JEWHISH STUDIES MAJOR

The Major in Jewish Studies provides undergraduates with a framework for the organized and interdisciplinary study of the history, philosophy, and literature of the Jews from antiquity to the present. Jewish Studies draws on a vast literature in a number of languages, especially Hebrew and Aramaic, and includes the Bible, the Talmud, and medieval and modern Hebrew literature. Yiddish language and literature compose an important sub-field. Courses offered by this department may be found under the following acronym(s): JWST, HEBR, ISRL, and RELS.

Program Objectives

The Meyerhoff Center and Program for Jewish Studies encourages research and provides instruction about the rich history and culture of the Jewish people from earliest times to the present day. Dedicated to the highest standards of scholarship, the program offers a wide array of courses in Hebrew Language and Literature, Jewish History, Bible, Rabbinics, Jewish Philosophy, and Yiddish Language and Literature. These courses form one of the largest undergraduate Jewish Studies programs in North America. In addition, the Jewish Studies program supports faculty research projects and organizes frequent academic conferences and lectures in order to bring the fruits of scholarship to a wider public. The Jewish Studies Program seeks to provide undergraduate majors with an appreciation for the interdisciplinary nature of Jewish Studies, understanding that Jewish literary texts, Jewish history, and Jewish culture and thought are, to a large degree, inseparable. Students are expected to master the Hebrew language and acquire facility in reading, understanding, analyzing, and interpreting texts both in Hebrew and in English translation. In addition, students should be able to pursue independent research and to argue coherently and persuasively in writing.

ADMISSION TO THE MAJOR

Hebrew proficiency through Intermediate Hebrew I is a prerequisite for the major, but students can declare the major prior to fulfilling this prerequisite and can take Jewish Studies courses while building their Hebrew skills. Many students may choose to prepare for the Hebrew requirement by studying Hebrew on their own or by enrolling in the University's sequence of beginning and intermediate Hebrew courses.

PLACEMENT IN COURSES

The Foreign Language Placement Assessment in Hebrew is used to determine in which Hebrew course students should enroll. For more information, contact hebrew-advise@umd.edu.

Program Learning Outcomes

The Jewish Studies Program seeks to provide undergraduate majors with an appreciation for the interdisciplinary nature of Jewish Studies (understanding that Jewish literary texts, Jewish history, and Jewish culture and thought are to a large degree inseparable). Students who complete the major should acquire the following knowledge and skills:

1. Mastery of modern Hebrew at the advanced level;
2. Mastery of the chronological development and major themes of Jewish history and culture;
3. Ability to read, analyze, and interpret texts in classical (biblical, rabbinic, medieval), and/or modern literary Hebrew; and
4. Ability to conduct independent research and analysis and represent their results in written form, showing mastery of academic tools and formal conventions.

Requirements

The undergraduate major requires 48 semester hours (27 hours minimum at the 3xx-level or above). Students enroll in 39 credits of Jewish Studies courses, and 9 additional credits from a field or fields outside of Jewish Studies. Jewish Studies courses for the major may include courses offered by Jewish Studies or cross-listed with other units.

By satisfying the Hebrew language requirements of the major, Jewish Studies majors will fulfill the Global Engagement Requirement of the College of Arts and Humanities. A minimum "C-" is required in all courses offered toward major requirements. An overall GPA of 2.0 or greater in the major is required for graduation.

Language Prerequisites

Please Note: Students can declare the major at any time and take other Jewish Studies courses while they are working to satisfy these prerequisites.

Hebrew language skills corresponding to the second-year level (HEBR211 or the equivalent)

Students may meet the prerequisite through successful completion of the lower-level sequence (HEBR111, HEBR112, and HEBR211, or the equivalent). Students with a background in Hebrew will be placed into the appropriate course by the Hebrew faculty. Students with a strong background may be deemed to have satisfied the Hebrew prerequisites by the Hebrew faculty.

General Requirements

Majors in Jewish Studies complete three core courses and fulfill an additional four requirements for a total of 19 to 22 credits in General Requirements (credit hours for Hebrew language are flexible, as discussed below).

Course | Title | Credits
--- | --- | ---
College Requirements (https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/undergraduate/colleges-schools/arts-humanities/#collegerequirementstext) |  |  
History | JWST233 Why the Jews? Historical and Cultural Investigations | 3  
Literature | JWST272 Introduction to Jewish Literature | 3  
Thought, Religion or Culture | Select one of the following: |  
JWST250 Fundamental Concepts of Judaism |  
JWST262 Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament |  
JWST304 Critical Approaches to Israeli Culture |  
JWST452 The Golden Age of Jewish Philosophy |  
JWST491 Judaism and the Construction of Gender |  
JWST492 Sex, Gender, & Jewish Identity |  
Others by petition |  
Hebrew Language | Select 3-6 credits of the following: | 3-6
Jewish Studies Major

HEBR212  Intermediate Hebrew II
HEBR313  Conversation and Composition I

3xx or 4xx-level course that is taught in Hebrew

Hebrew Text course
Select any course in which texts are read in Hebrew  

Research Seminar
JWST409  Research Seminar in Jewish Studies  

Area of Specialization/Tracks
Select an area of specialization:  
- Jewish History and Society (JH)
- Jewish Religion and Thought (JR)
- Jewish Literature and Culture (JL)
- Israeli Society, Politics, and Culture (IS)
- Hebrew Language and Texts (HL)

All Jewish Studies courses fall into at least one (and as many as three) of these areas of specializations. Students may petition to have courses count toward a particular area of specialization.

Electives
Select two Jewish Studies courses

Supporting Courses
Students take nine (9) credits in courses outside Jewish Studies

Total Credits  

1. Any course in which texts are read in Hebrew. Students who have a sufficient background in other Jewish languages (such as Aramaic, Judeo-Arabic, and Yiddish) may fulfill the text course requirement through one of these courses.

2. Research seminars are taught on a variety of topics within the field of Jewish Studies; seminars are general and methodological in their perspective, designed to bring together interests across a variety of subfields of Jewish Studies. Whenever possible, students should take a research seminar that aligns with their chosen area of specialization.

3. In consultation with an advisor, majors select an area of specialization in addition to their general Jewish Studies coursework. Up to six credits of this area of specialization may be at the 1xx or 2xx-level or 3xx or 4xx-level, while the remaining nine credits must be at the 3xx or 4xx-level or above. All Jewish Studies courses fall into at least one (and as many as three) of these areas of specializations. Students may petition to have courses count toward a particular area of specialization.

4. Students take two Jewish Studies courses (6 credits) as electives toward their major. 3 credits must be at the 3xx or 4xx-level.

5. Students take nine (9) credits in courses outside Jewish Studies, of which at least six (6) credits must be at the 3xx-level or above. Supporting courses are determined in consultation with the advisor. They should provide context for the area of specialization.

Note: A current listing of the Department's courses and assignment of courses to the above categories may be found on the Jewish Studies website. Students are reminded that, if there is a topic that doesn't figure in the list of courses, they are welcome to propose an independent study.

Mentoring: Students majoring in Jewish Studies will be assigned a faculty mentor from among the faculty specializing in their area of specialization. Students should consult with their faculty mentor as they plan their course of study.

Four Year Plan
Click here for roadmaps for four-year plans in the College of Arts and Humanities.

Additional information on developing a four-year academic plan can be found on the following pages:

- 4yearplans.umd.edu
- the Student Academic Success-Degree Completion Policy (https://academiccatalog.umd.edu/undergraduate/registration-academic-requirements-regulations/academic-advising) section of this catalog