Judaic Studies

Director of undergraduate studies: Paul Franks, (paul.franks@yale.edu) 406B Connecticut Hall [F]; David Sorkin (david.sorkin@yale.edu), 212 McClellan Hall [Sp]; judaicstudies.yale.edu

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, Comparative 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 lit or ancient Judaism, (3) JDST 200, (4) JDST 201, (5) Jewish thought, (6) a survey of Hebrew and Jewish lit; HEBR 110 and 120, or 2 courses in Hebrew lit 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

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FACULTY ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROGRAM OF JUDAIC STUDIES

Professors  Joel Baden (Divinity School), Leslie Brisman (English), Steven Fraade (Religious Studies), Paul Franks (Philosophy), Christine Hayes (Religious Studies), Hannan Hever (Comparative 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  Marci Shore (History), Eliyahu Stern (Religious Studies, History)

Senior Lecturer  Peter Cole (Comparative Literature)

Lecturer  Margaret Olin (Divinity School, History of Art, Religious Studies)

Senior Lector II  Shiri Goren

Senior Lectors  Dina Roginsky, Orit Yeret

Lector  Joshua Price

View Courses