JEWISH STUDIES (Div II)
Chair: Professor Edan Dekel

Advisory Committee

- Edan Dekel, Garfield Professor of Ancient Languages, Chair of Jewish Studies Program; affiliated with: Classics, Religion
- Alexandra Garbarini, Charles R. Keller Professor of History; on leave 2023-2024
- Jeffrey I. Israel, Chair and Associate Professor of Religion

THE PROGRAM IN JEWISH STUDIES

Jewish Studies is an interdisciplinary field that encompasses the texts, history, languages, philosophy, and culture of Jews and Judaism as they have changed over three millennia and throughout the world. The program offers courses in multiple disciplines including but not limited to Religion, Classics, History, Philosophy, Anthropology, Sociology, and Comparative Literature. Across these disciplines, the program examines topics such as religious belief and practice, textual interpretation, the development of Zionism, life in the Diaspora, the historicization and memorialization of the Holocaust, and historical, political and philosophical questions surrounding Jewish identity. Investigating the foundations and development of these various Jewish topics, as well as their interaction with and influence on other traditions, provides an opportunity to explore the continuities and diversity of Jewish life and thought. Students will gain exposure to a common body of knowledge and scholarly approaches through which to engage in their own rich and varied intellectual explorations of Jewish and related topics.

CONCENTRATION IN JEWISH STUDIES

The concentration in Jewish Studies requires five courses with at least two different prefixes: one gateway course, two core courses, one elective, and one capstone course. Senior concentrators should consult with the chair about arrangements for a capstone course.

Gateway Courses (can also count as core courses):

REL 203 / JWST 101 SEM Judaism: Before The Law
Taught by: Jeffrey Israel
Catalog details

REL 222 / JWST 222(F) SEM The Jewish Art of Interpretation
Taught by: Jeffrey Israel, Edan Dekel
Catalog details

Core Courses

ANTH 334 / COMP 334 / JWST 334 / REL 334(S) SEM Imagining Joseph
Taught by: Peter Just
Catalog details

ARAB 363 / JWST 268 / REL 268 / COMP 363(S) SEM Where are all the Jews?
Taught by: Brahim El Guabli
Catalog details

HIST 230 / JWST 230 LEC Modern European Jewish History, 1789-1948
Taught by: Alexandra Garbarini
Catalog details

HIST 490 / JWST 490 TUT Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe
Taught by: Alexandra Garbarini
Catalog details

REL 205 / CLAS 205 / JWST 205 / COMP 217 SEM Ancient Wisdom Literature
Taught by: Edan Dekel
Catalog details

REL 206 / COMP 206 / JWST 206 SEM The Book of Job and Joban Literature
Taught by: Edan Dekel
Catalog details

REL 207 / CLAS 207 / JWST 207 / COMP 250 SEM From Adam to Noah: Literary Imagination and the Primeval History in Genesis
Taught by: Edan Dekel
Catalog details

REL 209 / JWST 209 SEM Jewish America
Taught by: Jeffrey Israel
Catalog details

REL 222 / JWST 222(F) SEM The Jewish Art of Interpretation
Elective Courses

Students may meet the elective requirement with a course partially related to Jewish Studies or another core course. In an elective course partially related to Jewish Studies, a student will normally focus at least one of the major writing assignments on a topic relevant to Jewish Studies or approximately one-third of the course will be devoted to Jewish subjects. The list of relevant electives changes regularly, so the course catalog should be checked for details. Listed below are examples of courses partially related to Jewish Studies. Students may meet the elective requirement with a course not listed here, subject to the approval of the Chair of Jewish Studies.

- **HIST 207 / GBST 102 / ARAB 207 / LEAD 207 / JWST 217 / REL 239(F) LEC The Modern Middle East**
  
  Taught by: Magnus Bernhardsson

- **HIST 239(F) SEM Germany in the Twentieth Century**
  
  Taught by: Thomas Kohut

- **PSCI 339 / JWST 339 TUT Politics in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt**
  
  Taught by: Laura Ephraim

- **SILP 101(F) LEC Elementary Hebrew**
  
  Taught by: TBA

- **SILP 102(S) LEC Elementary Hebrew**
  
  Taught by: TBA

Capstone Course

- **HIST 433 / JWST 433 SEM Colonialism and the Jews**
  
  Taught by: Maud Mandel

- **HIST 490 / JWST 490 TUT Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe**
  
  Taught by: Alexandra Garbarini

- **REL 330 / PSCI 375 / JWST 492 SEM Modern Jewish Political Theory**
  
  Taught by: Jeffrey Israel

THE DEGREE WITH HONORS IN JEWISH STUDIES

The degree with honors offers students the opportunity to undertake advanced research under the supervision of one or more of the faculty members in Jewish Studies. Students normally must have at least a 3.5 GPA in the concentration and secure a faculty sponsor to be eligible. In addition to completing the five courses required for the concentration, candidates must enroll in either JWST 493 and a Winter Study course or a Winter Study course and JWST 494 in their senior year, and prepare a substantial written thesis. Honors in Jewish Studies may be granted to concentrators after an approved candidate completes an honors thesis and is awarded an honors grade by her/his advisor and one other faculty reader. Students interested in becoming candidates for honors should consult with the program in the spring of the junior year.

Croghan Professorship

Each year, in addition to the regular course offerings listed above, Williams sponsors the Croghan Bicentennial Visiting Professor in Religion who offers one course in Judaism and/or Christianity

OVERSEAS STUDIES

Studying in Israel is highly recommended for students interested in Jewish Studies. Many students have spent a semester or year at Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University, or the University of Haifa. With the approval of the Jewish Studies program chair, students may count a study-abroad
program towards up to two core requirements.

FAQ

Students MUST contact departments/programs BEFORE assuming study away credit will be granted toward the major or concentration.

Can your department or program typically pre-approve courses for major/concentration credit?

Yes, in some cases, if appropriate course information is available in advance (e.g. syllabi and/or course descriptions), though students should be sure to contact the department.

What criteria will typically be used/required to determine whether a student may receive major/concentration credit for a course taken while on study away?

Course title and description.

Does your department/program place restrictions on the number of major/concentration credits that a student might earn through study away?

No.

Does your department/program place restrictions on the types of courses that can be awarded credit towards your major?

No.

Are there specific major requirements that cannot be fulfilled while on study away?

Yes. Gateway course and Capstone course.

Are there specific major requirements in your department/program that students should be particularly aware of when weighing study away options? (Some examples might include a required course that is always taught in one semester, laboratory requirements.)

No.

Give examples in which students thought or assumed that courses taken away would count toward the major or concentration and then learned they wouldn’t:

None to date.

FUNDING

The Bronfman Fund for Judaic Studies was established in 1980 by Edgar M. Bronfman '50, Samuel Bronfman II '75, and Matthew Bronfman '80. The Bronfman Fund provides opportunities for the Williams community to learn about Jewish history and culture, both within the College’s formal curriculum and through the planning of major events on Jewish themes.

The Morris Wiener and Stephen R. Wiener '56 Fund for Jewish Studies was established in 1997 through the estate of Stephen R. Wiener '56. The Wiener gifts have provided an endowment to support a faculty position in modern Jewish thought, and are used to underwrite an annual lecture, forum or event relevant to contemporary Jewish life.

JWST 101 (F) Judaism: Before The Law

Cross-listings: JWST 101 REL 203

Secondary Cross-listing

This course introduces the academic study of Judaism through a humanistic exploration of "the Law" as a concept in Jewish thought and practice. Coverage will include the Law of Moses in the Hebrew Bible, the rabbinic distinction between "Oral Law" and "Written Law," medieval philosophical justifications for the Law, modern interpretations of the Law as Moral Law, Hasidic challenges to the centrality of the Law, and twentieth-century Jewish fiction that is haunted by a felt absence of the Law. Topics may also include the nature of rabbinic authority, methods of Jewish legal interpretation and innovation, and Jewish law as it pertains specifically to women, gentiles, idolaters, food consumption, and the Land of Israel. Course materials will include classical sources such as the Talmud and Midrash, modern philosophical texts, Franz Kafka’s The Trial with his parable "Before The Law," ethnographic accounts of contemporary Jewish observance, and much else. All readings will be in translation.

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, three short papers, and a final longer paper

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 30

Enrollment Preferences: Jewish Studies concentrators, Religion majors and students who are considering these options

Expected Class Size: 15
Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
JWST 101(D2) REL 203(D2)

Attributes: JLST Interdepartmental Electives JWST Gateway Courses

Not offered current academic year

JWST 205  (S)  Ancient Wisdom Literature

Cross-listings: COMP 217 JWST 205 REL 205 CLAS 205

Secondary Cross-listing

The Biblical books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job are often grouped together under the Hebrew category of *hokhmah*, 'wisdom.' Although these books are very different in content, they can all be interpreted as meditations on ethical and practical philosophy. In this way, they represent the Hebrew Bible's canonical embrace of a widespread Near Eastern literary phenomenon. From the instructional literature of Egypt and Mesopotamia to Greek didactic poetry and fables, ancient Mediterranean cultures offer a wide range of texts that engage the issues of personal behavior, leadership, and justice. Starting with the central wisdom books of the Hebrew Bible and moving through relevant material from the Apocrypha, New Testament, and the Egyptian and Babylonian traditions, this course will examine the literature of wisdom throughout the ancient world with an eye toward understanding its various social, political, and philosophical contexts. We will then consider the Greek wisdom tradition in such texts as Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Aesop's fables, and fragments from the pre-Socratic philosophers. Finally, we will explore the influence of these ancient sources on later expressions of wisdom in medieval European literature, as well as more recent examples such as Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanack*.

All readings are in translation.

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, short written assignments, and two longer papers

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
COMP 217(D2) JWST 205(D2) REL 205(D2) CLAS 205(D2)

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

JWST 206  (S)  The Book of Job and Joban Literature

Cross-listings: REL 206 COMP 206 JWST 206

Secondary Cross-listing

The Book of Job has often been described as the most philosophical book of the Hebrew Bible. The story of one man's struggle to understand the cause of his suffering and his relationship to God represents the finest flowering of the Near Eastern wisdom literature tradition. Through its exploration of fundamental issues concerning human suffering, fate and divinity, and the nature of philosophical self-examination, Job has served as a touchstone for the entire history of existential literature. At the same time, the sheer poetic force of the story has inspired some of the greatest artistic and literary meditations in the Western tradition. This course will engage in a close reading of the Book of Job in its full cultural, religious, and historical context with special attention to its literary, philosophical, and psychological dimensions. We will then proceed to investigate key modern works in several genres that involve Joban motifs, themes, and text both explicitly and implicitly. These texts will include Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, Archibald MacLeish's *J.B.*, Robert Frost's "Masque of Reason," Carl Jung's *Answer to Job*, and William Blake's *Illustrations to the Book of Job*. All readings are in translation.

Class Format: For the spring of 2021, this course will be taught online. The seminar will meet at the regularly scheduled time twice a week.

Requirements/Evaluation: Evaluation will be based on class participation, weekly short written assignments, and two longer papers.

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 12
Enrollment Preferences: If the course is overenrolled, preference will be given to students who have already taken a course in biblical literature.

Expected Class Size: 12

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 206(D2) COMP 206(D2) JWST 206(D2)

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

JWST 207 (F) From Adam to Noah: Literary Imagination and the Primeval History in Genesis

Cross-listings: CLAS 207 REL 207 JWST 207 COMP 250

Secondary Cross-listing

How long did Adam and Eve live in the Garden of Eden? What was the mark of Cain? Why did Enoch not die? Who was Noah's wife? How did Giants survive the Flood? These are only a few of the fascinating questions that ancient readers and interpreters of the Book of Genesis asked and attempted to answer. The first ten chapters of Genesis present a tantalizingly brief narrative account of the earliest history of humankind. The text moves swiftly from the Creation to the Flood and its immediate aftermath, but this masterful economy of style leaves many details unexplained. This course will explore the rich and varied literary traditions associated with the primeval history in the Genesis. Through a close reading of ancient noncanonical sources such as the Book of Enoch, Jubilees, and the Life of Adam and Eve, as well as Jewish traditions represented in Josephus, Philo, and Rabbinic literature and other accounts presented in early Christian and Gnostic texts, we will investigate the ways in which the elliptical style of Genesis generated a massive body of ancient folklore, creative exegesis, and explicit literary re-imagining of the early history of humankind. We will then turn to some continuations of these variant traditions in medieval literature, with particular attention to the material on the figures of Cain and Noah. All readings are in translation.

Class Format: For the fall of 2020, this course will taught online. The seminar will meet at the regularly scheduled time twice a week.

Requirements/Evaluation: Class participation and several writing assignments.

Prerequisites: None.

Enrollment Limit: 12

Enrollment Preferences: If the class is overenrolled, preference will be given to students who have already taken a course in Biblical literature.

Expected Class Size: 12

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
CLAS 207(D2) REL 207(D2) JWST 207(D2) COMP 250(D2)

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

JWST 209 (S) Jewish America

Cross-listings: JWST 209 REL 209

Secondary Cross-listing

Who and what counts as "Jewish" in America? Does stand-up comedy have a distinctly Jewish pedigree? What about neoconservatism? How is it possible to answer such questions without falling into what David Hollinger has called the "booster-bigot trap"? How is it possible, that is, to avoid answers that uncritically celebrate "Jewish contributions" or perniciously suggest "Jewish influence"? This course will explore the various meanings of Jewishness in American culture as expressed by artists, rabbis, activists, intellectuals, boosters, bigots and others. We will seek to avoid the booster-bigot trap by focusing vigilantly on what is at stake wherever Jewishness is invoked, defined or ascribed. We will draw methodological support from scholars like Hollinger, Jonathan Freedman, Laura Levitt, Yuri Slezkine, Shaul Magid, Andrea Most and others. Particular attention will be given to the appearance of Jewish themes and involvement in popular culture and political action, as well as to Jewish American communal institutions, the everyday lives of Jewish Americans, and Jewish variations on American religion. Coursework will involve some historical, sociological and ethnographic readings, but will focus primarily on close analysis of films, literary fiction, stand-up comedy, political magazines, theological texts, and
television shows. We may, for instance, watch films like *The Jazz Singer* (1927 and 1980), *Exodus* and *Annie Hall*; read John Updike's *Bech: A Book*, Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock* or Cynthia Ozick's *The Puttermesser Papers*; listen to the comedy of Mort Sahl, Lenny Bruce and Sarah Silverman; read from Henry Ford's *Dearborn Independent*, the Menorah Journal or *Commentary*; study works by Rabbis Stephen Wise, Abraham Joshua Heschel and Meir Kahane; and watch episodes of *Bridget Loves Bernie*, *Northern Exposure* and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. We will also study arguments about the role and meaning of Jewishness in American secularization, "therapeutic culture," the civil rights movement, the sexual revolution, and feminism.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** class participation, two short papers, a midterm take-home exam, and a final paper interpreting an example of Jewishness in America chosen by the student

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 30

**Enrollment Preferences:** Religion majors, Jewish Studies concentrators, and students who are interested in either of these options

**Expected Class Size:** 25

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

JWST 209(D2) REL 209(D2)

**Attributes:** JWST Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

**JWST 217 (F) The Modern Middle East (DPE)**

**Cross-listings:** ARAB 207 GBST 102 LEAD 207 JWST 217 REL 239 HIST 207

**Secondary Cross-listing**

This survey course addresses the main economic, religious, political and cultural trends in the modern Middle East. Topics to be covered include the cultural diversity of the Middle East, relations with Great Powers, the impact of imperialism, the challenge of modernity, the creation of nation states and nationalist ideologies, the discovery of oil, radical religious groups, and war and peace. Throughout the course these significant changes will be evaluated in light of their impact on the lives of a variety of individuals in the region and especially how they have grappled differently with increasing Western political and economic domination.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** participation, online responses, quizzes, midterm, and final exam

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 40

**Enrollment Preferences:** History & Arabic majors, and Jewish studies concentrators; completion of course admission survey if overenrolled

**Expected Class Size:** 30-40

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

ARAB 207(D2) GBST 102(D2) LEAD 207(D2) JWST 217(D2) REL 239(D2) HIST 207(D2)

**Difference, Power, and Equity Notes:** This course introduces students to the incredible diversity of the Middle East. It will explore how people of different backgrounds and in different situations have responded in diverse ways to the problems of the day. Students will acquire the critical tools to assess a number of interpretations of the past and how to understand and appreciate the many narratives in the Middle East today that have profound political and cultural implications.

**Attributes:** GBST Middle Eastern Studies Electives  HIST Group E Electives - Middle East  JWST Elective Courses  LEAD Facets or Domains of Leadership

Fall 2023

LEC Section: 01  MW 11:00 am - 12:15 pm  Magnús T. Bernhardsson

**JWST 222 (F) The Jewish Art of Interpretation**
Cross-listings: REL 222 JWST 222

Secondary Cross-listing

Turn it and turn it, for everything is in it. This famous rabbinic dictum offers an enigmatic yet comprehensive account of the principles that have defined the Jewish practice of interpretation for over two millennia. The imperative to keep a text, word, image, or concept in constant motion, in order to generate as many meanings and cross-meanings as possible, challenges us to transform the act of interpretation itself into a virtuosic craft or art that can engage the human imagination as diversely and powerfully as the creation of the works being interpreted. At the same time, emphasis on the dynamism between text and interpreter should dispel the notion that only expansive works have expansive meanings. If interpretation itself is an art, then even the shortest text can contain “everything” within it when it participates in that art. This course will engage students in a radical experiment in the art of interpretation. Through a deep encounter with a selection of miniature texts, ranging from ancient rabbinic proverbs and medieval fables to the modern parables and fragments of Franz Kafka, as well as folklore and jokelore from every period in Jewish history up to the present, we will develop an interpretive practice that combines analytic, critical, and creative principles in both written and oral contexts. The goal throughout is to explore interactively how the making of meaning is an integral part of the human experience.

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, regular short written and oral assignments, and a final project

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 18

Enrollment Preferences: If the class is overenrolled, preference will be given to Jewish Studies concentrators and Religion majors.

Expected Class Size: 18

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 222(D2) JWST 222(D2)

Attributes: JWST Core Electives JWST Gateway Courses

Fall 2023

SEM Section: 01 TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am Jeffrey I. Israel, Edan Dekel

JWST 230 (F) Modern European Jewish History, 1789-1948

Cross-listings: HIST 230 JWST 230

Secondary Cross-listing

What does it mean to be a Jew? The vexed question of Jewish identity emerged anew at the end of the eighteenth century in Europe and has dominated Jewish history throughout the modern period. Although Jewish emancipation and citizenship followed different paths in different parts of Europe, in general Jews were confronted by unprecedented opportunities for integration into non-Jewish society and unprecedented challenges to Jewish communal life. Focusing primarily on France and Germany, and to a lesser extent on the Polish lands, this course will introduce students to the major social, cultural, religious, and political transformations that shaped the lives of European Jews from the outbreak of the French Revolution to the aftermath of World War II. We will explore such topics as emancipation, Jewish diversity, the reform of Judaism, competing political ideologies, Jewish-gentile relations, the rise of modern antisemitism, the role of Jewish women, interwar Jewish life and culture, Jewish responses to Nazism and the Holocaust, and the situation of Jews in the immediate postwar period. In addition to broad historical treatments, course materials will include memoirs, diaries, and fiction.

Class Format: discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, two papers, and a final exam

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 40

Enrollment Preferences: Jewish studies concentrators, first-years, sophomores

Expected Class Size: 10-20

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
JWST 249 (S) Anti-Semitism (DPE)

Cross-listings: REL 249 JWST 249

Secondary Cross-listing

This course will investigate intellectual traditions, political movements, and cultural objects that portray Jews, Jewishness, or Judaism as essentially pernicious. We will analyze materials from a variety of times and places, including the ancient world, the medieval period, and the present day. We will assess the impact of anti-Semitism on the lives of Jews and non-Jews. But we will also read theoretical approaches to the study of anti-Semitism that raise key questions for our investigation. Where does the term "anti-Semitism" come from and how exactly should it be defined? Is anti-Semitism a continuous phenomenon that connects every claim of Jewish perniciousness, wherever it is alleged, for over two thousand years of human history? Or should every context be treated as fundamentally distinct, so that the claim of Jewish perniciousness is presumed to have a distinct meaning, origin, and purpose in each case? What motivates charges of Jewish perniciousness? What are the particular threats typically alleged to be posed by Jews, Jewishness, and Judaism? How do constructions of Jewish perniciousness fit with constructions of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality, and nationality in different times and places?

Requirements/Evaluation: Three 5-7 page papers, class participation

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: Jewish Studies concentrators, Religion majors, and students who have taken JWST 203

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

REL 249(D2) JWST 249(D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course will introduce students to discursive, institutional, and social structures that have organized the stigmatization, domination, and persecution of Jews in various geographic locations for over two thousand years. An understanding of these structures is crucial to understanding contemporary dynamics of difference and power. Students will also learn how anti-Semitism intersects with constructions of race, gender, class, religion, ethnicity, and nation.

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Spring 2024

SEM Section: 01  Cancelled

JWST 268 (S) Where are all the Jews? (DPE) (WS)

Cross-listings: ARAB 363 REL 268 COMP 363 JWST 268

Secondary Cross-listing

Until four decades ago, many Maghrebi and Middle Eastern cities and villages teemed with Jewish populations. However, the creation of the Alliance Israelite Universelle's schools (1830s), the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the decolonization process in the Maghreb and the Middle East, and the Arab defeat in the Six-Day War accelerated the departure of Arab and Berber Jews from their homelands to other destinations, including France, Israel, Canada, the United States, and different Latin American countries. Arab and Berber Jews' departure from their ancestral lands left a socioeconomic and cultural void that Maghrebi and Middle Eastern cultural production has finally started to address, albeit shyly. The course will help students understand the depth of Jewish life in the Maghreb and the Middle East, and interrogate the local and global factors that led to their disappearance from both social and cultural memories for a long time. Reading fiction, autobiographies, ethnographies, historiographical works, and anthropological texts alongside documentaries films, the students will understand how literature and film have become a locus in which amnesia about Arab/Berber Jews is actively contested by recreating a bygone world. Resisting both conflict and nostalgia as the primary determinants of Jewish-Muslim relations, the course will help students think about multiple ways in which Jews and Muslims formed communities of citizens despite their differences and disagreements.
Requirements/Evaluation: 400-word weekly, focused responses on Glow; a book review (600 words); two five-page papers as mid-terms; one ten-page final paper; one presentation.

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 14

Enrollment Preferences: students interested in critical and comparative literary, religious or historical studies.

Expected Class Size: 14

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
ARAB 363(D1) REL 268(D2) COMP 363(D1) JWST 268(D2)

Writing Skills Notes: Students are required to present an outline of their papers before submitting a draft paper. The professor will give feedback on each written work to improve students' writing skills. Students are required to incorporate the feedback to improve their drafts before they become final. Students will receive detailed and consistent feedback about their writing in Arabic language. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: Students in this course will understand the historical process that lead to the disappearance of Arab/Berber Jews. Students also will work out alternative ways to grasp Jewish-Muslim relations beyond nostalgia and conflict. Finally, students enrolled in the course will grapple with and try to disentangle the complexity of Jewish-Muslim citizenship in both pre-colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Spring 2024

SEM Section: 01 MR 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm Brahim El Guabli

JWST 299 (S) Shakespeare's Torah

Cross-listings: JWST 299 REL 299

Secondary Cross-listing

For readers and speakers of the English language over the past five centuries, no literary body of work has been more central than the writings of William Shakespeare. His plays and poems have shaped the linguistic, philosophical, and artistic representation of human experience in ways that permeate every aspect of our lives. Shakespeare's capacious work and its central preoccupation with the essential questions of humanity have also inspired an extensive tradition of commentary, interpretation, and performance. In this regard, his work occupies a position similar to the one held by the collection of writings known in the Jewish tradition as Torah. This term refers both to the set of books contained in the Hebrew Bible and to the rabbinic tradition that emerged from reading those books, which in turn has provided the core principles for over two millennia of Jewish interpretive practice. This course invites students to read Shakespeare as Torah by applying the essential features of that practice to his extraordinary work. Through a deep and sustained encounter with four plays in four different genres (Hamlet, Henry IV, Twelfth Night, and The Tempest), we will combine analytic, critical, and creative principles to make meaning in and out of these texts. The goal throughout is to explore how the Jewish art of interpretation can illuminate our experience of Shakespeare's humanity.

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, regular short written and oral assignments, and a final project

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 18

Enrollment Preferences: If the class is overenrolled, preference will be given to Jewish Studies concentrators, Religion majors, and students who have taken REL/JWST 222.

Expected Class Size: 18

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
JWST 299(D2) REL 299(D2)

Attributes: JWST Core Electives
JWST 334 (S) Imagining Joseph

Cross-listings: REL 334 ANTH 334 JWST 334 COMP 334

Secondary Cross-listing

Beloved son, rival brother, faithful servant, dreamer, seer, object of desire, lover, husband, bureaucrat, Joseph is one of the most fully-limned and compelling figures in the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scriptural traditions. The story of Joseph unfolds over fourteen chapters in the Hebrew Bible, and is the subject of the fourth longest sura in the Qur’an. Through millennia, the story of Joseph has inspired a wealth of interpretations, commentary, apocrypha, re-tellings, and back-story, including an apocryphal book of scripture about Joseph and his wife, Asenath, Sufi poetry about Joseph and Zuleikha (Potiphar’s wife), a trilogy by the 20th century German novelist Thomas Mann, a musical by Andrew Lloyd Weber, and many expressions in Western visual art. The course will explore these various expressions, looking to them for the ways in which Joseph has captured the imaginations of peoples and cultures across time and space. The course will be organized as a collaborative seminar in which the class will read the foundational scriptures together, followed by thematic discussions to which students will contribute insights from their own readings of particular peripheral texts. Students will learn the pleasures of close and intense exegetical reading in approaching the Hebrew Bible and Qur’an, as well as the more expansive pleasures of linking post-scriptural expressions together.

Requirements/Evaluation: occasional response papers; substantial final project and paper; class participation

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 12

Enrollment Preferences: based on responses to a questionnaire

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

REL 334(D2) ANTH 334(D2) JWST 334(D2) COMP 334(D1)

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

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JWST 339 (S) Politics in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt

Cross-listings: JWST 339 PSCI 339

Secondary Cross-listing

Hannah Arendt (1906-75) bore witness to some of the darkest moments in the history of politics. Born a Jew in Germany, Arendt lived through—and reflected deeply on--two world wars, the rise of totalitarianism, and the detonation of the first atomic bomb. She narrowly escaped imprisonment by the Gestapo and internment in a refugee camp in Vichy France before fleeing to New York. Yet, in the face of these horrors, Arendt never lost her faith in political action as a way to express and renew what she called "love of the world." She wrote luminously about the darkness that comes when terror extinguishes politics and the shining, almost miraculous events of freedom through which politics is sometimes renewed. In this tutorial, we will investigate what Arendt’s vision of politics stands to offer to those struggling to comprehend and transform the darkest aspects of the contemporary political world. Our time and Arendt's are similarly darkened by the shadows of racism, xenophobia, inequality, terror, the mass displacement of refugees, and the mass dissemination of lies. It may be tempting to conclude from these similarities--as some recent commentators have--that we are witnessing the return of "totalitarianism" as Arendt understood it. She would be the first to refuse to use inherited concepts as if they were keys to unlock the present. Her words and her example should impel us to reject shortcuts to authentic understanding, the "unending activity by which...we come to terms with and reconcile ourselves to reality." We will turn to Arendt as an interlocutor, not a guide, as we seek to reconcile ourselves to the contingency and specificity of past and present political realities. And we will search her works and our world for embers of hope that even seemingly inexorable political tragedies may yet be interrupted by assertions of freedom in political action.

Requirements/Evaluation: five 5-page papers; five 2-page responses; participation

Prerequisites: a prior course in political theory, philosophy, or critical theory, or permission of the instructor
Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: Political Theory concentrators, Political Science majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

JWST 339(D2) PSCI 339(D2)

Writing Skills Notes: You will receive feedback from me and your tutorial partner on your five papers (each 5 pages long and spaced evenly through the semester). Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Attributes: JWST Elective Courses PHIL Related Courses PSCI Political Theory Courses

Not offered current academic year

JWST 430 (S) Postcolonial Reparations: Trauma, History, and Memory after European Imperialism (DPE) (WS)

Cross-listings: HIST 430 JWST 430

Secondary Cross-listing

How have European states responded to calls to acknowledge and atone for the crimes of Empire? This course places recent calls for reparations in a historical context. Weaving together a wide-range of historical and contemporary case studies -- including the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (1951), Germany's official recognition of the Herero Genocide (2021), and ongoing debates in France about the restitution of colonial-era looted art, this course investigates how the language and mechanisms of restorative justice have historically developed, evaluates which past efforts of restorative justice were successful and why, and examines what role historical memory and historians-as-activists should play in campaigns that seek reparations for colonial injustices. In doing so, it evaluates how activists have deployed scholarly vocabularies on memory, justice, and violence in a number of national and international contexts.

Requirements/Evaluation: Class participation, weekly 500-word discussion posts and a 20-page research paper

Prerequisites: None

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: History majors, seniors, and then juniors

Expected Class Size: 10-15

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

HIST 430(D2) JWST 430(D2)

Writing Skills Notes: This is an intensive writing seminar for advanced history majors. We focus on how to write a journal-length piece of original historical research, while evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of other scholarly pieces. Students receive feedback on multiple drafts of their final research papers and participate in two workshop seminars in which they provide feedback on the papers of their peers.

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course asks how contemporary political and social justice movements can -- or ought to -- address political and economic inequities between the Global South and North, introduces students to how questions of race and national belonging have informed contemporary debates on restorative justice, and exposes the persistence of some global and historically-situated inequities.

Attributes: HIST Group C Electives - Europe and Russia

Spring 2024

SEM Section: 01   W 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm   Charlotte A. Kiechel

JWST 433 (F) Colonialism and the Jews (DPE) (WS)

Cross-listings: HIST 433 JWST 433

Secondary Cross-listing

Where are Jews in colonial history? Where is colonialism in Jewish history? In many ways, these questions haunt contemporary Jewish and often
world politics. Indeed, in the twenty-first century, the relationship between Jews and colonialism has been present in debates about Zionism, the history of capitalism, Jewish-Muslim relations, the wider Middle East, the future of European identity, the aims and roots of American empire, and the intersections of race and religion in colonial domination. And yet, typically, the subject of Jews and colonialism is more polemicized or avoided than probed. This course will seek to address this lacunae by introducing students to new historical scholarship that has begun tracing these questions.

Students will consider the ways in which imperial legal forms, economic structures, and cultural and intellectual underpinnings shaped Jewish lives from the British antipodes to French North Africa, and throughout the Russian and Ottoman Empires, as well as in metropolitan Europe. Among other issues, we will ask: How did Jews become defined and define themselves in the colonial venture? In their various roles in colonial empires, are Jews best understood as subjects or agents of empire or are there more fruitful ways to conceptualize their engagement? What was the impact of anti-colonial struggles on modern Jewish politics and historical development? The course will approach this topic thematically rather than as a comprehensive survey. By introducing students to some of the key debates in this emerging field, we will consider what it takes to construct a successful historical argument and how to engage critically with works in an emerging field. A semester-long writing project will expand students capacities to pose thoughtful historical questions; conduct research and gather compelling evidence; read deeply and critically; carefully assess evidence; and write inquiry-based essays.

Requirements/Evaluation: Class participation; brief weekly writing on the readings; a final research paper written in stages, including two "research updates"; an analysis of a source; a research proposal; a rough draft of one paper section; a rough draft of the paper; and a final 25-page paper.

Prerequisites: None; open to all students (however, a background in European history and/or Jewish Studies will be helpful).

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: Junior and Senior History Majors and Jewish Studies Concentrators

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

HIST 433(D2) JWST 433(D2)

Writing Skills Notes: Before each course, students will submit a 2-3 paragraph critique and a list of 3 questions for discussion. The final assignment will be a research paper (approximately 25 pages) or historiographical essay. Assignments en route to the final deadline, include: 1) two early "research updates" to document process and progress; 2) analysis of a source; 3) research proposal; 4) rough draft of a section; 5) draft of paper; 6) final paper. Only some work will graded, but all will receive feedback.

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course considers the complex ways that religion, ethnicity and national identities shaped the colonial and post-colonial world. Never controlling or collectively representing a European power, Jews were also rarely situated at the bottom of any colonial hierarchy, sometimes occupying more than one social or political role in a single colonial territory. This course provides insight into the many ways hierarchies of power could operate in colonial and post-colonial settings.

Attributes: HIST Group C Electives - Europe and Russia JWST Capstone Course

Not offered current academic year

JWST 490 (S) Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe (WS)

Cross-listings: JWST 490 HIST 490

Secondary Cross-listing

This course is about the postwar legacy of the Holocaust. Nazi Germany's extermination of European Jews has become a moral and cultural touchstone for people in Europe and in many other parts of the world. This tutorial explores a series of topics from the immediate aftermath of the Second World War to the present. Engaging with a wide-range of sources, we will wrestle with historical, legal, moral, political, and cultural issues and debates that have emerged out of the confrontation with the extermination of the Jews of Europe. They include: Why was the Holocaust "unprecedented" and "unimaginable"? Is it a Jewish story or universal story? Does the Holocaust raise different issues than other historical events for the historian? How should the Holocaust be represented in words and images, and what are the implications of different means of representing it? Has Germany faced up to its past? Were Germans also victims of World War II? Who were the "bystanders" as compared to the "perpetrators"? Were the postwar trials of perpetrators a travesty of justice? What "lessons" have we learned and should we learn from the Holocaust? By the end of the course, students will have grappled with the ongoing controversies that have arisen among scholars, artists, governments, and lay people about the meaning of the Holocaust for the postwar world. In a world in which extraordinary acts of violence continue to be perpetrated and many nations' pasts are marked by episodes of extreme criminality and/or trauma, exploring the manner by which one such episode has been remembered, avenged, and adjudicated has relevance for considering other societies' efforts to confront their own traumatic pasts.
Class Format: tutorial; class time consists of weekly one-hour sessions with the instructor and a fellow student

Requirements/Evaluation: Every other week the student will write and present orally a 5- to 7-page paper on the assigned readings of that week; on alternate weeks, the student will write a 2-page critique of the fellow student's paper; a final written paper on the issues raised in the tutorial to cap off the semester's work.

Prerequisites: permission of instructor

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: History majors and Jewish Studies concentrators

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

JWST 490(D2) HIST 490(D2)

Writing Skills Notes: Bi-weekly 5- to 7-page papers. Students will receive regular and individualized feedback on their writing to help them work on different writing issues throughout the semester.

Attributes: HIST Group C Electives - Europe and Russia JWST Capstone Course JWST Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

JWST 492 (S) Modern Jewish Political Theory

Cross-listings: JWST 492 PSCI 375 REL 330

Secondary Cross-listing

By the late 19th century, Jews across Europe were faced with an urgent political problem. Amidst burgeoning national self-consciousness throughout the continent, despite the liberatory promises of the Enlightenment, Jews remained a vulnerable, segregated, and stigmatized minority population. Jews had to decide where to pin their hopes. Should they ally themselves with the liberals or the communists? Should they embrace nationalism or cosmopolitanism? Should they, perhaps, abandon Europe altogether and re-constitute themselves elsewhere? If so, should they focus their efforts on relocation to the historical land of Israel? Or could they go anywhere? Wherever they might go, should they aspire to build a modern Jewish nation-state, a semi-autonomous Jewish community, or some other arrangement? Should this coincide with the cultivation of a distinctively Jewish modern language? If so, should it be Hebrew or Yiddish? In this course we will assess various answers to these questions proffered by Jewish political thinkers in the modern period. We will pay particular attention to the construction of "Jews" and "Judaism" in these arguments. And we will ask persistently: what constitutes a "Jewish justification" for a political claim in modern Jewish political theory? Coverage will include: Jewish liberalism, political Zionism, Yiddishist autonomism, messianic quietism, and other views. We will read mostly primary sources, including texts by: Hermann Cohen, Theodore Herzl, Chaim Zhitlowsky, Franz Rosenzweig, Leo Strauss, Hannah Arendt, and many others.

Requirements/Evaluation: six short (1-2 pages) response papers; two 6- to 8-page papers, each analyzing a different view in depth; a final 18- to 20-page paper that incorporates the two previously submitted 6-8 page papers, but also compares the two views and adjudicates between them

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors, Jewish Studies concentrators, and Political Science students on the "Theory" track

Expected Class Size: 18

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

JWST 492(D2) PSCI 375(D2) REL 330(D2)

Attributes: JWST Capstone Course JWST Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

JWST 493 (F) Senior Thesis: Jewish Studies

Jewish Studies thesis.
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2023
HON Section: 01    TBA     Edan  Dekel

JWST 494  (S) Senior Thesis: Jewish Studies
Jewish Studies thesis.
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2024
HON Section: 01    TBA     Edan  Dekel

JWST 497  (F) Independent Study: Jewish Studies
Jewish Studies independent study.
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2023
IND Section: 01    TBA     Edan  Dekel

JWST 498  (S) Independent Study: Jewish Studies
Jewish Studies independent study.
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2024
IND Section: 01    TBA     Edan  Dekel