

Jewish Studies

The minor in Jewish studies is administered by the Jewish Studies Committee: Professors Fine (Jewish studies, *chair*), Gill (politics), Lipman (history), Remmler (German), Weber (English); Associate Professors Hashmi (international relations), King (history) Penn (religion); Assistant Professor Ben Moshe (Jewish studies).

Contact Persons

Lawrence Fine, *chair*

The curriculum in Jewish studies provides course offerings in a range of fields and disciplines, including English, German, history, international relations, politics, and religion. Courses represent a variety of methodological approaches and are intended to introduce students to the broad and rich diversity of Jewish culture and experience.

Requirements for the Minor

Those choosing a minor in Jewish studies should consult as early as possible with the program chair in order to devise a course of study in consultation with the chair and other members of the program.

Credits

- A minimum of 16 credits

Courses

- Jewish Studies 212, Introduction to Judaism
- At least 4 credits must be at the 300 level.

Students are encouraged to consider Jewish studies offerings at the other Five Colleges.

First-Year Students

First-year students are encouraged to take 212 as a gateway to Jewish studies.

Course Offerings

150f Introduction to Modern Hebrew

This year-long course introduces students to modern, spoken Hebrew by a systematic study of grammar and vocabulary. Emphasis will be placed on conversational Hebrew as it is spoken in Israel today. Some attention will be given to the cultural setting of modern Hebrew as well. No previous knowledge necessary.

Meets either language requirement or Humanities I-B requirement

I. benMoshe

students must complete both Jewish Studies 150 and 151 to satisfy the College language requirement; 4 credits

151s Introduction to Modern Hebrew

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Meets either language requirement or Humanities I-B requirement

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students must complete both Jewish Studies 150 and 151 to satisfy the College language requirement; 4 credits

203fs Introduction to the Hebrew Bible

(Same as Religion 203-01) This course provides a critical introduction to the writings contained in the Hebrew Bible (also known as the Old Testament). It investigates the social and historical context of the ancient Israelites, examines a range of ancient Near Eastern literature, and introduces the principal methods of biblical studies. Participants will read much of the Hebrew Bible as well as select non-Israelite sources. Examples of recent biblical scholarship will provide additional information for better understanding these writings and will present different methods for approaching and interpreting ancient texts.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement
The department
4 credits

204fs Introduction to the New Testament
 (Same as Religion 204) This course investigates the social and historical context of first and early second-century Christianity, examines New Testament and select noncanonical documents, and introduces participants to the principal methods of New Testament studies. Students will read the 27 works that make up most modern collections of the New Testament, a number of early Christian documents that did not make the final cut, and several ancient non-Christian sources. Examples of recent New Testament scholarship will provide historical background for better understanding of Christian writings and will present different methods for approaching and interpreting ancient texts.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement
The department
4 credits

212s Introduction to Judaism
 (Same as Religion 212) Judaism is a 3,500-year-old tradition that has developed over time as Jewish communities all over the world creatively interacted with the different cultural and historical milieus in which they lived. This course explores the ways in which Judaism has sought to transform ordinary life into sacred life. What are the ways in which Judaism conceives of God, and what is the meaning of life? What roles do study, prayer, ethics, sex, marriage, family, rituals of the life cycle, and community play in Judaism? These and other questions will be taken up through study of diverse types of religious literature and historical evidence.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement
L. Fine
4 credits

***215s Jewish Spiritual Autobiographies**
 (Same as Religion 215) Along with such genres as letters, ethical wills, travel accounts, and other personal communications, spiritual autobiographies and diaries often reveal what people actually thought and felt about matters important to them. These sources provide insight into religion as lived experience. This course studies autobiographical

accounts of Jewish religious figures from the medieval period to the contemporary. We include narratives by both women and men, philosophers, mystics, messianic pretenders, travelers, authors of Holocaust memoirs, and other contemporary Jews. Taken together, such accounts bring to life the diversity of spiritual quests in which Jews have engaged.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement
L. Fine
4 credits

222s Engendering Judaism: Women and Jewish Tradition

(Speaking-intensive course; Same as Religion 222-01, Gender Studies 210-01) This course examines the representations and roles of women in Jewish culture, from the literature of the Hebrew Bible to the contemporary period. What were the distinctive ways in which women's religious life expressed itself by way of prayer and ritual practice? Were there women mystics and visionaries? How did women exert their influence as mothers and wives? There will be significant focus on the dramatic developments taking place among contemporary Jewish women: innovative rituals and experimental liturgies; opportunities to become rabbis; new approaches to God, theology, and social issues; the Jewish lesbian movement; women's writing and documentary filmmaking.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement
L. Fine
4 credits

***232f Contemporary Jewish Ethics**

(Same as Religion 232-01) This course will explore issues of contemporary ethics from the point of view of Jewish religious thought and tradition. Topics will include medical and genetic ethics, death and dying, family and sexual ethics, ethics of war, poverty, and the environment. The course will explore these issues in the context of theoretical approaches to questions of religion and ethics.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement
L. Fine

Prereq. 4 credits in religion or Jewish studies, or permission of instructor; 4 credits

235f Introduction to Jewish Mysticism

(Same as Religion 235) Mysticism refers to a type of religious life in which individuals seek

intimate and personal, direct and intense experience of the Divine. There exists a rich and fascinating Jewish mystical tradition with hundreds of books of diverse kinds. This course examines the *Kabbalah* of thirteenth-century Spain, focusing upon the seminal work of this period, the *Zohar*; the synthesis of mysticism and messianism that occurred in the city of Safed (in the Land of Israel) in the sixteenth century; and the popular pietistic movement of Eastern Europe from the eighteenth century forward, Hasidism; and various expressions of mystical spirituality in our own time.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

L. Fine

4 credits

***250f Intermediate Hebrew**

This course emphasizes skills necessary for proficiency in reading, writing, and conversational Hebrew. It presents new grammatical concepts and vocabulary through texts about Jewish and Israeli culture and tradition, as well as popular culture and day-to-day life in modern Israel. Course material includes newspapers, films, music, and readings from Hebrew short stories and poetry. Starts a transition from simple/simplified Hebrew to a more literate one, and sharpens the distinction between different registers of the language.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

I. benMoshe

Prereq. At least one year of college Hebrew or equivalent or permission of instructor; For Fall 2011, meets at Smith College MWF 11-12:10 (JUD 200). Classes via video-conference may be possible.; 4 credits

***255s Dimensions of Contemporary Judaism in America**

(Same as Religion 255) Contemporary Judaism in America is in a state of extraordinary ferment and creative transition. This course will explore significant aspects of this ferment, including ritual innovation and experimentation, theological creativity, Jewish feminism, the growing interest in Jewish spirituality, Jewish environmentalism, Zionism, and the religious repercussions of the Holocaust.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

L. Fine

4 credits

***265f Holy Feast, Holy Fast: Sacred Food and Eating in Judaism**

(Same as Religion 265) This course explores the role of food and eating in Jewish religious culture, but will also include a significant comparative religious dimension. Topics will include the ritual, religious, and social significance of the dietary laws in Judaism, the symbolic foods of Passover and other festivals, fasting and ascetic attitudes toward food, as well as food culture as a marker of Jewish identity.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

L. Fine

4 credits

***275s The Ethics of Interpersonal Relations in Judaism**

(Same as Religion 275-01) As in other religious traditions, interpersonal relations are central to Judaism. Drawing upon both classical and modern textual sources, this course explores such themes as forgiveness, compassion, humility, and honesty in interpersonal affairs. It also considers notions of love, friendship, and teacher-disciple relations, both between individuals and in the context of religious community.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

L. Fine

4 credits

276s Mapping Jewish American Generations

(Same as English 276) This course sets canonical Jewish American literature in creative dialogue with contemporary Jewish American writers, filmmakers, and performance artists to explore how early twentieth-century figures (Abraham Cahan, Anzia Yezierska, and Henry Roth) continue to influence —inspire—a rising generation of authors. The key mediating figure in this generational dialogue is Philip Roth, whose work we will examine as well. Topics to be explored include “immigrant” writing then and now; the uses of nostalgia; genealogies of standup comedy and popular culture in general; the emergence of “hipster” Judaism and its various modes of expression (above all via websites).

Does not meet a distribution requirement

D. Weber

Prereq. so.; 4 cr in English, religion, Jewish studies, history, sociology, film studies; 4 credits

285s The Jewish Poetic Tradition

(Same as Religion 285) Beginning with the psalms of the Hebrew Bible, Jewish religious tradition has produced beautiful poetry over the course of three millennia. This course explores this rich and varied tradition, including biblical poetry, the extraordinary Arabic influenced poetics of medieval Spanish Jewry, the poetry of Jewish mystical tradition, Holocaust poetry, and contemporary poems. The course will also include a comparative dimension, with examples from other religious traditions, focusing on contemplative poetry.

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

L. Fine

4 credits

295fs Independent Study

Does not meet a distribution requirement

The department

1-4 credits

***350s Special Topics in Judaism**

(Same as English 393, Gender Studies

333(11)) TBA

Meets Humanities I-B requirement

R. Rubenstein

Prereq. 4 credits in religion or Jewish studies, or permission of instructor; 4 credits

395fs Independent Study

Does not meet a distribution requirement

The department

1-8 credits

Related Courses in Other Departments

For a list of current courses that may be taken for credit toward a Jewish studies minor, consult with the chair of the program.