JUDAIC STUDIES

Directors of undergraduate studies: Elli Stern; eliyahu.stern@yale.edu; 451 College St., Rm. 403, 432-0841; 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, 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 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) 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

FACULTY ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROGRAM OF JUDAIC STUDIES

Professors Joel Baden (Divinity School), Elitzur Bar-Asher Siegal (Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Visiting), Michal Bar-Asher Siegal (Religious Studies, Visiting) Leslie Brisman (English), Steven Fraade (Chair) (Religious Studies), Paul Franks (Philosophy), 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 Marci Shore (History), Eliyahu Stern (Religious Studies, History)
Senior Lecturer Peter Cole (Comparative Literature)

Lecturers Asaf Angermann (Philosophy), Noah Bickart (Religious Studies), Margaret Olin (Divinity School, History of Art, Religious Studies), Liran Yadgar (History)

Senior Lecturer II Shiri Goren

Senior Lecturers Josh Price, Dina Roginsky, Orit Yeret

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Freshman Seminar

* JDST 026a / PLSC 026a / RLST 026a, Political Theology Eliyahu Stern
Investigation of the theological aspects of modern political ideologies. Topics include sovereignty, universalism, law, election, commandment, and messianism. Primary readings include selections from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, and the writings of Thomas Hobbes, Barukh Spinoza, Carl Schmidt, Mikhail Bakunin, Karl Marx, Jacob Taubes, Martin Buber, and Alain Badiou. Enrollment limited to freshmen. Preregistration required; see under Freshman Seminar Program. HU

Core Course

JDST 200a / ER&M 219a / HIST 219a / MMES 149a / RLST 148a, 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. Counts toward either European or non-Western distributional credit within the History major, upon application to the director of undergraduate studies. HU RP

Special Project and Senior Essay Courses

* JDST 471a or b, Individual Tutorial Staff
For students who wish, under faculty supervision, to investigate an area in Judaic Studies not covered by regular course offerings. May be used for research or for directed reading, but in either case a long essay or several short ones are required. To apply for admission, a student should present a prospectus with bibliography and a letter of support from the faculty member who will direct the work to the director of undergraduate studies.

* JDST 491a or b and JDST 492b, The Senior Essay Staff
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 ]

* JDST 127a / RLST 220a, Christians in Early Jewish Sources Michal Bar-Asher Siegal
Exploration of Jewish and Christian texts from the first centuries (1-6th) C.E. Comparison of texts produced by Jewish and Christian writers in various geographical areas and communities; how the two religious communities saw each other and the world in which they both lived. Further understanding of the complexity of Jewish-Christian interactions in this early period. HU

CLASSICAL PERIOD

* JDST 235b / MMES 235b / NELC 231b / RLST 147b, Introduction to Judaism in the Ancient World 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. No prior background in Jewish history assumed. HU

* JDST 400a / RLST 408a, Midrash Seminar: Case Studies in Biblical Interpretation Christine Hayes
Rich and polyphonic tradition of interpretation of two biblical narratives beginning in the Bible itself, continuing in ancient translations and Second Temple period Jewish literature, and culminating in classical rabbinic sources. Examination of interpretative techniques and rhetorical strategies of midrash and consideration of the way sacred texts have been employed to stake out diverse intellectual and cultural claims. Prerequisite: reading proficiency in Hebrew. HU

MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN PERIODS

* JDST 32b, Capital Punishment in Judaism and Christianity Noah Bickart
Study of religious texts as basis for capital punishment. Special attention to the (in)famous trial and execution of Jesus of Nazareth in both the Bible and literatures of Rabbinc Judaism and early Christianity. Further exploration of how medieval and modern Jews and Christians alike attempt to apply values from documents of late antiquity to changing circumstances both in Medieval Europe and to
An advanced Hebrew course for students interested in practicing and enhancing conversational skills. Focus on listening comprehension and on various forms of discussion, including practical situations, online interactions, and content analysis. Prerequisite: HEBR 140 or permission of instructor.
* 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.