JUDAIC STUDIES

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Chair and Director of Graduate Studies
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Senior Research Scholar Margaret Olin (Divinity; History of Art; Religious Studies)

Senior Lecturer Peter Cole (Comparative Literature)

Lecturers Asaf Angermann (Philosophy), Yair Assulin (Visiting), Micha Perry (Visiting)

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

Senior Lecturer I Dina Roginsky (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 653b / ANTH 531b / ARCG 531b / CLSS 815b / EALL 773b / HIST 502b / HSAR 564b / NELC 533b / RLST 803b, Sensory Experiences in Ancient Ritual  Carolyn Laferriere and Andrew Turner
A comparative exploration of the role the senses played in the performance of ancient and premodern ritual, drawing from a range of ancient traditions including those of Greece, Rome, and Egypt, and from cultural traditions of the Near East, India, China, and the New World. Placing particular emphasis on the relationship between art and ritual, we discuss the methods available for reconstructing ancient sensory experience, how the ancient cultures conceived of the senses and perception, and how worshipers' sensory experiences, whether visual, sonic, olfactory, gustatory, or haptic, were integral aspects in their engagement with the divine within religious ritual. This seminar incorporates material in the Yale Art Gallery.

JDST 654a / RLST 782a, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Judaism  John Collins
This course explores various forms of early biblical interpretation in the Second Temple period, including Philo and the Dead Sea Scrolls, and implicit interpretations in biblical paraphrases. Prerequisites: Hebrew and Greek.

JDST 686b / CPLT 679b, Major Modern Jewish Poets  Peter Cole
This course introduces students to a diverse group of modern Jewish poets, from Gertrude Stein, Moyshe-Leyb Halpern, and Adrienne Rich to Muriel Rukeyser, Yehuda Amichai, Paul Celan, Edmond Jabès, Leonard Cohen, and others. Writing in English, Yiddish, German, Hebrew, and French, these poets gave seminal expression to Jewish life in a variety of modes and permutations, and in the process produced poems of lasting and universal value. The class explores work as art and considers pressing questions of cultural, historical, and political context. All readings are in English. Permission of the instructor required.
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.

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.

Close study of a section of the Mishnah, the earliest digest of Jewish law, treating procedures for public fasts in response to drought and other forms of collective adversity. Particular attention to the textual practices of rabbinic legal discourse in relation to its social function, and to the interplay of law and narrative. Prerequisite: reading fluency in ancient Hebrew.

The giving of the Torah to Israel as seen through rabbinic eyes. Close readings of midrashic texts. Views of revelation, tradition, interpretation, law, and commandment in their literary and historical contexts. Interpretations and interpretive strategies compared and contrasted with those of other ancient biblical exegetes (Jewish and non-Jewish). Prerequisite: reading fluency in ancient Hebrew.

A broad introduction to the history of Jewish culture from the late Middle Ages until the present. Emphasis on the changing interaction of Jews with the larger society as well as the transformation of Judaism in its encounter with modernity.

Research seminar that focuses on the two medieval Jewish subcultures of Ashkenaz (northern Christian Europe) and Sefarad (mainly Muslim and Christian Spain).

This course is an introduction to some of the major themes in the history of the Jewish people from late antiquity to 1500. We trace the development of Jewish communities in Muslim and Christian lands, focusing on the complex relationship that Jews had with their host societies. Other topics include Jewish self-government and communal organization and major currents in Jewish intellectual culture. The course follows a thematic line, moving from demographics to economics, from legal issues to intellectual and social questions.

Medieval Jewish history has been based primarily on written sources and hence has tended to concentrate on the intellectual male elite, institutions, and events. In recent years, historians are increasingly interested in everyday, or quotidian, history, looking beyond the intellectual elite to society as a whole and using, alongside texts, archaeology and the material world. Following the “material turn,” this seminar focuses on Jewish material culture, using archaeology and art history in the service of cultural history. Among the subjects considered are the Jewish quarter and street; the synagogue; the ritual bath (mikve); the cemetery and gravestone; book culture; charters; jewelry; fashion; and food.

This course investigates the theological aspects of modern political ideologies. Subjects include sovereignty, universalism, law, election, commandment, and messianism. Primary readings include Carl Schmitt, Martin Buber, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, Daniel Boyarin, and Giorgio Agamben.

This course explores the changing nature of Jewish politics in relationship to three of the twentieth century’s major events. First we examine Jewish political behavior during the Holocaust, especially the notion of “resistance” vis-à-vis the so-called Jewish councils and the controversy surrounding Hannah Arendt’s book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Second, we probe the continuities and discontinuities in the establishment of the State of Israel, focusing on the politics of the “Yishuv” (Jewish settlement in Mandatory Palestine) and its relationship to British imperialism. Third, we analyze shifts in the domestic and foreign policies of the organized American Jewish community during the era of the civil rights movement (1946–64).