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
- REL 203/JWST 101 Judaism: Before the Law

Core Courses
- ANTH 334/COMP 334/JWST 334/REL 334 Imagining Joseph
- COMP 352/JWST 352/RLSP 352 Writing after the Disaster: The Literature of Exile
- HIST 230/JWST 230 Modern European Jewish History, 1789-1948
- HIST 338/JWST 338/REL 296 The History of the Holocaust
- HIST 433/JWST 433 The Justice of Violence? Histories of Terrorism in Europe
- HIST 434/JWST 434 The Meaning of Diaspora and the Jews of Europe
- HIST 480T/ARAB 480T/JWST 480T Interpretations of the Israeli Palestinian Conflict
- HIST 490T/JWST 490T Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe
- REL 202/JWST 202/COMP 214 Moses: Stranger in a Strange Land
- REL 205/CLAS 205/COMP 217/JWST 205 Ancient Wisdom Literature
- REL 206/COMP 206/JWST 206 The Book of Job and Joban Literature
- REL 207/COMP 250/JWST 207/CLAS 207 From Adam to Noah: Literary Imagination and the Primeval History in Genesis
- REL 209/JWST 209 Jewish America
- REL 259/ENGL 259/JWST 259 Ethics of Jewish American Fiction
- REL 330/PSCI 375/JWST 492 Modern Jewish Political Theory

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 101-102 Critical Languages: Hebrew

HIST 111/LEAD 150/ARAB 111 Movers and Shakers in the Middle East

HIST 129/WGSS 129 Blacks, Jews, and Women in the Age of the French Revolution

HIST 207/JWST 217/REL 239/ARAB 207/GBST 101/LEAD 207 The Modern Middle East

HIST 226/REL 222 Europe from Reformation to Revolution: 1500–1815

HIST 239 Germany in the Twentieth Century

HIST 311/ARAB 311 The United States and the Middle East

HIST 409/ARAB 409/GBST 409 Crescent, Cross, and Star: Religion and Politics in the Middle East

HIST 410/ARAB 410/JWST 410/REL 405 Kings, Heroes, Gods, & Monsters: Historical Texts and Modern Identities in the Middle East

REL 212/HIST 324 The Development of Christianity: 30 B.C.E.

Capstone Course

REL 330/PSCI 375/JWST 492 Modern Jewish Political Theory

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.

Class Format: thesis

Distributions: (D2)

Winter 2019

HON Section: 01    TBA     Edan Dekel

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.

Class Format: independent study

Winter 2019

IND Section: 01    TBA     Edan Dekel

JWST 101 (F) Judaism: Before The Law

Crosslistings: JWST101 / REL203

Secondary Crosslisting

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.

Class Format: seminar

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

Extra Info: not available for the fifth course option
JWST 201 (F) The Hebrew Bible
Crosslistings: COMP201 / JWST201 / REL201

Secondary Crosslisting
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
Distributions: (D2)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL or JWST; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under COMP
Attributes: JWST Gateway Courses

Fall 2018
LEC Section: 01  TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am  Edan Dekel

JWST 202 (S) Moses: Stranger in a Strange Land
Crosslistings: COMP214 / JWST202 / REL202

Secondary Crosslisting
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 Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: students who have already taken a course in biblical literature
Expected Class Size: 19
Distributions: (D2)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL or JWST; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under COMP
Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Spring 2019
SEM Section: 01    TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am     Edan Dekel

JWST 204 (F) Jesus and Judaism
Crosslistings: REL204 / JWST204
Secondary Crosslisting
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, short papers (3-5 pages), and final exam
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: none
Enrollment Preferences: none
Expected Class Size: 10-12
Distributions: (D2)
Not offered current academic year

JWST 205 (S) Ancient Wisdom Literature
Crosslistings: JWST205 / REL205 / COMP217 / CLAS205
Secondary Crosslisting
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
Distributions: (D2)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL or JWST; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under CLAS or COMP

Attributes: JWST Core Electives

Not offered current academic year

JWST 206 (S) The Book of Job and Joban Literature  (WI)
Crosslistings: COMP206 / JWST206 / REL206

Secondary Crosslisting

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

Distributions: (D2) (WI)

Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL or JWST; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under COMP

Attributes: JWST Core Electives;

Not offered current academic year

JWST 207 (F) From Adam to Noah: Literary Imagination and the Primeval History in Genesis
Crosslistings: COMP250 / REL207 / JWST207 / CLAS207

Secondary Crosslisting

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

Extra Info: core course for COMP

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

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

Expected Class Size: 19
JWST 209 (S)  Jewish America
Crosslistings: JWST209 / REL209

Secondary Crosslisting
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, 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

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

Distributions: (D2)

Not offered current academic year

JWST 217 (F)  The Modern Middle East  (DPE)
Crosslistings: JWST217 / ARAB207 / HIST207 / REL239 / GBST101 / LEAD207

Secondary Crosslisting
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.

Class Format: lecture

Requirements/Evaluation: participation, two short papers, 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
Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under ARAB, DPE: This course introduces students to the incredible diversity of the Middle East and offers a critical assessment of difference, power, and equity in the Middle East. In particular 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 2018
LEC Section: 01 TF 1:10 pm - 2:25 pm Magnús T. Bernhardsson

JWST 219 (S) Judaism Under Ancient Greek and Roman Imperialisms
Crosslistings: JWST219 / CLAS219 / REL219

Secondary Crosslisting
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 preparation and participation, short reading response papers (1-page), midterm, and final exam
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: none
Enrollment Preferences: none
Expected Class Size: 10-12
Distributions: (D2)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL or JWST; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under CLAS
Not offered current academic year

JWST 230 (F) Modern European Jewish History, 1789-1948
Crosslistings: HIST230 / JWST230

Secondary Crosslisting
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
JWST 249 (F) Anti-Semitism (DPE)
Crosslistings: JWST249 / REL249
Secondary Crosslisting
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)
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 30
Enrollment Preferences: Jewish Studies concentrators, Religion majors, and students who have taken JWST 203
Expected Class Size: 18
Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

JWST 259 (F) Ethics of Jewish American Fiction (WI)
Crosslistings: JWST259 / ENGL259 / REL259
Secondary Crosslisting
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
Extra Info: not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors, Jewish Studies concentrators, and English majors

Expected Class Size: 18

Distributions: (D2) (WI)

Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under REL or JWST; meets Division 1 requirement is registration is under ENGL

Attributes: JWST Core Electives;

Not offered current academic year

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

Crosslistings: JWST270 / REL270

Secondary Crosslisting

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

Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2019

SEM Section: 01    W 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm     Lawrence M. Wills

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

Crosslistings: JWST289 / REL289

Secondary Crosslisting

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

Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: Religion majors, Jewish Studies students

Expected Class Size: 10

Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2018

TUT Section: T1    TBA     Phillip J. Webster
Secondary Crosslisting

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

Expected Class Size: 10

Distributions: (D2) (WI)

Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under ANTH, JWST, or REL; meets Division 1 requirement if registration is under COMP

Attributes: JWST Core Electives;

Spring 2019

SEM Section: 01    W 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm     Peter  Just

JWST 338 (F) The History of the Holocaust

Crosslistings: HIST338 / REL296 / JWST338

Secondary Crosslisting

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, a map quiz, four papers (4 pages) based on class readings, and a final research paper (6-8 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

Distributions: (D2)

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

Not offered current academic year
JWST 434 (S)  The Meaning of Diaspora and the Jews of Europe
Crosslistings: JWST434 / HIST434

Secondary Crosslisting

Dispersion, exile, migration, statelessness are all aspects of diaspora. And 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, this seminar examines various interpretations of Jews' diasporic existence from the nineteenth century to the present, both as a cultural practice and a form of group identity from which political claims have been made. We will test the proposition that "The Modern Age is the Jewish Age," that is, that the meaning of diaspora in modern Jewish history has direct relevance to students of human identity not just of Jewishness. Throughout the second half of the semester, students will conduct independent archival research on some aspect of the history of the Jewish diaspora that will culminate in a 20-page paper. The seminar will continue to meet weekly as a research colloquium, to provide a forum for students to present their research and drafts in progress and provide feedback on fellow students' work.

Class Format: seminar
Requirements/Evaluation: evaluation will be based on class participation, several short papers, oral presentations, and a 20-page research paper
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 15
Enrollment Preferences: History majors and Jewish Studies concentrators
Expected Class Size: 15
Distributions: (D2)
Attributes: HIST Group C Electives - Europe and Russia; JWST Capstone Course; JWST Core Electives
Not offered current academic year

JWST 480 (F)  Interpretations of the Israeli Palestinian Conflict  (DPE) (WI)
Crosslistings: JWST480 / GBST480 / ARAB480 / HIST480

Secondary Crosslisting

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
Extra Info: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option
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
Distributions: (D2) (DPE) (WI)
Distribution Notes: meets Division 2 requirement if registration is under ARAB DPE: This course challenges students to engage with difference and power in the longstanding 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, that often have to do with power and difference. Students will gain a better understanding of nationalism, state power, inequality, victimhood, desperation, corruption, and injustice and will hopefully therefore gain tools to seek equitable solutions to the conflict in the future. WI: As a tutorial, this course is writing- intensive while students employ and develop critical tools to interpret conflicting narratives of history and facts. Each week, students will develop their writing by providing constructive criticism of their partner’s papers. They will also learn how to receive criticism and ways to incorporate those suggestions in their future writings. Students will be given the opportunity to substantially revise their work on a regular basis.
Fall 2018
TUT Section: T1    TBA    Magnús T. Bernhardsson

JWST 490 (S) Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe  (WI)
Crosslistings: HIST490 / JWST490
Secondary Crosslisting
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
Extra Info: 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
Extra Info 2: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option
Prerequisites: permission of instructor
Enrollment Limit: 10
Enrollment Preferences: History majors and Jewish Studies concentrators
Expected Class Size: 10
Distributions: (D2) (WI)
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  (WI)
Crosslistings: JWST492 / PSCI375 / REL330
Secondary Crosslisting
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.
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;

Extra Info: 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

Extra Info 2: may not be taken on a pass/fail basis; not available for the fifth course option

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

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

Expected Class Size: 18

Distributions: (D2) (WI)

Attributes: JWST Capstone Course; JWST Core Electives;

Spring 2019
SEM Section: 01  W 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm  Jeffrey I. Israel

JWST 493 (F)  Senior Thesis: Jewish Studies

Class Format: thesis

Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2018
HON Section: 01  TBA  Edan Dekel

JWST 494 (S)  Senior Thesis: Jewish Studies

Class Format: thesis

Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2019
HON Section: 01  TBA  Edan Dekel

JWST 497 (F)  Independent Study: Jewish Studies

Class Format: independent study

Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2018
IND Section: 01  TBA  Edan Dekel

JWST 498 (S)  Independent Study: Jewish Studies

Class Format: Independent study

Distributions: (D2)
Spring 2019
IND Section: 01  TBA  Edan Dekel