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 201 / COMP 201 / JWST 201 The Hebrew Bible
  Taught by: Edan Dekel
  Catalog details
REL 203 / JWST 101 Judaism: Before The Law
  Taught by: Jeffrey Israel
  Catalog details

Core Courses

ANTH 334 / COMP 334 / JWST 334 / REL 334(S) Imagining Joseph
  Taught by: Peter Just
  Catalog details
ARAB 363 / JWST 268 / REL 268 / HIST 311 / COMP 363(S) Where are all the Jews?
  Taught by: Brahim El Guabli
  Catalog details
HIST 230 / JWST 230(F) Modern European Jewish History, 1789-1948
  Taught by: Alexandra Garbarini
  Catalog details
HIST 238 / REL 296 / JWST 338(F) The History of the Holocaust
  Taught by: Alexandra Garbarini
  Catalog details
HIST 434 / REL 435 / JWST 434(S) The Meaning of Diaspora and the Jews of Europe
  Taught by: Alexandra Garbarini
  Catalog details
HIST 480 T / ARAB 480 / GBST 480 / JWST 480 Interpretations of the Israeli Palestinian Conflict
  Taught by: Magnús Bernhardsson
  Catalog details
HIST 490 T / JWST 490 Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe
  Taught by: Alexandra Garbarini
  Catalog details
HIST 495 T / JWST 495(F) Memoirs, Memory and the Modern Jewish Experience
  Taught by: Maud Mandel
  Catalog details
REL 202 / JWST 202 / COMP 214 Moses: Stranger in a Strange Land
  Taught by: Edan Dekel
  Catalog details
REL 205 / CLAS 205 / JWST 205 / COMP 217 Ancient Wisdom Literature
  Taught by: Edan Dekel
  Catalog details
REL 206 / COMP 206 / JWST 206 The Book of Job and Joban Literature
  Taught by: Edan Dekel
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.

CRHE 101(F) Hebrew
   Taught by: TBA
Catalog details
CRHE 102(S) Hebrew
   Taught by: Jane Canova
Catalog details
HIST 111 / ARAB 111 / LEAD 150 Movers and Shakers in the Middle East
   Taught by: Magnús Bernhardsson
Catalog details
HIST 207 / GBST 101 / ARAB 207 / LEAD 207 / JWST 217 / REL 239(F) The Modern Middle East
   Taught by: Magnús Bernhardsson
Catalog details
HIST 239(F) Germany in the Twentieth Century
   Taught by: Thomas Kohut
Catalog details
HIST 409 / ARAB 409 / GBST 409(F) Crescent, Cross, and Star. Religion and Politics in the Middle East
   Taught by: Magnús Bernhardsson
Catalog details
PSCI 339 T / JWST 339(F) Politics in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt
   Taught by: Laura Ephraim
Catalog details

Capstone Course

HIST 434 / REL 335 / JWST 434(S) The Meaning of Diaspora and the Jews of Europe
   Taught by: Alexandra Garbarini
Catalog details
HIST 490 T / JWST 490 Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe
   Taught by: Alexandra Garbarini
Catalog details
REL 330 / PSCI 375 / JWST 492 Modern Jewish Political Theory
   Taught by: Jeffrey Israel
Catalog details
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 31 (W) Senior Thesis: Jewish Studies

Jewish Studies senior thesis.
JWST 99 (W) Independent Study: Jewish Studies
Open to upperclass students. Students interested in doing an independent project (99) during Winter Study must make prior arrangements with a faculty sponsor. The student and professor then complete the independent study proposal form available online. The deadline is typically in late September. Proposals are reviewed by the pertinent department and the Winter Study Committee. Students will be notified if their proposal is approved prior to the Winter Study registration period.

JWST 101 (F) Judaism: Before The Law
Cross-listings: REL 203 JWST 101
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 by Franz Rosenzweig, Leo Strauss and Joseph Soloveitchik, Kafka's The Trial with his parable "Before The Law," Woody Allen's film Crimes and Misdemeanors, and ethnographic accounts of contemporary Jewish observance. All readings will be in translation.

JWST 201 (F) The Hebrew Bible
Cross-listings: COMP 201 REL 201 JWST 201
Secondary Cross-listing
The Hebrew Bible is perhaps the single most influential work in the history of Western philosophy, literature, and art. But the overwhelming presence of the text in nearly every aspect of modern culture often obscures the sheer brilliance of its narrative technique as well as the complex interplay
between law, history, prophecy, and poetry. This course offers a comprehensive introduction to the literary, historical, and theological aspects of the Hebrew Bible with an eye towards developing a sophisticated understanding of the text in its ancient context. Through the close reading of substantial portions of the Hebrew Scripture in translation and the application of various modern critical approaches to culture and literature, students will explore fundamental questions about the social, ritual, and philosophical history of ancient Israel, as well as the fundamental power of storytelling that has resonated across two millennia.

Class Format: lecture/discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation will be based on class participation, short written assignments, and two to three longer papers

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 40

Enrollment Preferences: Jewish Studies concentrators, Religion and Comparative Literature majors

Expected Class Size: 40

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 201 (D1) REL 201 (D2) JWST 201 (D2)

Attributes: JWST Gateway Courses

Not offered current academic year

JWST 202  (S)  Moses: Stranger in a Strange Land

Secondary Cross-listing

As chieftain, priest, prophet, and lawgiver all in one, Moses occupies the central place in the history of Israelite and Jewish leaders. However, he is a somewhat unlikely candidate for such an important role. He is God's chosen leader among the enslaved Israelites, but he is raised as an Egyptian prince. He is a spokesman for his people, but he is slow of speech. He is the lawgiver and first judge of his nation, yet he is quick-tempered and impatient. The story of the most revered figure in the Jewish tradition, who nevertheless remains an outsider to the very end, has fascinated commentators and inspired countless artistic and literary interpretations. This course will engage in a close study of the figure of Moses by examining the biblical narrative of his life and career from Exodus through Deuteronomy with an eye towards understanding the complex and often contradictory portrait of this self-described “stranger in a strange land.” We will also examine some of the ancient legendary and folkloric accounts about Moses, as well as philosophical and allegorical treatments in Hellenistic Jewish, early Christian, and Muslim biographies. We will then proceed to investigate key modern reconfigurations and critiques of Moses in several genres, which may include renaissance visual depictions, literary works by Sigmund Freud, George Eliot, Thomas Mann, and Zora Neale Hurston, and even musical and cinematic renditions. All readings are in translation.

Class Format: seminar

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

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment: 19

Enrollment Preferences: students who have already taken a course in biblical literature

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:

JWST 202 (D2) COMP 214 (D1) REL 202 (D2)

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

JWST 204  (F)  Jesus and Judaism

Cross-listings: JWST 204  REL 204
Secondary Cross-listing

Was Jesus a Christian? Was he Jewish? And if Christianity's ostensible founder was Jewish, what does that mean for his Christianness? This course will explore Christian, Jewish, and secular depictions of Jesus' Jewishness to see what they reveal about the nature and history of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. Broad in its historical scope, the course will include examinations of ancient Jewish messianic expectations, New Testament depictions of Jesus' Jewishness, covert references to Jesus in the Talmud, medieval debates between Jews and Christians, and modern scholarly "quests" for the historical Jesus. Was Jesus Jewish? How so and for whom?

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: active preparation and participation, papers

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 21

Enrollment Preferences: Religion Majors and Jewish Studies concentrators get preference

Expected Class Size: 15

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 204 (D2) REL 204 (D2)

Fall 2019

SEM Section: 01    TF 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm     Phillip J. Webster

JWST 205  (S)  Ancient Wisdom Literature

Cross-listings: COMP 217  REL 205  JWST 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.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation will be based on 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) REL 205 (D2) JWST 205 (D2) CLAS 205 (D2)

Attributes:  JWST Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

JWST 206  (S)  The Book of Job and Joban Literature
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: discussion
Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation will be based on class participation, weekly 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 206 (D2) REL 206 (D2) JWST 206 (D2)
Attributes: JWST Core Electives

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 several continuations of these variant traditions in medieval and early modern literature, with particular attention to the extensive material on the figures of Cain and Noah. All readings are in translation.

Class Format: discussion
Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation will be based on class participation and several writing assignments
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: students who have already taken a course in Biblical literature
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:
CLAS 207 (D1) COMP 250 (D2) REL 207 (D2) JWST 207 (D2)
Attributes: JWST Core Electives
JWST 208 (S) Genesis: The Family Saga

Cross-listings: REL 208 COMP 207 JWST 208

Secondary Cross-listing

The Book of Genesis has rightly been described as the masterpiece of Hebrew biblical narrative. In particular, the continuous tale that begins with Abraham and Sarah and extends four generations to the children of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel is one of the most extraordinary examples of literary artistry in any time or tradition. As one family wrestles with the promise of becoming a chosen people, the narrative explores themes of marriage, parenthood, sibling rivalry, land, violence, wandering, and, above all, the complex relationship between humanity and God. This course will examine those themes through a close reading of Genesis in translation, from Abraham and Sarah's first appearance on the scene to the death of Jacob. We will consider the text from multiple perspectives with an eye toward understanding the literary, philosophical, and psychological dimensions that continue to amaze and perplex readers to this day.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, a series of short writing assignments, and two longer papers

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: students who have already taken a course in Biblical literature

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:
REL 208 (D2) COMP 207 (D1) JWST 208 (D2)

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Spring 2020

SEM Section: 01 TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am Edan Dekel

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.

Class Format: seminar

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
**JWST 219  (S)  Judaism Under Ancient Greek and Roman Imperialisms**

**Cross-listings:**  CLAS 219  REL 219  JWST 219

**Secondary Cross-listing**

How did ancient Greek and Roman empires shape the beginnings of Judaism? In this course, we will examine how Greek and Roman imperial systems of identity, ethnicity, law, religion, and knowledge affected Judaism as a religious and cultural system. We will pay particular attention to the ways that Jews/Judeans responded to these imperial pressures, especially as those responses articulated "hybrid" versions of Judaism that were informed both by resistance to imperial centers as well as the sheer hegemony of those cultural systems. The course thus uses (and introduces...
students to) postcolonial theory to study the history of Judaism under Greek and Roman empires. Readings for this course will include a wide array of ancient Jewish works, such as the books of Maccabees, Flavius Josephus, Philo of Alexandria, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Mishnah. The course will also include select readings from early Christian texts and postcolonial theory.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: Active participation and preparation, papers
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 21
Enrollment Preferences: Religion Majors, Jewish Studies Concentrators, Classics Majors
Expected Class Size: 14
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 219 (D1) REL 219 (D2) JWST 219 (D2)

Spring 2020
SEM Section: 01 TF 2:35 pm - 3:50 pm Phillip J. Webster

JWST 222 (F) The Jewish Art of Interpretation
Cross-listings: REL 222 JWST 222 COMP 211
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.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, regular short written and oral assignments, and a final project
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 18
Enrollment Preferences: none
Expected Class Size: 18
Grading: yes 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) COMP 211 (D1)
Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Fall 2019
SEM Section: 01 TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am Edan Dekel, Jeffrey I. Israel

JWST 230 (F) Modern European Jewish History, 1789-1948
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 anti-Semitism, 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 a novel.

Class Format: lecture/discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation will be based on class participation, two papers, and a final exam

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 40

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:

HIST 230 (D2) JWST 230 (D2)

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

Fall 2019

LEC Section: 01 MWF 8:30 am - 9:45 am Alexandra Garbarini

JWST 249 (F) 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?

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: three short papers (4-5 pages), one longer final paper (6-8 pages)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 30

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

Expected Class Size: 18

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
Not offered current academic year

JWST 259 (S) Ethics of Jewish American Fiction

Cross-listings: REL 259 ENGL 259 JWST 259

Secondary Cross-listing

After the Second World War, Jewish American writers who wrote about Jewish characters and Jewish themes were increasingly celebrated as central figures in American fiction. Isaac Bashevis Singer, Bernard Malamud, Saul Bellow, Cynthia Ozick and Philip Roth are among those who gained prominence in this period. These writers were literary innovators and often addressed broad humanistic themes. But they also struggled with profound questions that arose in the postwar period about Jewishness, the legacy of the Holocaust, and what it means to be an American. In this course we will read the above authors and others. We will focus, in particular, on the distinctive ethical and political ideas, emotions, and aspirations that animate their work. The course will begin with a study of theoretical approaches that will provide the basis for our ethical criticism: we will read, for instance, Lionel Trilling, Wayne Booth, Martha Nussbaum, and Noël Carroll. Then we will delve into the fiction, following a trail that begins in the postwar period and continues in fictions by Erica Jong, Rebecca Goldstein, Michael Chabon, Gary Shteyngart, and others. Can we find a distinctive Jewish American ethics in Jewish American fiction?

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: class participation, one take-home exam on theoretical approaches to ethical criticism; four short essays

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors, Jewish Studies concentrators, and English majors

Expected Class Size: 18

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

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 259 (D2) ENGL 259 (D1) JWST 259 (D2)

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Spring 2020
SEM Section: 01 MR 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm Jeffrey I. Israel

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

Cross-listings: ARAB 363 COMP 363 JWST 268 HIST 311 REL 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 sudden disappearance from both social and cultural memories for a long time. Reading fiction, autobiographies, historiographical works, ethnographies, and anthropological texts alongside films and documentaries, the students will understand how literature and film have become a locus in which historiographical amnesia about Arab/Berber Jews is actively contested by recreating a bygone world, which, until fairly recently, both Jews and Muslims occupied and negotiated successfully for millennia. Reading against 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.

Class Format: Seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: 400-word weekly, focused responses on Glow; a book review (500 words); two five-page papers as mid-terms; one ten-page final paper; one presentation

Prerequisites: None

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: None

Expected Class Size: 19

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) COMP 363 (D1) JWST 268 (D2) HIST 311 (D2) REL 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 2020

SEM Section: 01 TR 11:20 am - 12:35 pm Brahim El Guabli

JWST 270 (S) Jewish and Christian Identity in the Ancient World

Cross-listings: REL 270 JWST 270

Secondary Cross-listing

The modern engagement with the many ways that we construct identity has been matched by a similar wave of studies about identity construction in the ancient world. In this course, we will discuss the rise of "Judaism" and "Jewish identity" in the ancient period (looking at roughly 400 BCE-200 CE), and compare it with the movement of the followers of Jesus as a negotiation of a new identity within Judaism (roughly 30 CE-200 CE). We will conclude with the question of the "Parting of the Ways" of these two groups.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: three short papers (4-5 pages), one final paper (10-15 pages), close reading of materials, engagement with class discussion

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors, Jewish Studies concentrators

Expected Class Size: 15

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 270 (D2) JWST 270 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

JWST 280 (F) Art at its Limits: Representing the Holocaust (DPE) (WS)
The Holocaust poses unique challenges to art: it is an event that unsettles the very notion of representation while, at the same time, also demanding it. Art, after all, is a mode of witnessing as well as a form of commemoration; it allows survivors to record their testimony and later generations to remember. Yet the representation of suffering can all too easily become exploitative or aestheticizing, it can turn pain into entertainment and history into fiction. How, then, do writers, artists, and filmmakers navigate the representation of the Shoah if it resists comprehension and undermines traditional forms of narrative? In this course, we will ask if and how art can do justice to a catastrophe of such magnitude as the Holocaust by analyzing different forms of media from a variety of cultural backgrounds. What can poetry offer that remains foreclosed to prose? Was Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus* really in bad taste? How should documentaries approach the Shoah, and is there a place for Hollywood films in the archives of commemoration? Texts among others by Tadeusz Borowski, Tadeusz Ró’ewicz, Art Spiegelman, Paul Celan, Primo Levi, Sylvia Plath, Hannah Arendt, Theodor W. Adorno, Jacques Derrida, and Maurice Blanchot; films by Quentin Tarantino, Claude Lanzmann, Pawe’ Pawlikowski, and Steven Spielberg.

**Class Format:** Seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** three 2-page critical responses, oral presentation, final project

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 20

**Enrollment Preferences:** German and Comparative Literature majors

**Expected Class Size:** 14

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

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

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

COMP 280 (D1) JWST 280 (D2) GERM 280 (D1)

**Writing Skills Notes:** Three 2-page papers spaced over the course of the semester on which students will receive detailed feedback and which they will be able to revise; the final project will either be a 10-page paper or a creative project accompanied by a 4-page reflection that will consider the creative component in relation to the themes of the course. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

**Difference, Power, and Equity Notes:** This course will examine how art can help us think about the catastrophic abuses of power in the Third Reich. While many of the texts we will examine focus on the stories of Jewish people, the class will also consider how the narratives of other persecuted groups, including the Sinti and Roma, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ victims and survivors, relate to and differ from these experiences.

Fall 2019

SEM Section: 01    Cancelled

**JWST 289 (F) The Talmud on What it Means to be Human**

**Cross-listings:** JWST 289 REL 289

**Secondary Cross-listing**

The Talmud, a central text in Judaism, is one of the richest and most sophisticated works of literature and thought ever produced. In this course, students will be introduced to the challenges and thrills of reading the Talmud as they consider how the Talmud asks and answers the question of what it means to be human. We will be particularly interested in exploring how the Talmud envisions human difference and similarity in terms of humans’ relationships with animals and material things. In addition to learning how to read the Talmud, therefore, students will also be introduced to burgeoning interdisciplinary theories and methods (Posthumanism and New Materialism) for considering what it means to be human in a world of animals and things.

**Class Format:** tutorial

**Requirements/Evaluation:** weekly papers, final paper

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 10

**Enrollment Preferences:** Religion majors, Jewish Studies students
**Expected Class Size:** 10

**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 289 (D2) REL 289 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

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**JWST 334 (S) Imagining Joseph**

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

**Class Format:** seminar

**Requirements/Evaluation:** 3- to 5-page weekly response papers; 15-page final paper; class participation

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 12

**Enrollment Preferences:** based on responses to a questionnaire

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**JWST 334 (F) The History of the Holocaust**

**Cross-listings:** HIST 338 JWST 338 REL 296

**Secondary Cross-listing**

In twenty-first century United States, the murder of approximately six million European Jews by Nazi Germany remains a central event in our political, moral, and cultural universe. Nevertheless, the Holocaust still confounds historians' efforts to understand both the motivations of the perpetrators and the suffering of the victims. In this course, we will study the origins and unfolding of Nazi Germany's genocidal policies, taking into consideration the perspectives of those who carried out mass murder as well as the experiences and responses of Jews and other victim groups to persecution. We will also examine the Holocaust within the larger context of the history of World War II in Europe and historians' debates about Germany's exterminatory war aims. Course materials will include diaries, speeches, bureaucratic documents, memoirs, films, and historical scholarship.

**Class Format:** mostly discussion

**Requirements/Evaluation:** evaluation will be based on class participation, weekly reading responses, a map quiz, two papers (5-7 pages) on class readings, a final research paper (10-12 pages)
Prerequisites: none; open to first-year students with instructors permission
Enrollment Limit: 25
Enrollment Preferences: History majors and Jewish Studies concentrators
Expected Class Size: 20-25
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
HIST 338 (D2) JWST 338 (D2) REL 296 (D2)
Attributes: HIST Group C Electives - Europe and Russia JWST Core Electives

Fall 2019
LEC Section: 01    MR 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm     Alexandra Garbarini

JWST 339  (F)  Politics in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt  (WS)

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.

Class Format: tutorial
Requirements/Evaluation: five 5-page papers; five 2-page responses; a final revision of a prior paper; 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). This feedback will inform the revision you submit at the end of the semester of a paper of your choosing. 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

Fall 2019
TUT Section: T1    TBA     Laura D. Ephraim
JWST 434  (S)  The Meaning of Diaspora and the Jews of Europe  (WS)

Cross-listings:  HIST 434  REL 335  JWST 434

Secondary Cross-listing

Dispersion, exile, migration, statelessness are all aspects of diaspora. In the study of diasporic peoples and cultures, the Jews have long figured as the archetype. As a result, Jewish political figures, intellectuals, social activists and scholars have played a central role in discussions of the meaning of diaspora, including debates about its political and social implications, economic value, and cultural significance. In the first half of the semester, in discussions of common readings, we will examine various historical interpretations of Jews¿ diasporic existence from the nineteenth century to the present and its implications for humanitarianism. Beginning in the first half of the semester and with greater intensity in the second half of the semester, you will conduct independent archival research on some aspect of the history of the Jewish diaspora using the digitized archives of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee that will culminate in a twenty-plus-page paper. In the second half, the seminar will continue to meet weekly as a research colloquium, to provide a forum for you to present your research and drafts in progress and to give feedback on fellow students¿ work. In this seminar, we are not merely studying history; you are actually doing history. That is to say, you will be more than students of history in this course: you will become historians in your own right. Over the semester, you will learn how to pose historical questions; to engage critically with readings beyond summarizing them; to synthesize an enormous amount of source material; and to learn how to write more clearly. By the end of the semester, the goal is for each student to produce a polished research paper based on substantial engagement with archival sources and relevant secondary literature that will serve as a capstone to your coursework at Williams or as a potential jumping-off point for future research projects, including a senior thesis in History or Jewish Studies.

Class Format: seminar

Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation will be based on class participation, several short papers, oral presentations, and a 20-page research paper

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit:  15

Enrollment Preferences: History majors and Jewish Studies concentrators

Expected Class Size: 10

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

Distributions: (D2)  (WS)

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

HIST 434 (D2) REL 335 (D2) JWST 434 (D2)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write two drafts of their research paper before submitting the final paper for a grade. They will receive timely comments on drafts from professor and peers, to be incorporated into their final paper.

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

Spring 2020

SEM Section: 01    M 7:00 pm - 9:40 pm     Alexandra  Garbarini

JWST 480  (F)  Interpretations of the Israeli Palestinian Conflict  (DPE)

Cross-listings:  GBST 480  ARAB 480  HIST 480  JWST 480

Secondary Cross-listing

This tutorial addresses the powerful, competing, and bitterly contested historical narratives that underpin the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Both Israelis and Palestinians appeal to history to legitimize their territorial claims and to justify contemporary action. Special attention will be paid to the interpretations of key historical moments, especially the 1948 and 1967 wars, and on the contrasting views of some of the core issues of the conflict (Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, terrorism).

Class Format: tutorial

Requirements/Evaluation: 5- to 7-page essays or 2-page critiques due each week and a final report (3-4 pages) at the end of the semester

Prerequisites: none, though some academic experience with Middle East materials is preferred

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: History majors and Arabic Studies majors and Jewish Studies concentrators

Expected Class Size: 10
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:
GBST 480 (D2) ARAB 480 (D2) HIST 480 (D2) JWST 480 (D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course challenges students to engage with difference and power in the Israeli Palestinian conflict though the reading of historical works that have different political motivations. Students will develop tools to comprehend the complexities of perspectives in Israel and Palestine. Students will gain a better understanding of nationalism, state power, inequality, victimhood, desperation, corruption, and injustice and gain tools to seek equitable solutions to the conflict in the future.

Attributes: GBST Middle Eastern Studies Electives  HIST Group E Electives - Middle East  JWST Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

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

Cross-listings: JWST 490  HIST 490

Secondary Cross-listing

The atrocities committed by Nazi Germany during the Second World War continue to trouble historians in their attempts to understand and represent them in all their magnitude and horror. Beyond historians, the complicity of segments of European societies in perpetrating those atrocities continues to raise thorny questions for postwar European nations about what their responsibilities are toward that past. This tutorial will focus on a series of questions relating to the historicization and memorialization of the extermination of European Jews. They include: Is the Holocaust unique? Is it a Jewish story or universal story? Does the Holocaust raise different issues for the historian than other historical events? How should the Holocaust be represented and what are the implications of different means of representing it? What role, if any, did European Jews play in their own destruction? 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? How appropriate are the different uses that Israel and the United States have made of the Holocaust? By the end of the course, students will have grappled with the ongoing controversies that have arisen among scholars, governments, and lay people about the meaning (and meaninglessness) of the Holocaust for the postwar world. In a world in which extraordinary acts of violence continue to be perpetrated and more and more 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 should prove relevant for future consideration of 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; additional requirements on alternate weeks, the student will write a 2-page critique of the fellow student’s paper; a final written exercise, a thought piece on the issues raised in the tutorial, will 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)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
JWST 490 (D2) HIST 490 (D2)

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: PSCI 375  JWST 492  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 reconstitute 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.

Class Format: seminar

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:

PSCI 375 (D2) JWST 492 (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.

Class Format: independent study

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

Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2019

HON Section: 01 TBA Edan Dekel

JWST 494 (S) Senior Thesis: Jewish Studies

Jewish Studies thesis.

Class Format: independent study

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

Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2020

HON Section: 01 TBA Edan Dekel

JWST 495 (F) Memoirs, Memory and the Modern Jewish Experience (DPE) (WS)

Cross-listings: HIST 495 JWST 495

Secondary Cross-listing

Memoirs have proven to be an increasingly important source for Jewish historians, and particularly for those interested in the impact of modern society on Jewish identity. This tutorial will consider modern Jewish history by focusing on such individual voices. By comparing memoirs from the early
modern period through contemporary times and from widely divergent geographical settings such as Europe, the United States, Latin America, and the Middle East, we will consider how Jews in different historical settings have understood their "Jewishness" and their relationship to their past, as well as the historian's role in this relationship. In each case, we will ask such questions as: How does the role/importance of religion and ritual shift over time and place? How does the surrounding society shape the author's sense of self and his/her place in society? Similarly, we will consider the impact of economic, occupational, and political factors on understandings of Jewish identity as well as the impact of gender and generational splits on such understandings. In broad terms we will question what (if anything) links the different individuals under study. In other words, is there something about Jewish identity that transcends the historical specificity of the author's setting? Throughout the course, we will also consider how a memoir can be used as an historical source. Can we generalize from individual experience, and if so how do we reconcile contradictions among the multiple voices?

Class Format: tutorial

Requirements/Evaluation: each student will write and present orally a 3- to 5-page response paper on the assigned readings of the week (alternating weeks); there will be one final 10-page paper

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 6

Enrollment Preferences: upperclass students, History majors and Jewish Studies concentrators, or those with documented academic interests in the subject matter

Expected Class Size: 6

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 495 (D2) JWST 495 (D2)

Writing Skills Notes: Each student will write and present orally a 3- to 5-page response paper on the assigned readings of the week (alternating weeks). There will be one final 10-page paper. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: As a course that focuses on the Jewish experience, this course will consider (among other things) issues of race, ethnicity, "passing", and pressures to adapt to majority cultures.

Attributes: HIST Group G Electives - Global History JWST Core Electives

Fall 2019
TUT Section: T1 TBA Maud Mandel

JWST 497 (F) Independent Study: Jewish Studies
Jewish Studies independent study.

Class Format: independent study

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

Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2019
IND Section: 01 TBA Edan Dekel

JWST 498 (S) Independent Study: Jewish Studies
Jewish Studies independent study.

Class Format: Independent study

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

Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2020