JUDAIC STUDIES

Director of undergraduate studies: Ivan Marcus; 114 McClellan Hall, ivan.marcus@yale.edu (ivanmarcus@yale.edu); 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), 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 Lector II  Shiri Goren

Senior Lectors  Josh Price, Dina Roginsky, Orit Yeret

Core Course

JDST 201b / HIST 220b / RLST 149b, Introduction to Modern Jewish History  David Sorkin
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.  HU

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 and JDST 492b, The Senior Essay  Ivan Marcus
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 110a / HUMS 133a / RLST 145a, The Bible  Christine Hayes
The writings common to both Jewish and Christian scripture examined as diverse and often conflicting expressions of the religious life and thought of ancient Israel. The works' cultural and historical setting in the ancient Near East; the interpretive history of selected passages influential in Western culture. Introduction to a wide range of critical and literary approaches to biblical studies. Students view course lectures, which survey the entire Bible, on line; class time focuses on specific biblical passages and their subsequent interpretation in Jewish and Christian culture.  HU

* JDST 219a / PHIL 403a / RLST 450a, Spinoza and the God of the Bible  Nancy Levene
This course considers Spinoza's metaphysics and social and political thought in light of a family of problems named religion: the concept of God, the relations among politics, divine law, and their institutions, the value of Judaism and Christianity, and the interpretation of the Bible. We read from Spinoza's principal works as well as from the Bible and a few other thinkers, medieval and modern, in conceptual proximity to Spinoza.  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 392a / NELC 382a / RLST 405a, Mishnah Seminar: Tractate Sanhedrin  Steven Fraade
Close study of a section of the Mishnah, the earliest digest of Jewish law, treating religious courts and their jurisprudential practice. Dual attention to the historical significance of the institutions of law represented and to the cultural significance of the rhetoric of that representation. Consideration of the textual practices of rabbinic legal discourse in relation to its social function, as well as to the interplay of law and narrative. Prerequisite: reading fluency in ancient Hebrew.  15, HU

MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN PERIODS

* 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
MODERN PERIOD

* JDST 293b / HIST 248Jb / RLST 214b, Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought  Eliyahu Stern
An overview of Jewish philosophical trends, movements, and thinkers from the seventeenth century to the twenty-first. Topics include enlightenment, historicism, socialism, secularism, religious radicalism, and Zionism.  HU

* JDST 355b / GMAN 372b / LITR 228b, Reflections on the Holocaust  Katrin Truestedt
Reflections on how the Holocaust has shaken the self-understanding of modern Western culture. We focus on theoretical reflections characterizing the Holocaust as undermining the very possibility of experience, representation, and of inhabiting a shared world. The course aims to give perspective on the complex factors conditioning the Holocaust; the rise of nationalism and fascism, antisemitism and racism; the relation between modernity and barbarism; inclusion and exclusion; law and bare life; World War II and the emergence of the Camp System in Eastern Europe; collaboration, resistance, survival, and testimony. Readings by Hannah Arendt, Theodor W. Adorno, Giorgio Agamben, Shoshana Felman, Primo Levi, Timothy Snyder, and others.  HU

Language and Literature

* JDST 213a / 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 permission of instructor.  1.5  RP

* JDST 282b / LITR 437b / RLST 258b / SPAN 282b, Judeo-Spanish Culture, Language, and Literature  Allyson Gonzalez
This course explores the rich body of culture, language, and literature that emerged in the Sephardi (Judeo-Spanish) diaspora following the expulsion of Jews from Iberia in 1492, and continuing to the present. This course is taught in English.  TR  HU
* JDST 329b / LITR 235b, 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.  HU  

* JDST 391a / NELC 381a / RLST 407a, Midrash Seminar: The Exodus from Egypt  Steven Fraade
The Exodus from Egypt as seen through rabbinic eyes. Close readings of the early rabbinic commentary (midrash), Mekhilta, to the narrative of Exodus 13:17ff (the lection Beshallah). Particular attention to the methods and language of rabbinic exegesis and to the rhetorical interplay of tradition and scriptural commentary. Interpretations and interpretive strategies compared and contrasted with those of other ancient biblical exegetes (Jewish and non-Jewish), where available. Prerequisite: reading fluency in ancient Hebrew.  L5, HU  

* JDST 401b / HEBR 152b, Reading Academic Texts in Modern Hebrew  Dina Roginsky
Reading of academic texts in modern Hebrew, for students with a strong background in Hebrew. Discussion of grammar and stylistics; special concentration on the development of accuracy and fluency. Prerequisite: HEBR 150 or permission of instructor. Conducted in Hebrew.  L5  RP  

JDST 407b / HEBR 161b / MMES 156b, Israeli Popular Music  Dina Roginsky
Changes in the development of popular music in Israel explored as representations of changing Israeli society and culture. The interaction of music and cultural identity; modern popular music and social conventions; songs of commemoration and heroism; popular representation of the Holocaust; Mizrahi and Arab music; feminism, sexuality, and gender; class and musical consumption; criticism, protest, and globalization. Conducted in Hebrew. Prerequisite: HEBR 140 or equivalent.  L5  

* JDST 416a or b / GMAN 102a or b, 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.