JUDAIC STUDIES

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Judaic Studies enables students to develop a broad knowledge of the history, religion, literature, philosophy, languages, and politics of the Jews. Jewish society, texts, ideologies, material cultures, and institutions are studied from a comparative perspective in the context of histories, cultures, and intellectual traditions among which Jews have lived throughout the ages. As an interdisciplinary program, Judaic Studies employs historical, literary, political, social, and philosophical methods of analysis.

The Judaic Studies major – especially as a second major with Economics, Political Science, Literature, English, Philosophy, or History – offers a broad liberal arts background combined with intensive preparation in the historical and religious experience of Jewish culture from antiquity to contemporary times. The major epochs of Jewish history are the Persian and Hellenistic, classical, medieval, early modern, and modern periods.

Students considering the major in Judaic Studies should contact the director of undergraduate studies (DUS) as early as possible.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

The major in Judaic Studies requires thirteen term courses, including three courses selected from a set of core requirements, a language or literature requirement, three courses selected from each of two areas of concentration, and the senior requirement.

Core requirements Each student must elect at least three from the following: (1) a course in Hebrew Bible, such as JDST 110; (2) a course in rabbinic literature or ancient Judaism, such as JDST 235; (3) JDST 200; (4) JDST 201; (5) a course in Jewish thought, such as JDST 281 or JDST 293; (6) a survey course in Hebrew and Jewish literature.

Language or literature requirements Students must complete either HEBR 110 and 120 or two courses in Hebrew literature in translation. Up to three Hebrew language courses may be counted toward the requirements of the major.

Areas of concentration Students must select two of the following areas of concentration: ancient Israel/Hebrew Bible; Judaism and Jewish history of Second Temple and Talmudic times; Jewish history and civilization of medieval and Renaissance times; modern Jewish history and civilization; Jewish/Hebrew literature (which requires the study of literature in Hebrew); and Jewish thought. With the approval of the DUS, students may design their own areas of concentration.

In each of the two areas of concentration, students choose three courses in consultation with the DUS. These are expected to comprise one introductory course; one seminar taken in the junior year, and one course requiring a final research paper. One relevant course should be in an area outside Judaic Studies, such as a course relating to the larger historical, literary, or philosophical context if the concentration is in a historical period, or a course in the theory or practice of literature if the concentration is in Jewish/Hebrew literature.

SENIOR REQUIREMENT

Students are required either to complete a two-term senior essay in JDST 491 and 492 related to both areas of concentration, or to complete a one-term senior essay in JDST 491 or 492 related to one area of concentration and an additional seminar related to the other. The senior essay may build on research conducted for one or both of the student’s junior seminar papers.

STUDY ABROAD

Students majoring in Judaic Studies should be aware of the numerous opportunities for study abroad. Those interested in research and language-study opportunities in the Middle East, Europe, and South America should consult the DUS.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Prerequisites None

Number of courses 13 term courses (incl senior req)

Distribution of courses 3 courses from: (1) Hebrew Bible, (2) rabbinic literature or ancient Judaism, (3) JDST 200, (4) JDST 201, (5) Jewish thought, (6) survey of Hebrew and Jewish literature, or 2 courses in Hebrew literature in translation; 2 areas of concentration, with 3 courses in each for a total of 6

Senior requirement Two-term senior essay (JDST 491, 492) or one-term senior essay (JDST 491 or 492), and additional seminar

FACULTY ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROGRAM OF JUDAIC STUDIES

Professors Joel Baden (Divinity School), Leslie Brisman (English), Steven Fraade (Chair) (Religious Studies), Paul Franks (Philosophy), Warren Zev Harvey (Philosophy) (Visiting), Christine Hayes (Religious Studies), Hannan Hever (Literature), Ivan Marcus (History, Religious Studies), Steven Smith (Political Science, Philosophy), David Sorkin (History), Laura Wexler (Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies, American Studies), Robert Wilson (Religious Studies)

Associate Professors Joseph David (Law) (Visiting), Marci Shore (History), Eliyahu Stern (Religious Studies, History)

Senior Lecturer Peter Cole (Comparative Literature)
Lecturers  Asaf Angermann (Philosophy), Yair Assulin (Comparative Literature) (Visiting), Alessia Bellusci (History), Allyson Gonzalez (Religious Studies), Margaret Olin (Divinity School, History of Art, Religious Studies), Micha Perry (Visiting)

Senior Lectors II  Shiri Goren

Senior Lectors  Josh Price, Dina Roginsky, Orit Yeret

Special Project and Senior Essay Courses
* JDST 491a and JDST 492b, The Senior Essay  David Sorkin
The essay, written under the supervision of a faculty member, should be a substantial paper between 6,500 and 8,000 words for one term and between 12,500 and 15,000 words for two terms.

Electives within the Major

BIBLICAL PERIOD
[ JDST 110, The Bible ]

CLASSICAL PERIOD
* JDST 256a / MMES 236a / NELC 232a / RLST 400a, The Dead Sea Scrolls: The Damascus Document  Steven Fraade
Study of the Damascus Document, one of the most important of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Attention to the document’s place in the history of biblical interpretation and ancient Jewish law; the nature and rhetorical function of its textual practices, both narrative and legal; and its relation to the central sectarian writings of the Qumran community. Prerequisite: reading proficiency in ancient Hebrew.  L5, HU

* JDST 400b / RLST 408b, Interpreting the Bible in Antiquity: Case Studies  Christine Hayes
Examines the rich and polyphonic tradition of interpretation of two biblical narratives that were classical loci of Jewish-Christian polemic. Beginning with inner-bible exegesis, and continuing with ancient translations, Second Temple and Hellenistic period literature, early Christian sources, and finally classical rabbinic texts, this course explores the interpretative techniques and rhetorical strategies of ancient readers (especially midrash and allegory) and considers the way sacred texts have been employed to stake out competing intellectual and cultural claims. Prerequisite: reading proficiency in Hebrew.  HU

JEWISH PHILOSOPHY
* JDST 223a / HUMS 295a / PLSC 307a, Trials of Uncertainty  Norma Thompson
Is the demise of the trial at hand? The trial as cultural achievement, considered as the epitome of humanistic inquiry, where all is brought to bear on a crucial matter in an uncertain context. Truth may be hammered out or remain elusive, but the expectation in the court case has been that the adversarial mode works best for sorting out evidentiary conundrums. Inquiries into issues of meaning of the trial, its impartiality, and challenges to its endurability. The role of character, doubt, and diagnosis explored in Sophocles, Plato, Cicero, Burke, Jane Austen, Tocqueville, and Kafka, as well as in twentieth-century trials, films, documentaries, and twenty-first-century medical narratives.  WR, RU

MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN PERIODS
JDST 265b / HIST 345b / MMES 148b / RLST 202b, Jews in Muslim Lands from the Seventh to the Sixteenth Centuries  Ivan Marcus
Jewish culture and society in Muslim lands from the time of the Prophet Muhammad to that of 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.  HU RP

* JDST 270a / HIST 232Ja / HUMS 443a / MMES 342a / RLST 201a, Medieval Jews, Christians, and Muslims In Conversation  Ivan Marcus
How members of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities thought of and interacted with members of the other two cultures during the Middle Ages. Cultural grids and expectations each imposed on the other; the rhetoric of otherness—humans or devils, purity or impurity, and animal imagery; and models of religious community and power in dealing with the other when confronted with cultural differences. Counts toward either European or Middle Eastern distributional credit within the History major, upon application to the director of undergraduate studies.  WR, HU RP

* JDST 374a / HIST 249Ja / RLST 355a, Jewish Magic  Alessia Bellusci
The course explores the history of Jewish magic from the Bible to our time, focusing on the development and transmission of magical lore in the late antique and medieval Jewish world. We introduce the most important methodological approaches developed to study magical traditions in the context of Religious Studies, discussing topics such as the impact of magic on pre-modern cultures, the interculturality of magic, the relation magic-religion-science, magic and gender, the efficacy of the magical/ritual act. Through the analysis of magical artifacts and manuscript excerpts, we familiarize with Jewish magical literature and specific magical behaviors, with attention to analogous phenomena developed among Near-Eastern and Mediterranean civilizations.  HU

MODERN PERIOD
* JDST 319a / HEBR 162 / MMES 161a, Israel in Ideology and Practice
An advanced Hebrew class focusing 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, on-
line resources, speeches of different political and religious groups, and contemporary and archival footage. Comparisons to American political and ideological discourse. Prerequisite: HEBR 140 or permission of instructor. L5 RP

JDST 346a / HIST 249a, Making European Culture Jewish: Five Media, 1780-1930 David Sorkin
This course studies the ways in which Jewish writers and artists turned European culture into Jewish culture, that is, how a minority group fashioned its own version of the majority culture. As European Jews encountered European culture and society, they had to grapple with a host of fundamental questions. What was Judaism and who were the Jews: a religion, a history, a culture, a nation? We examine the way in which writers and artists struggled with these issues in five media: memoir, theology, history, fiction, and painting, thereby creating Jewish versions first of Enlightenment, Romanticism, and realism (1780-1870) and then of nationalism, positivism, and modernism (1870-1930). HU

Language and Literature

* JDST 231a / HEBR 150a / MMES 150a, Advanced Modern Hebrew: Daily Life in Israel Orit Yeret
An examination of major controversies in Israeli society. Readings include newspaper editorials and academic articles as well as documentary and historical material. Advanced grammatical structures are introduced and practiced. Conducted in Hebrew. Prerequisite: HEBR 140 or equivalent. L5 RP

* JDST 305b / HEBR 158b / MMES 168b, Contemporary Israeli Society in Film Shiri Goren
Examination of major themes in Israeli society through film, with emphasis on language study. Topics include migration, gender and sexuality, Jewish/Israeli identity, and private and collective memory. Readings in Hebrew and English provide a sociohistorical background and bases for class discussion. HEBR 140 or permission of instructor. L5, HU RP

* JDST 316b / ENGL 456b / HUMS 427b / LITR 348b, The Practice of Literary Translation Peter Cole
This course combines a seminar on the history and theory of translation (Tuesdays) with a hands-on workshop (Thursdays). The readings lead us through a series of case studies comparing, on the one hand, multiple translations of given literary works and, on the other, classic statements about translation—by translators themselves and prominent theorists. We consider both poetry and prose from the Bible, selections from Chinese, Greek, and Latin verse, classical Arabic and Persian literature, prose by Cervantes, Borges, and others, and modern European poetry (including Pushkin, Baudelaire, and Rilke). Students are expected to prepare short class presentations, participate in a weekly workshop, try their hand at a series of translation exercises, and undertake an intensive, semester-long translation project. Proficiency in a foreign language is required. HU

* JDST 326a / LITR 317a, Marxist Theory of Literature Hannan Hever
The role of Marxist thought in understanding literary institutions and texts in the twentieth century. Marx’s theory of ideology; Lukacs’s theory of literature as the basis for development of Marxist literary theory; the Frankfurt and materialistic schools. Readings include works by Raymond Williams, Catherine Belsey, Walter Benjamin, Pierre Macherey, and Frederic Jameson. HU

* JDST 327b / ER&M 416b / GMAN 411b / HUMS 342b / LITR 406b, World Literature Hannan Hever
The concept of world literature, from its origins in eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism represented by Herder and Goethe up to contemporary critical debates (Apter, Casanova, Cheah, Damrosch, Dharwadker, I. Hesse, Moretti, Muñí, Pollock, Said, Spivak). World literature in relation to national literature, German-language, and Jewish literature; translation, untranslatability, the effect of markets, diaspora, politics. Literary critical readings supplemented by exemplary literary texts in multiple genres. Student contributions based on individual linguistic backgrounds. HU

* JDST 336b / LITR 342b, Jewish Literary Masterpieces Hannan Hever
Exploration of the nature of Jewish identity through a literary prism, focusing on novels, stories, poetry, and homilies. Study of texts written over a three thousand year period by Jews living in the Middle East, Europe, and America, from biblical writings through modern works composed by Franz Kafka, Philip Roth, as well as Israeli Literature. Special attention given to the role of gender, minority identities, and the idea of nationalism. Taught in translation, readings in English. HU RP

* JDST 391a / NELC 381a / RLST 407a, Midrash Seminar: Sifre Shofetim Steven Fraade
Close study of the earliest rabbinic commentary to the Book of Deuteronomy, focusing on its interpretations of laws dealing with the responsibilities of courts and public figures: judges, kings, priests, and prophets. Particular attention is paid to the interrelation of rabbinic legal rhetoric and the hermeneutics of scriptural commentary, with comparisons to other corpora of ancient Jewish and non-Jewish literature. Prerequisite: reading fluency in ancient Hebrew. L5, HU RP

* JDST 402a / HEBR 167a / MMES 166a, Creative Writing in Hebrew Orit Yeret
An advanced language course with focus on creative writing and self-expression. Students develop knowledge of modern Hebrew, while elevating writing skills based on special interests, and in various genres, including short prose, poetry, dramatic writing, and journalism. Students engage with diverse authentic materials, with emphasis on Israeli literature, culture, and society. Prerequisite: HEBR 140 or placement exam. L5 RP

* JDST 403b / HEBR 169b / MMES 162b, 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% of its population, yet lack of communication exists today between Hebrew speakers and Arabic speakers for mainly political reasons. This L5 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 L5 Arabic class which 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. L4 Hebrew or equivalent (placement test). L5 RP

* JDST 416a / GMAN 102a, Reading Yiddish  Joshua Price
This course is designed to build literacy in Yiddish, the vernacular of Ashkenazi Jewry. With focus on the accelerated treatment of Yiddish grammar, regularly supplemented with simple primary texts (poems, songs, folktales), and followed by close readings of (modern) Yiddish literature, students will be able to navigate most Yiddish texts with the aid of a dictionary. May not be taken concurrently with elementary or intermediate German.

* JDST 417b / HEBR 164b / MMES 167b, Biblical to Modern Hebrew for Reading Knowledge  Dina Roginsky
Instruction in the linguistic needs of students who have reading knowledge of Biblical Hebrew but cannot read or converse in Modern Hebrew. Concentration on reading comprehension of Modern Hebrew for research purposes, particularly scholarly texts tailored to students’ areas of interest. Two years of Biblical or Modern Hebrew studies, or permission of the instructor. RP

* JDST 418b / GMAN 103b, Reading Yiddish II  Joshua Price
Intermediate study of Yiddish literary language with annotated readings from classic authors including: Mendele, Sholem Aleichem, Peretz, Bergelson, Der Nister, Bashevis, as well as American and Soviet Yiddish poetry. Secondary readings in English will offer a broader introduction to the modern Yiddish canon. Continuation of GMAN 102/JDST 416. Previous knowledge of German or Hebrew-Aramaic recommended but not required.