological, and lexical similarity. Historically, Hebrew and Arabic have been in cultural contact, especially in medieval Spain, the Middle East, and North Africa — as evidenced by the Judeo-Arabic languages. In modern Israel, Arabic is the native tongue of about 20 percent of the population, yet lack of communication exists today between Hebrew speakers and Arabic speakers for mainly political reasons. This advanced Hebrew class explores cultural and linguistic contacts between the two languages and relationships between the communities, including both Jewish and non-Jewish Arabic speakers and Hebrew speakers. Additionally, students benefit from regular meetings with a parallel Arabic class that discusses similar topics. The shared meetings enable Hebrew learners and Arabic learners to participate together in one class, to promote social interaction based on mutual respect, and to focus on cultural and linguistic aspects of the material.

JDST 677a / CPLT 574a, Marxist Theory of Literature  Hannan Hever

Marxist thought has played a major role in the understanding of literary institutions, as well as literary texts. Within Marxist thought, literature always had a unique function in the processes of ideology, class struggles, and the constitution of the subject; material Marxism, cultural Marxism, European Marxism, and neo-Marxism all studied the work of literature as an institution and as both reflection and construction of reality, and of its perception. The aim of this seminar is to acquaint ourselves with Marxist theories of literature in the twentieth century. We start with the very basics of Marxism, focusing especially on the theory of ideology. We then study Lukács's theory of literature as the basis of the development of Marxist literary theory, followed by the literary theories developed by the Frankfurt
School, the materialistic school of Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, E.P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Terry Eagleton, Catherine Belsey, Fredric Jameson, and others. Open to undergraduates. All texts are in English, and no previous knowledge is required.

JDST 602a / HSAR 731a / RLST 798a, Witnessing, Remembrance, Commemoration  Margaret Olin
Memory and its expressions structure and inform many aspects of contemporary visual culture. Beginning with Albert Camus's novel *The Plague*, this seminar pursues readings about memory and witnessing chosen from among the works of such writers as Sigmund Freud, Frances Yates, Maurice Halbwachs, and the authors of the book of Genesis, as well as writings about commemoration by James Young and Pierre Nora, among others. Discussions apply these readings to the study of witnessing and memorializing as artistic practices and examine visual realizations of such works, including some monuments and memorials near campus—but with a nonexclusive emphasis on Jewish examples, such as videos in the Fortunoff archive. Student projects center on theory or on special cases of witnessing or commemoration, ritual, memorial practice, and monuments, whether built, written, aural, electronic, or played out on the streets. Qualified undergraduates welcome.

JDST 701a / RLST 763a, The Bible  Christine Hayes
This course introduces students to the writings common to both Jewish and Christian scripture (the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible or Tanakh found in all Bibles) and examines these writings as diverse and often conflicting expressions of the religious life and thought of ancient Israel as well as a foundational element of Western civilization. Special emphasis on the writings’ cultural and historical setting in the ancient Near East; close reading of selected passages; the interpretive history of selected passages influential in Western culture. Students are also introduced to a wide range of critical and literary approaches to biblical studies, including source criticism, tradition criticism, redaction criticism, and contemporary literary criticism. Students view course lectures, which survey the entire Bible, online; class time focuses on comparative materials, close readings, and the interpretation of specific biblical passages in Jewish and Christian culture.

JDST 720b, Aramaic Incantation Bowls from Sasanian Mesopotamia  Staff
This course is an introduction to the study of Aramaic incantation bowls. It focuses especially on intersections with the Babylonian Talmud and other Jewish traditions but also considers the relevance of non-Jewish Mesopotamian sources (e.g., Mandaeans, Syriac Christian, Zoroastrian, Manichaean, ancient Assyrian/Babylonian) and compares contemporaneous and diachronically stratified traditions throughout the Mediterranean, Near East, and Iranian Plateau. We consider the utility and drawbacks of different methodological approaches and explore relevant theoretical and pragmatic issues, including matters of textual transmission, orality and materiality, ritual practice, cosmology, communal identity and authority, gender and sexuality, and the interplay of religion, science, magic, medicine, and other aspects of culture in late antiquity. Prerequisite: previous experience with Hebrew or Aramaic.

JDST 721b / NELC 703b / RLST 751b, Introduction to Judaism in the Ancient World: From Temple to Talmud  Steven Fraade
The emergence of classical Judaism in its historical setting. Jews and Hellenization; varieties of early Judaism; apocalyptic and postapocalyptic responses to suffering and catastrophe; worship and atonement without sacrificial cult; interpretations of scriptures; law and life; the rabbi; the synagogue; faith in reason; Sabbath and festivals; history and its redemption.

JDST 727b, Mishnah Seminar: Tractate Megillah  Steven Fraade
Study of rabbinic texts treating rules for the public recitation and translation of the Scroll of Esther on the holiday of Purim and of other sacred scriptures and translations throughout the year, with special attention to the relation between law and ritual and the narrativity of both. EMWAR area of concentration designations: STHJ, Rabjuda, ScrInterp. Prerequisite: reading fluency in ancient Hebrew.

JDST 760a / RLST 772a, Rabbinics Research Seminar  Christine Hayes
An in-depth survey of research debates and of methods and resources employed in the study of classical (pre-Geonic) rabbinic literature of all genres. Required of graduate students in ancient Judaism. Prerequisites: knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic, ability to read academic Hebrew, and permission of the instructor.

JDST 761a / HIST 596a / MDVL 596a / RLST 773a, Jewish History and Thought to Early Modern Times  Ivan Marcus
A broad introduction to the history of the Jews from biblical beginnings until the European Reformation and the Ottoman Empire. Focus on the formative period of classical rabbinic Judaism and on the symbiotic relationships among Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Jewish society and culture in its biblical, rabbinic, and medieval settings.

JDST 764b / HIST 590b / MDVL 590b / RLST 777b, Jews in Muslim Lands from the Seventh through the Sixteenth Century  Ivan Marcus
Introduction to Jewish culture and society in Muslim lands from the Prophet Muhammad to Suleiman the Magnificent. Topics include Islam and Judaism; Jerusalem as a holy site; rabbinic leadership and literature in Baghdad; Jewish courtiers, poets, and philosophers in Muslim Spain; and the Jews in the Ottoman Empire.

JDST 806a / HIST 603a / MDVL 603a / RLST 616a, Jews and Christians in the Formation of Europe, 500–1500  Ivan Marcus
This seminar explores how medieval Jews and Christians interacted as religious societies between 500 and 1500.

JDST 852a / HEBR 519a, Israel in Ideology and Practice  Dina Roginsky
An advanced Hebrew class that focuses on changing ideology and politics in Israel. Topics include right- and left-wing political discourse, elections, state-religion dynamics, the Jewish-Arab divide, and demographic changes. Materials include newspapers, publications, online resources, speeches of different political and religious groups, and contemporary and archival footage. Also, this course draws comparisons to American political and ideological discourse. Prerequisite: HEBR 502 or equivalent.
JDST 842a / CPLT 688a / RLST 775a, What is Political Theology?  Hannan Hever
This course investigates the theological aspects of modern political ideologies. It takes its title from the controversial work of the German political thinker Carl Schmitt, who argued that theological assumptions stood behind the veneer of secular politics. Concepts such as sovereignty, citizenship, universalism, law, and the state of exception have been said to have their provenance in Jewish and Christian concepts of God, election, Messiah, the commandment, and antinomianism. In recent years the study of the theological origins of political concepts has become important for both those seeking to critique the neutrality of certain western-democratic institutions as well as those hoping to better understand the relationship between religion and politics. Subjects covered in the course include sovereignty, universalism, law, election, commandment, messianism, and nationalism. Readings focus on the work of modern political thinkers such as Benedict Spinoza, Thomas Hobbes, and Bruno Bauer, whose normative works assumed a direct relationship between the political and the theological, as well as those who have theorized the very idea of political-theology, such as Martin Buber, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Zizek, Daniel Boyarin, and Giorgio Agamben.

JDST 861b / HIST 597b / RLST 797b, Twentieth-Century Jewish Politics  David Sorkin
This seminar explores major aspects of twentieth-century Jewish politics with an emphasis on new forms of political practice.