JEWISH STUDIES PROGRAM (JWST)

JWST 026 Jews and China: Views From Two Perspectives
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 031 Beginning Yiddish
Yiddish is a 1000-year-old language with a rich cultural heritage. YDSH 101, the first in the Beginning Yiddish language series, introduces the student who has no previous knowledge of the language to the skills of reading, writing, and speaking Yiddish. Starting with the alphabet, students study grammar, enriched by cultural materials such as song, literature, folklore, and film, as well as the course's on-line Blackboard site, to acquire basic competency. By the end of the first semester, students will be able to engage in simple conversations in the present tense, know common greetings and expressions, and read simple texts, including literature, newspapers, songs, and letters. Students are encouraged to continue with YDSH 102/ JWST 032/ YDSH 501 in the Spring. Four semesters of Yiddish fulfill the Penn Language Requirement.
For BA Students: Language Course
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 032 Beginning Yiddish II
In this course, you can continue to develop basic reading, writing, and speaking skills. Discover treasures of Yiddish culture: songs, literature, folklore, and films.
For BA Students: Language Course
Course usually offered in spring term
Prerequisites: JWST 031 or permission of the instructor.
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 033 Intermediate Yiddish I
A continuation of JWST 032/ YDSH 102, Beginning Yiddish II, this course develops the skills of reading, writing, and speaking Yiddish on the intermediate level through the study of grammar and cultural materials, such as literature, newspapers, films, songs, radio programs.
For BA Students: Language Course
Taught by: Hellerstein
Course usually offered in fall term
Prerequisite: GRMN 402 or equivalent
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 034 Intermediate Yiddish II
Continuation of JWST 033; emphases in reading texts and conversation.
For BA Students: Last Language Course
Taught by: Hellerstein
Course usually offered in spring term
Prerequisite: GRMN 403 or permission of the instructor
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 041 Israel in Middle East
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 051 Elementary Modern Hebrew I
An introduction to the skills of reading, writing, and conversing in modern Hebrew. This course assumes no previous knowledge of Hebrew.
For BA Students: Language Course
Two terms. student may enter either term.
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 052 Elementary Modern Hebrew II
A continuation of HEBR 051, First Year Modern Hebrew, which assumes basic skills of reading and speaking and the use of the present tense. Open to all students who have completed one semester of Hebrew at Penn with a grade of B- or above and new students with equivalent competency.
For BA Students: Language Course
Two terms. student may enter either term.
Prerequisite: HEBR 051 or permission of instructor
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 053 Intermediate Modern Hebrew III
Development of the skills of reading, writing, and conversing in modern Hebrew on an intermediate level. Open to all students who have completed two semesters of Hebrew at Penn with a grade of B- or above and new students with equivalent competency.
For BA Students: Language Course
One-term course offered either term
Prerequisites: HEBR 052 or permission of the instructor.
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 054 Intermediate Modern Hebrew II
This course constitutes the final semester of Intermediate Modern Hebrew. Hence, one of the main goals of the course is to prepare the students for the proficiency exam in Hebrew. Emphasis will be placed on grammar skills and ability to read literary texts. Open to all students who have completed three semesters of Hebrew at Penn with a grade of B- or above and new students with equivalent competency.
For BA Students: Last Language Course
One-term course offered either term
Prerequisites: HEBR 053 or permission of instructor.
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 055 Advanced Modern Hebrew: Conversation & Writing
After four semesters of language study, it’s time to enter the vibrant world of contemporary Israeli culture. In this course students read some of the best plays, poems, short stories, and journalism published in Israel today. They also watch and analyze some of Israel’s most popular films, TV programs, and videos. Themes include Jewish-Arab relations, the founding of the State, family ties and intergenerational conflict, war and society, and the recent dynamic changes in Israeli society. HEBR 054 or permission of instructor. Since the content of this course may change from year to year, students may take it more than once (but only once for credit).
For BA Students: Advanced Language Course
Taught by: Engel
One-term course offered either term
Prerequisite: HEBR 054 or permission of instructor
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
JWST 100 THEMES JEWISH TRADITION: Iberian Conversos: Jewish-Christian?
Course topics will vary; they have included The Binding of Isaac, Responses to Catastrophes in Jewish History, Holy Men & Women (Ben-Amos); Rewriting the Bible (Dohrmann); Performing Judaism (Fishman); Jewish Political Thought (Fishman); Jewish Esotericism (Lorberbaum) Democratic culture assumes the democracy of knowledge - the accessibility of of knowledge and its transparency. Should this always be the case? What of harmful knowledge? When are secrets necessary? In traditional Jewish thought, approaching the divine has often assumed an aura of danger. Theological knowledge was thought of as restricted. This seminar will explore the "open" and "closed" in theological knowledge, as presented in central texts of the rabbinic tradition: the Mishnah, Maimonides and the Kabbalah. Primary sources will be available in both Hebrew and English.
For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
Taught by: Ben-Amos/Dohrmann/Fishman
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 102 Jewish Humor
In modern American popular culture Jewish humor is considered by Jews and non-Jews as a recognizable and distinct form of humor. Focusing upon folk-humor, in this course we will examine the history of this perception, and study different manifestation of Jewish humor as a particular case study of humor in general. Specific topics for analysis will be: humor in the Hebrew Bible, Jewish humor in Europe and in America, JAP and JAM jokes, Jewish tricksters and pranksters, Jewish humor in the Holocaust and Jewish humor in Israel. The term paper will be collecting project of Jewish jokes.
Taught by: Ben Amos
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 103 The Messianic Impulse in Jewish History
Taught by: Ruderman
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 122 Religions of the West
This course surveys some of the core beliefs and practices within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. To do so, we will focus on history and memory, exploring how key figures and formative events from the past have been made present, from generation to generation, through scripture, ritual, liturgy, and remembrance. Special attention will be given to points of interaction between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, as well as to the impact of their intertwined histories on the formation and development of Western cultures. Fulfills History & Tradition Sector.
For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
Taught by: Reed
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 126 Jewish Mysticism
Survey of major periods of development of mystical speculation and experience within Judaism. Mystical symbolism as a basis for theosophical interpretations of Torah, Immanentist theologies, mystical ethics. Types of experiences and practices which were cultivated by Jewish mystics in order to achieve intimate communion with the Divine and to facilitate a sacred transformation of themselves and the world. Includes "Riders of the Chariot", The Zohar (Book of Splendor), Lurianic Kabbalah, Hasidism.
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 130 American Jewish Experience
This course offers a comprehensive survey of American Jewish history from the colonial period to the present. It will cover the different waves of Jewish immigration to the United States and examine the construction of Jewish political, cultural, and religious life in America. Topics will include: American Judaism, the Jewish labor movement, Jewish politics and popular culture, and the responses of American Jews to the Holocaust and the State of Israel.
Taught by: Wenger
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 131 How To Read the Bible
While the Bible may be the most read text in the world, it is not clear that anyone understands what it actually means. Secular scholars read the Bible as they would any other ancient document, trying to understand who wrote it and what it reveals about the past, but that is not how the Bible is understood by hundreds of millions of readers who embrace it as a message from God and read its contents not just to learn about the past but to understand what the meaning of life is, how to be a good person, and where the world is headed. How is it that the Bible is read in such different ways by the secular and the religious? Who is right in the struggle over its meaning, and how does one go about deciphering that meaning in the first place?
Taught by: Weitzman
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 136 Death and the Afterlife in Ancient Judaism and Christianity
This course surveys the development of concepts about death and the afterlife in Judaism and Christianity, exploring the cultural and socio-historical contexts of the formation of beliefs about heaven and hell, the end of the world, martyrdom, immortality, resurrection, and the problem of evil. Readings cover a broad range of ancient sources, including selections from the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, as well as other Jewish and Christian writings (e.g., “apocrypha,” “pseudepigrapha,” Dead Sea Scrolls, classical rabbinic literature, Church Fathers, “gnostic” and “magical” materials). In the process, this course introduces students to formative eras and ideas in the history of Judaism, Christianity, and Western culture.
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
JWST 150 Introduction to the Bible (The "Old Testament")
A survey of the major themes and ideas of the Bible, with special attention paid to the contributions of archaeology and modern Biblical scholarship, including Biblical criticism and the response to it in Judaism and Christianity.
For BA Students: Humanities and Social Science Sector
Taught by: Tigay
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 151 Great Books of Judaism (Fall 2018: Lifecycle in the Talmud)
The Babylonian Talmud, known simply as the Bavli, is the foundational legal and ethical document of rabbinic Judaism. It is one of the best read works of world literature, and it is the most widely disseminated and revered rabbinic work. It not only contains legal discussions and rulings but rather it also presents the worldview of the rabbis. This course will analyze and contextualize the perspectives of the Talmud towards the important phases of life. We will examine in-depth several Talmudic passages relating to the various stages of the human lifecycle: birth and naming of the child; circumcision; bar/bat mitzva and adulthood; earning a livelihood and choosing a career; marriage and divorce; procreation and raising children; death, burial, mourning and the belief in the resurrection of the dead among others. We will evaluate these teachings in light of other traditions and in their broader late antiquity and contemporary contexts. All texts will be read in their English translation but originals will also be provided.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Taught by: Bergmann
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 153 Jewish Literature in the Middle Ages in Translation
Course explores the cultural history of Jews in the lands of Islam from the time of Mohammed through the late 17th century (end of Ottoman expansion into Europe) – in Iraq, the Middle East, al-Andalus and the Ottoman Empire. Primary source documents (in English translation) illuminate minority-majority relations, internal Jewish tensions (e.g., Qaraism), and developments in scriptural exegesis, rabbinic law, philosophy, poetry, polemics, mysticism and liturgy. Graduate students have additional readings and meetings. Spring 2015
Taught by: Fishman
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 154 Modern Hebrew Literature and Culture in Translation: Autobiography
This course follows and analyzes the transformations in Israeli literature and cinema. The lens through which we study this canon changes each semester. These “lenses” include: “Childhood,” “Holocaust,” “Cities,” “Madness,” and others. Israeli works constitute much of the course’s material, but European and American film and fiction play comparative roles. For a description of the current theme, please see the websites of Cinema and Media Studies, Jewish Studies, NELC, COML, or ENGL. This course will follow and analyze the transformation of Israeli literature and cinema from instruments of suppression into a means of processing this national trauma. While Israeli works constitute much of the course’s material, European and American film and fiction play comparative roles.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Taught by: Gold
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 155 Jews and Judaism in Antiquity: History of Jewish Civilization I
The course is an overview of Jewish history, culture, and society from its biblical settings through the Hellenistic-Roman, and rabbinic periods. We will trace the political, social, and intellectual-religious, and literary development of Judaism from its beginnings through the Second Temple period to the formation and evolution of Rabbinic Judaism. Topics to be covered include: the evolution of biblical thought and religious practice over time; Jewish writing and literary genres; varieties of Judaism; Judaism and Imperialism; the emergence of the rabbinic class and institutions.
For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
Taught by: Dohrmann
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 156 Jews and Judaism in Antiquity: History of Jewish Civilization II
This course is an overview of Jewish history, culture, and society from the rise of Islam in the seventh century to the assault on established conceptions of faith and religious authority in 17th century Europe, that is, from the age of Mohammed to that of Spinoza. Particular attention will be paid to the interaction of Jewish culture with those of Christianity and Islam.
For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
Taught by: Ruderman
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 157 Medieval and Early Modern Jewry
Exploration of intellectual, social, and cultural developments in Jewish civilization from the rise of Islam in the seventh century to the assault on established conceptions of faith and religious authority in 17th century Europe, that is, from the age of Mohammed to that of Spinoza. Particular attention will be paid to the interaction of Jewish culture with those of Christianity and Islam.
For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
Taught by: Tigay
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 158 Jews in the Modern World: History of Jewish Civilization III
This course offers an intensive survey of the major currents in Jewish culture and society from the late middle ages to the present. Focusing upon the different societies in which Jews have lived, the course explores Jewish responses to the political, socio-economic, and cultural challenges of modernity. Topics to be covered include the political emancipation of Jews, the creation of new religious movements within Judaism, Jewish socialism, Zionism, the Holocaust, and the emergence of new Jewish communities in Israel and the United States. No prior background in Jewish history is expected.
For BA Students: History and Tradition Sector
Taught by: Gold
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit
JWST 171 Elementary Biblical Hebrew I
This course is an introduction to Biblical Hebrew. It assumes no prior knowledge, but students who can begin to acquire a reading knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet before class starts will find it extremely helpful. The course is the 1st of a 4-semester sequence whose purpose is to prepare students to take courses in Bible that demand a familiarity with the original language of the text.
For BA Students: Language Course
Taught by: Carasik
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 173 Intermediate Biblical Hebrew I
This course will focus on using the grammar and vocabulary learned at the introductory level to be able to read Biblical texts independently and take advanced Bible exegesis courses. We will also work on getting comfortable with the standard dictionaries, concordances, and grammars used by scholars of the Bible. We will concentrate on prose this semester, closely reading Ruth, Jonah, and other prose selections. We will begin to translate from English into Biblical Hebrew, and there will also be a unit on the cantillation/punctuation marks used in the Bible. A suitable entry point for students who know modern Hebrew or have previously learned Biblical Hebrew in a less demanding framework.
For BA Students: Language Course
Taught by: Carasik
Course usually offered in fall term
Prerequisites: Successful completion of HEBR 152 or permission of the instructor.
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 199 Directed Readings
A tutorial under the direction of a member of the Jewish Studies Program faculty. Student and faculty member will create a reading list designed to achieve specific goals. The students will meet regularly with the faculty member and submit written assignments. Prior approval and sponsorship by a Jewish Studies Program faculty member is needed to take the course.
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit

JWST 201 Major Seminar in History: Europe Before 1800
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 213 The Religious Other
Course explores attitudes toward monotheists of other faiths, and claims made about these "religious Others" in real and imagined encounters between Jews, Christians and Muslims from antiquity to the present. Strategies of "othering" will be analyzed through an exploration of claims about the Other's body, habits and beliefs, as found in works of scripture, law, theology, polemics, art, literature and reportage. Attention will be paid to myths about the other, inter-group violence, converts, cases of cross-cultural influence, notions of toleration, and perceptions of Others in contemporary life. Primary sources will be provided in English.
Taught by: Fishman
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 215 Re-Reading the Holocaust
This course explores how the Holocaust has been constructed as an historical event. Beginning in the mid-1940s, with the first attempts to narrate what had transpired during the Nazi era, this seminar traces the ways that the Holocaust became codified as a distinct episode in history. We will examine documentary films, memoirs, survivor testimonies, as well as other scholarly and popular representations of the Holocaust. Students will be introduced to unfamiliar sources and also asked to reconsider some well-known Holocaust documents and institutions.
Taught by: Wenger
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 216 Jews and the City
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 225 Introduction to the Dead Sea Scrolls
Exploration of the issues relating to the identification and history of the people who produced and used these materials as well as the claims made about the inhabitants of the Qumran site near the caves in which the scrolls were discovered, with a focus on what can be known about the community depicted by some of the scrolls, its institutions and religious life, in relation to other known Jewish groups at that time (the beginning of the common era). This will involve detailed description and analysis of the writings found in the caves -- sectarian writings, "apocrypha" and "pseudepigrapha" biblical texts and interpretations.
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 244 Miracles to Mindfulness
In 1902, the most famous philosopher in America, William James, revolutionized the study of religion by analyzing religion as an experience rather than as a set of doctrines or scriptures. In this course, we will pick up the inquiry that James and scholars such as Sigmund Freud began by exploring new approaches to the science and philosophy of religious experience. We will invite a series of experts from a wide range of fields: neuroscience, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, psychology, anthropology, to name only a few, to present their cutting-edge research on the nature of religious experience. How can religious experience be studied? What does the research reveal about religious experience? And what can we learn from such experiences about the workings of the human mind and human society? The course has two components: 1) a discussion-centered mini-seminar from 3:30-5:00 will open consideration of the subject with help from relevant readings 2) a guest lecture series every Tuesday from 5:00-6:30, nary angles or in light featuring leading scholars who approach religious experience from different disciplinary angles or in light of different questions.
Taught by: Steve Weitzman, Phil Webster
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 248 Arab Israeli Relations
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Recitation
1 Course Unit
JWST 249 Ultimate Meanings
Does life have some ultimate meaning? In their search for an answer to this question, people tell stories—stories about the creation of the world, about great human beings confronted with the mysteries of existence, about what happens to people after death. To explore the role of stories in finding meaning in life, we will focus on some of the most meaningful stories ever composed: the biblical stories of Adam and Eve, Abraham and his family, the Exodus, Job and his friends, and the life and death of Jesus. One of our goals is to try to retrieve the original meaning of these narratives, what their authors intended, but we will also explore what they have come to mean for readers in our own day for believers and skeptics, scientists and artists, fundamentalists and feminists.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Taught by: Weitzman
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 255 The Bible in Translation
This course introduces undergraduates and graduate students to one specific Book of the Hebrew Bible. "The Bible in Translation" involves an in-depth reading of a biblical source against the background of contemporary scholarship. Depending on the book under discussion, this may also involve a contextual reading with other biblical books and the textual sources of the ancient Near East. Although no prerequisites are required, NEJC 250 is a perfect follow-up course for NEJC 150 "Intro to the Bible."
Taught by: Cranz
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: May be repeated for credit.

JWST 258 Studies in Medieval Jewish Literature
Course introduces students to the academic study of different genres of medieval Jewish culture through exposure to themes, authors and genres: literature, poetry, narrative, biblical interpretation, polemic, liturgy, historiography, philosophy, law, custom, sermons, piestistic and mystical texts. Study of primary texts will be anchored in explorations of the historical, regional and cross-cultural settings in which they were produced and subsequently received. The specific topic of the course – whether a genre, (e.g., polemics), a theme (e.g., prophecy), or an author (e.g., Maimonides) – varies. Students who will be reading primary sources in the original should have experience reading unpointed Hebrew texts. Students who do not read Hebrew may encounter the texts in English translation. When topics vary, may be repeated for credit.
Taught by: Fishman
Course usually offered in fall term
Prerequisite: Reading knowledge of Hebrew
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 259 Introduction to Modern Hebrew Literature
The objective of this course is to develop an artistic appreciation for literature through in-depth class discussions and text analysis. Readings are comprised of Israeli poetry and short stories. Students examine how literary language expresses psychological and cultural realms. The course covers topics such as: the short story reinvented, literature and identity, and others. Because the content of this course changes from year to year, students may take it for credit more than once. This course is conducted in Hebrew and all readings are in Hebrew. Grading is based primarily on participation and students' literary understanding.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Taught by: Gold
Course usually offered in fall term
Prerequisites: Hebrew 054 or the equivalent, per instructor's evaluation
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: Because the content of this course changes from year to year, students may take it more than once.

JWST 260 Jewish Folklore
The Jews are among the few nations and ethnic groups whose oral tradition occurs in literary and religious texts dating back more than two thousand years. This tradition changed and diversified over the years in terms of the migrations of Jews into different countries and the historical, social, and cultural changes that these countries underwent. The course attempts to capture the historical and ethnic diversity of Jewish folklore in a variety of oral literary forms.
Taught by: Ben-Amos
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 261 Topics in Jewish-American Literature
Course introduces students to the academic study of different genres of Jewish-American culture through exposure to themes, authors and genres: literature, poetry, narrative, biblical interpretation, polemic, liturgy, historiography, philosophy, law, custom, sermons, piestistic and mystical texts. Study of primary texts will be anchored in explorations of the historical, regional and cross-cultural settings in which they were produced and subsequently received. The specific topic of the course – whether a genre, (e.g., polemics), a theme (e.g., prophecy), or an author (e.g., Maimonides) – varies. Students who will be reading primary sources in the original should have experience reading unpointed Hebrew texts. Students who do not read Hebrew may encounter the texts in English translation. When topics vary, may be repeated for credit.
Taught by: Hellerstein
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
JWST 262 Jewish Literature in Translation
The course explores an aspect of 20th-century literature intensively; specific course topics will vary from year to year. Fall 2016 - REPRESENTATION OF THE HOLOCAUST IN LITERATURE AND FILM:
This discussion-centered course is about the enormous difficulties faced by those who felt the urgent need to describe their own or others’ experiences during the genocide of the European Jews, 1933-1945. We will explore the complex options they have faced as narrators, witnesses, allegorists, memoirists, scholars, teachers, writers and image-makers. Some linguistically (or visually) face the difficulty head on; most evade, avoid, repress, stutter or go silent, and agonize. One purpose of the course is for us to learn how to sympathize with the struggle of those in the latter group. This is not a history course, although the vicissitudes of historiography will be a frequent topic of conversation. Students will write frequent short papers, called position papers, due before class, in order to provide a basis for discussion. Students need not know anything about the Holocaust, although enrollees should consider historical reading over the summer.
Taught by: Filreis
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 266 Jewish Art
Jewish Art provides a survey of art made by and for Jews from antiquity to the present. It will begin with ancient synagogues and their decoration, followed by medieval manuscripts. After a discussion of early modern representation of Jews in Germany and Holland (esp. Rembrandt), it focuses most intently on the past two centuries in Europe, American, and finally Israel and on painting and sculpture as Jewish artists began to pursue artistic careers in the wider culture. No prerequisites or Jewish background assumed.
Taught by: Silver
Course not offered every year
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 299 Independent Study
An independent study course culminating in a final written project. Prior approval and sponsorship by a member of the Jewish Studies Program faculty is needed to take the course.
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit

JWST 303 Power and Peril: The Paradox of Monarchy among Ancient Greeks, Romans, and Jews
We imagine Ancient Greece and Rome as the cradles of democracy and republicanism, the early Judea as pious theocracy, but the evidence tells us that monarchy was the most common and prevalent form of government in antiquity (and the premodern world in general). Despite their ubiquity, the King was a polarizing figure in reality and in conception. On the one hand, some idealized the monarchy as the ideal leader, and monarchy provided the language with which to describe and even imagine the very gods but on the other, monarchs were widely reviled in both theory and practice, from the Greek tyrant to biblical Saul. The Emperor Augustus loudly denied his own affinity to the office of king, even as he ruled alone and was revered as a god. In other words, kings stood both for the ideal ruler and the worst form of government. This class confronts the paradox of the King. This class will take a special look at the idea and institution of kingship in the Near East, among the Jews, Greeks, and Romans to assess and discuss similarities, differences, and mutual influences among these cultures. Through the lens of the king we will explore the idea of god, government, human frailty, and utopianism. Why did the rule of one prevail, why was it so attractive to so many? How was royal rule legitimized? What role did religious beliefs play for keeping a monarchical system stable? What did people expect from their rulers and what happened if the ruler failed to fulfill these expectations? How was the concept of monarchical rule adopted and transferred into other spheres, such as religious belief systems or hopes for messianic kingship? While kingship is a rich field of scholarly inquiry, the question of its ubiquity, and the entanglement and divergences of these three cultures is rarely studied in context and in comparison.
Taught by: Julia Wilker, Natalie Dohrmann
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 305 Jewish Diaspora in the Roman Empire
Under the Roman Empire, Jewish communities developed and flourished especially in the cities of the Eastern Mediterranean, in Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Northern Africa, and Italy proper. In many of these cities, the Jews formed a considerable part of the population, they influenced the cultural, social, and political communal life and developed an identity that was distinctively different from that in Judea. In this seminar, we will trace Jewish life in the Diaspora under Roman rule. How did Jews and non-Jews interact? What was the legal status of Jewish communities under the Roman Empire? What caused conflicts and how were they solved? What can the history of Jewish Diaspora communities tell us about minorities in the Roman Empire in general? We will use literary texts, inscriptions, papyri, and archaeological material to answer these questions and many more.
Taught by: Wilker
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
JWST 320 Spirit and Law
While accepting “the yoke of the commandments”, Jewish thinkers from antiquity onward have perennially sought to make the teachings of revelation more meaningful in their own lives. Additional impetus for this quest has come from overtly polemical challenges to the law, such as those leveled by Paul, medieval Aristotelians, Spinoza and Kant. This course explores both the critiques of Jewish law, and Jewish reflections on the Law’s meaning and purpose, by examining a range of primary sources within their intellectual and historical contexts. Texts (in English translation) include selections from Midrash, Talmud, medieval Jewish philosophy and biblical exegesis, kabbalah, Hasidic homilies, Jewish responses to the Enlightenment, and contemporary attempts to re-value and invent Jewish rituals.
Taught by: Fishman
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 359 Seminar in Modern Hebrew Literature
This course introduces students to selections from the best literary works written in Hebrew over the last hundred years in a relaxed seminar environment. The goal of the course is to develop skills in critical reading of literature in general, and to examine how Hebrew authors grapple with crucial questions of human existence and national identity. Topics include: Hebrew classics and their modern “descendants,” autobiography in poetry and fiction, the conflict between literary generations, and others. Because the content of this course changes from year to year, students may take it for credit more than once. This course is conducted in Hebrew and all readings are in Hebrew. Grading is based primarily on participation and students’ literary understanding.
For BA Students: Arts and Letters Sector
Taught by: Gold
Course usually offered in spring term
Prerequisites: Hebrew 059 or the equivalent, per instructor’s evaluation
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: Because the content of the course changes from year to year, students may take the course more than once for credit.

JWST 380 Modern Jewish Intellectual and Cultural History
An overview of Jewish intellectual and cultural history from the late 18th century until the present. The course considers the Jewish enlightenment Reform, Conservative and Neo-Orthodox Judaism, Zionist and Jewish Socialism thought, and Jewish thought in the 20th century, particularly in the conte of the Holocaust. Readings of primary sources including Mendelsohn, Geige Hirsch, Herzl, Achad-ha-Am, Baeck, Buber, Kaplan, and others. No previous background is required.
Taught by: Ruderman
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 390 Senior Research Seminar
JWST 390 is required of all students majoring in the Interdisciplinary Jewish Studies major, but all majors and minors in the various departmental programs are encouraged to take the seminar. Students will conduct independent research and complete a 20-30 page paper.
Course usually offered in spring term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: Permit required

JWST 399 Senior Honors Thesis
Jewish Studies Honors majors must take JWST 399 in which they will design, with the guidance of an advisor, an individualized directed reading program culminating in the writing of an honors thesis.
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit

JWST 410 Topics in Medieval History
This seminar introduces students to the development of Jewish and Christian biblical interpretation by focusing on ancient, medieval, and modern interpretations of the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount is part of the Gospel of Matthew and is often considered to summarize the essential teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Students will encounter a variety of important interpreters (including Origen, John Chrysostom, Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, Leo Tolstoy, Albert Schweitzer, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Clarence Jordan, and Hans Dieter Betz), guided by appropriate secondary materials. The seminar will utilize a combination of lecture, discussion, student presentations, reports, close reading, and a research paper. Students will be encouraged to do original research in the primary sources. This course has no prerequisites. The readings will be made available in English. The class will utilize a combination of lecture, discussion, student presentations, reports, close reading, and a research paper.
Taught by: Treat
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 438 Readings in Modern Yiddish Literature
This course will survey modern Yiddish literature through readings of Yiddish prose and poetry from the end of the 19th century through the late 20th century. The class will be conducted in both Yiddish and English. Reading knowledge of Yiddish is required, although some texts will be available in English translation. Authors include I.L. Peretz, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Moyshe-Leyb Halpern, and Kadya Molodowsky.
Taught by: Hellerstein
Course not offered every year
Prerequisites: Reading knowledge of Yiddish.
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 449 God and Nature: Readings on the Encounter between Jewish Thought and Science
God and Nature examines the place of the natural world, medicine, and science in Jewish thought from antiquity to the modern era. It looks especially at a body of primary sources in Hebrew written during the age of the so-called “scientific revolution” and during its aftermath. The course is a seminar open to undergraduate and graduate students with a reading knowledge of classical Hebrew. Students without Hebrew with special interest in the subject might enroll with special permission from the instructor.
Taught by: Ruderman
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
JWST 471 Elementary Biblical Hebrew I
This course is an introduction to Biblical Hebrew. It assumes no prior knowledge, but students who can begin to acquire a reading knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet before class starts will find it extremely helpful. The course is the 1st of a 4-semester sequence whose purpose is to prepare students to take courses in Bible that demand a familiarity with the original language of the text.
For BA Students: Language Course
Taught by: Carasik
Course usually offered in fall term
Prerequisite: For the second semester: Completion of the first semester or permission of the instructor
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 473 Intermediate Biblical Hebrew I
This course will focus on using the grammar and vocabulary learned at the introductory level to be able to read Biblical texts independently and take advanced Bible exegesis courses. We will also work on getting comfortable with the standard dictionaries, concordances, and grammars used by scholars of the Bible. We will concentrate on prose this semester, closely reading Ruth, Jonah, and other prose selections. We will begin to translate from English into Biblical Hebrew, and there will also be a unit on the cantillation/punctuation marks used in the Bible. A suitable entry point for students who know modern Hebrew or have previously learned Biblical Hebrew in a less demanding framework.
For BA Students: Language Course
Taught by: Carasik
Course usually offered in fall term
Prerequisites: Successful completion of HEBR 152 or permission of the instructor.
Activity: Lecture
1 Course Unit

JWST 490 Topics in Jewish History
Reading and discussion course on selected topics in Jewish history.
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 509 Jewish Women Writers
One version of this seminar considers works by Jewish women who wrote in Yiddish, Hebrew, English, and other languages in the late 19th through the 20th century. The texts, poetry and prose, will include both belles lettres and popular writings, such as journalism, as well as private works (letters and diaries) and devotional works. The course will attempt to define "Jewish writing," in terms of language and gender, and will consider each writer in the context of the aesthetic, religious, and national ideologies that prevailed in this period. Because students will come with proficiency in various languages, all primary texts and critical and theoretical materials will be taught in English translation. However, those students who can, will work on the original texts and share with the class their expertise to foster a comparative perspective. Because we will be discussing translated works, a secondary focus of the course will, in fact, be on literary translation's process and products.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 520 Spirit and Law
While accepting "the yoke of the commandments", Jewish thinkers from antiquity onward have perennially sought to make the teachings of revelation more meaningful in their own lives. Additional impetus for this quest has come from overtly polemical challenges to the law, such as those leveled by Paul, medieval Aristotelians, Spinoza and Kant. This course explores both the critiques of Jewish Law, and Jewish reflections on the Law's meaning and purpose, by examining a range of primary sources within their intellectual and historical contexts. Texts (in English translation) include selections from Midrash, Talmud, medieval Jewish philosophy and biblical exegesis, kabbalah, Hasidic homilies, Jewish responses to the Enlightenment, and contemporary attempts to re-value and invent Jewish rituals.
Taught by: Fishman
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 523 Studies in Medieval Jewish Culture
Course examines features of 9th-16th century Jewish culture within their broader historical, regional and cross-cultural contexts, whether Christian or Islamic. Emphasis is placed on primary sources in Hebrew. Topics vary and have included "Reconstructing Rabbinic Judaism prior to the First Millennium"; "Custom in Medieval Jewish Cultures"; "Jewish Culture in the Islamicate World"; "Nature in Medieval Jewish Culture". Students should be able to read unpointed Hebrew. May be repeated for credit.
Taught by: Fishman
Course usually offered in fall term
Prerequisites: Reading knowledge of Hebrew.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 537 Translating Literature
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 553 Seminar in Rabbinic Literature
This seminar will investigate biblical and other precedents for the idea of the messiah and the messianic age, and their interpretation and extension into both ancient Judaism and ancient Christianity. To what degree are Second Temple Jewish and early Christian ideas about the messiah an extension of ancient Israelite concepts? To what degree might they reflect a response or reaction to Hellenistic and Roman imperial ideologies? How (and when) did beliefs surrounding Jesus depart meaningfully from Jewish ideas about the messiah? How do Rabbinic Jewish traditions about the messiah and messianic age differ from their Christian counterparts, and is there evidence of any "influence"? These questions will be explored with a focus on primary source readings.
Taught by: Stern
Course usually offered in spring term
Prerequisites: Proficiency in Hebrew and/or Greek recommended.
Undergraduates need permission to enroll.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit
Notes: May be repeated for credit
JWST 556 Seminar Modern Hebrew Literature: LITERATURE & IDENTITY
This course is for students who are interested in taking a literature course in Hebrew and are proficient in it. Grading is based primarily on students' literary understanding. There will be four 2-page written assignments over the course of the semester. We will discuss literary works that reflect Israelis' struggle with their national identity, from the patriotic 1948 generation for whom self and country overlapped to contemporary writers who ask what it means to be Israeli. While Yehuda Amichai's 1955 poem "I want to die in my bed" was a manifesto for individualism, the seemingly interminable Arab-Israeli conflict returned writers to the national, social, and political arenas starting in the 1980's. Readings include poems by Natan Alterman, Amir Gilboa, Meir Wieseltier and Roni Somek as well as fiction by Amos Oz, David Grossman, Sayed Kashua, Alona Kimhi and Etgar Keret. Texts, discussions and papers in Hebrew.
The content of this course changes from year to year so students may take it for credit more than once.
Taught by: Gold
Course not offered every year
Prerequisites: HEBR 059 or HEBR 259 or permission of the instructor.
This class is conducted in Hebrew and the texts are read in the original.
The syllabus serves solely as an outline. The amount of material we cover depends on the pace of the class. Additionally, the packet contains significantly more material than will be studied in class to compensate for the difficulty of obtaining Hebrew texts in America. The content of this course changes from year to year and therefore students may take it for credit more than once.
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 582 Topics in Aesthetics
The course will study Arendt's political theory, as developed in The Origins of Totalitarianism, and her controversial book Eichmann in Jerusalem. It will also consider essays collected in Men in Dark Times. (Fall 2016 course)
Taught by: Weissberg
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 620 Modern Jewish History
JWST 620 will be offered when the HIST 620 Colloquium subject matter is appropriate.
Course usually offered in fall term
Activity: Seminar
1 Course Unit

JWST 699 Independent Study
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit

JWST 999 Independent Study
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
1 Course Unit