

Jewish Studies

Institute of Jewish Thought and Heritage

College of Arts and Sciences
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Overview

This area of study is available as a minor or special major through the College of Arts and Sciences. It is not a separately registered degree program. Refer to the Special Majors section for more information.

Jewish Studies provides undergraduate students with a comprehensive view of the development of Jewish life and thought. The courses explore the thought, history, culture, and accomplishments of world Jewry and Judaism as a living religion. Because the experience of the Jews has spanned millennia and many cultures, students must develop interdisciplinary skills for analyzing Jewish lifestyles, ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary, while pursuing this minor or major.

The interdisciplinary nature of Jewish studies, and the fact that it is currently available as a minor or special major, means that creative, motivated students can develop an individualized course of study to suit their own needs and interests. Courses taken now can also be used for credit when the BA in Jewish Studies receives official approval.

Degree Options

Undergraduate: Minor, Special Major

Jewish Studies - Minor

Acceptance Criteria

Minimum GPA of 2.0

Advising Notes

Contact the Jewish Studies undergraduate advisor at 645-8426. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis.

Required Courses

18 credits that must include the following:

[JDS 103](#) Introduction to Judaism

[JDS 229](#) Medieval Judaism

4 other JDS courses or courses from other departments with approved Jewish Studies content (may include 2 Hebrew language courses)

At least 2 courses must be at the 300- or 400-level

HEB 101: Elementary Modern Hebrew 1

Credits: 5

Semester(s): Fall

Type: LEC

The first stage in learning Modern Hebrew - Reading, writing and elementary grammar. At this level, students become familiar with a basic vocabulary of 400 words, around which conversational exercises and classroom learning are built. A cultural segment

makes the learning process relevant.

HEB 102: Elementary Modern Hebrew 2

Credits: 5

Semester(s): Spring

Pre-requisites: [HEB 101](#)

Type: LEC

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Encourages improvement of reading and writing skills, and conversation. Studies complex verbal patterns and daily use of the language in an Israeli setting.

HEB 201: Intermediate Hebrew 1

Credits: 5
Semester(s): Fall
Type: LEC

Involves review and mastery of materials learned in [HEB 101](#) and [HEB 102](#). Concentrates on reading and discussing newspaper articles, writing letters and filling out forms and documents (job applications, postal claim forms, and so forth) which are useful for travel. Stresses understanding of basic cultural patterns.

HEB 202: Intermediate Hebrew 2

Credits: 5
Semester(s): Spring
Pre-requisites: [HEB 201](#)
Type: LEC

Concentrates on review and mastery of material learned in [HEB 201](#). Continuation of irregular verbs and verbal patterns. Stresses oral comprehension and speech, reading, and discussion of newspaper articles.

JDS 101: Introduction to Jewish History

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

Major political, social, and theological trends in Jewish history, from the formation of ancient Israel until the present day.

JDS 111: Great Jewish Books

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

Introduces and analyzes great works of Jewish literature from ancient to modern times: the Bible, Talmud; Guide for the Perplexed; Kuzari; poetry of the Golden Age in Spain; the great moderns.

JDS 112: Women in the Jewish Family

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

Comparative contemporary social and psychological studies of women intermingle with rabbinic ones in an endeavor to bring into sharper focus women's status, social roles, behavior, and impact on Jewish life; the Jewish woman in historical perspective, drawing upon oriental, European, and modern American societies as well as contemporary Feminist perspectives.

JDS 141: Introduction to Yiddish I

Credits: 3
Semester(s): Fall
Type: LEC

Students acquire the fundamentals of the sound system of Yiddish structure and basic reading and writing skills.

JDS 142: Introduction to Yiddish II

Credits: 3
Semester(s): Spring
Type: LEC

Second semester of introductory course.

JDS 201: Israel and the Ancient Near East

Credits: 3
Semester(s): Fall
Type: LEC

People of the Bible; the environment in which they lived; what they absorbed and rejected from Mesopotamia, Syria, Anatolia, Iran, Egypt. How to critically read ancient texts in comparative contexts.

JDS 202: Israel and the Emergence of Judaism

Credits: 3
Semester(s): Spring
Type: LEC

Post-biblical Jews and Judaism; their adaptation to Greco-Roman life; rise of Jewish sectarianism; writing of the Talmud. How to critically read ancient texts in comparative contexts.

JDS 203: Introduction to Judaism

Credits: 3
Semester(s): Fall
Type: LEC

Survey of Judaism and the rich Jewish legacy: basic philosophical, theological, social, and political values and practices of Judaism as they developed over time in a variety of social and political environments.

JDS 204: Seminar in Jewish Ethics

Credits: 3
Semester(s): Fall
Type: SEM

Ethical principles of Judaism: love, justice, holiness, freedom of will, dignity of humans, relative and final purpose, imitatio dei, family life, education, social welfare, race, justice, and ecology.

JDS 205: Historical Geography and Archaeology of Israel

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

Methods and results of excavation in Israel; development of material culture (pottery, architecture, and so forth) and its interpretation.

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JDS 206: Chassidic Philosophy

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

Historical context and causes of the rise of the Chassidic movement and specific Chassidic sects in modern Eastern Europe. Basic concepts and practices as revised and interpreted by Chassidic leaders.

JDS 207: Women in Jewish Society

Credits: 3
Semester(s): Fall
Type: LEC

Status of women in the structure of rabbinic law. Emphasizes the variety of stresses, both legal and social, placed on Jewish women from ancient times to the contemporary world. Jewish Feminist perspectives and alternatives.

JDS 209: Women in Jewish Literature

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

Woman's role in classical Jewish literature, from the Five Books of Moses to the Chronicles, Song of Songs, and the books of Ruth and Esther. Women as portrayed in Talmud and Midrash.

JDS 210: Introduction to the Old Testament

Credits: 3
Semester(s): Spring
Type: LEC

Critical, thematic, historic, and literary study of the roots of Judeo-Christian tradition as recorded in the writings of ancient Israel; different methods of biblical criticism.

JDS 212: Special Topics

Credits: 3
Type: SEM

The content of this course is variable and therefore it is repeatable for credit. The [University Grade Repeat Policy](#) does not apply.

Topics vary by semester.

JDS 214: The American Jewish Woman

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

Relationships and conflicts that shaped the identity of the American Jewish woman: Jewish women and the American women's rights movement; immigrant Jewish women and labor activism; impact of feminism on Judaism.

JDS 225: Modern Jewish Thought

Credits: 3

Type: LEC

Religious diversity in modern Judaism, from Mendelssohn to Rosenzweig, Buber, Heschel, Kaplan and Levinas. Varieties of faith and practice as reflections of changing historical and theological perspectives. The impact of science, the Holocaust, the creation of the State of Israel.

JDS 229: The Jew in Medieval Times

Credits: 3
Semester(s): Fall
Type: LEC

Jewish poets, philosophers, mathematicians, bankers, traders in medieval Christian and Islamic contexts.

JDS 230: Modern Jewish History

Credits: 3
Semester(s): Spring
Type: LEC

Jewish experience from the late 18th century to the present day; Western and Eastern European Jewry; ethnic origins and backgrounds of contemporary Jewry in the United States, Canada, and Israel.

JDS 235: The American Jewish Experience

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

American Jewish life from colonial beginnings to the present: immigration; assimilation; social mobility; education and the family; group identity.

JDS 237: History of Israel and Zionism

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

Development of the Zionist idea from its ancient and rabbinic origins to its modern political implementation; Israel and its historic purpose; modern Zionist leaders and their conflicting visions of the State of Israel.

JDS 250: Introduction to Biblical Hebrew

Credits: 3
Semester(s): Fall
Type: LEC

Reading and understanding the Hebrew Bible without recourse to complicated grammatical exegeses; stresses fundamentals, not the problems of the language.

JDS 253: Ethics of the Jewish Bible

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

Examination of ethical interpretations of key biblical events: "fall" of

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Adam; fratricide (Cain and Abel), Tower of Babel, Flood, the lives of the Patriarchs/Matriarchs, Golden Calf, etc., with a view to understanding the meaning of good and evil, sin and faithfulness, the permitted and the forbidden, justice and injustice. What is "prophetic morality"? What is the ethical dialectic between the Oral and Written Torah?

JDS 254: Rashi's Commentaries on the Bible

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

Who was the great 11th century French Jewish scholar Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac ("Rashi")? What did he accomplish? Why is his Torah commentary considered absolutely essential to the Jewish reading of the Bible? Comparison of his hermeneutics to those of others great Torah commentators such as Ibn Ezra, Nachmanides, the Kimchis.

JDS 260: Midrash: Rabbinic Exegesis

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

Examination of the creative literary devices and novel interpretations of Biblical and extra-Biblical narratives by later rabbinic scholars. What are the rabbis trying to accomplish?

JDS 261: Responsa Literature

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

Survey of the Responsa literature through which authoritative rabbis answer every day life questions and that began in the post-Talmudic period and has continued to flourish until the present. On what basis are answers formulated? What gives authority to the answers? Selected examples to be examined in detail.

JDS 262: Topics in Hebrew Language and Literature

Credits: 3
Semester(s): Fall, Spring
Type: LEC

The content of this course is variable and therefore it is repeatable for credit. The [University Grade Repeat Policy](#) does not apply.

Hebrew grammar or that of other Semitic languages (not Arabic) and reading of various periods' literary texts in the original tongue.

JDS 265: Readings in the Hebrew Bible

Credits: 3
Semester(s): Spring
Type: LEC

Readings of selected biblical literature in original Hebrew.

JDS 267: Wisdom Literature in the Hebrew Bible

Credits: 3
Semester(s): Spring

Type: LEC

Selections from the books of Proverbs and Psalms in Hebrew illustrating the styles of this type of didactic literature, Hebrew Bible, and poetry.

JDS 280: Jewish Mysticism

Credits: 3
Semester(s): Fall
Type: LEC

Origins and development of Kabbalah. Kabbalist readings of Creation, the soul, reincarnation, attachment to the divine. Role of "mysticism" in Jewish religion and community life.

JDS 283: The Holocaust and Jewish Law

Credits: 3
Semester(s): Spring
Type: LEC

Full range of legal and ethical problems posed during the Holocaust and certain precedent-setting decisions set down in the Responsa literature.

JDS 284: Israel and Jewish Law

Credits: 3
Semester(s): Spring
Type: LEC

Introduces a full range of legal, ethical, and theological issues that surround the status of biblical and Talmudic Israel; legal and theological questions that emerge and reemerge at the establishment of a modern Jewish state.

JDS 296: Jewish Business Ethics

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

History and development of Jewish business law and ethics; comparative study of Jewish and American law relating to business and economic issues.

JDS 304: Mesopotamian Archaeology

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

Studies the masterpieces of the architecture, painting, and sculpture of the societies that lived in the Tigris and Euphrates Valleys until the era of the Persian Empire.

JDS 306: Special Topics

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

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Topics vary by semester.

JDS 382: Topics in Talmudic Law

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

Specialized studies of how specific Jewish laws developed and their relationship to the larger context of civil and ritual law in Judaism.

JDS 384: Maimonides: His Life and Works

Credits: 3
Type: SEM

Considered the greatest Jewish philosopher of all time, this course will examine Maimonides' philosophy, comparing it to contemporary Islamic philosophy and Aristotle. Texts include selections from Mishnah Torah, Guide of the Perplexed, and Thirteen Principles of Faith.

JDS 385: Maimonides: the Guide for the Perplexed

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

Close reading of Maimonides's most philosophical text to examine fundamental issues of Judaism and religion more generally.

JDS 396: Jewish Medical Ethics

Credits: 3
Type: SEM

Jewish moral, ethical, and religious principles in medical practice: use of Jewish legal response to abortion; definition of death; euthanasia; contraception; artificial insemination; circumcision; organ transplants; sex changes; religious observations in the hospital, etc.

JDS 399: Redemption in Jewish Thought

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

A survey of various conceptions of Redemption, in contrast to personal salvation or purely secular utopianism, as the central purpose of Judaism.

JDS 401: Aspects of American Jewish History

Credits: 3
Type: SEM

Selected topics in American Jewish history, from colonial to mid-nineteenth century German-Jewish immigration to later East European immigration; formation of American Judaisms; impact of America on Jews and Jews on America.

JDS 426: Special Topics

Credits: 3

Type: SEM

The content of this course is variable and therefore it is repeatable for credit. The [University Grade Repeat Policy](#) does not apply.

Topics vary by semester.

JDS 455: Special Topics

Credits: 3
Type: LEC

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Topics vary by semester.