Overview and Contact Information

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.

See Also

- Religion (http://catalog.mtholyoke.edu/areas-study/religion/)

Contact Information

Mara Benjamin, Chair
Natalina Tulik, Academic Department Coordinator
205 Skinner Hall
413-538-2233
https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/jewish

Learning Goals

Jewish Studies is an interdisciplinary field that critically examines the global diversity and historical varieties of Jewish experience. A minor in Jewish Studies is an organic component of a liberal arts education and provides a lens through which to understand the human experience. Students who minor in Jewish studies at Mount Holyoke College are expected to:

1. Critically examine the varieties of Jewish cultural, religious, and literary expression from ancient Israel to contemporary times.
2. Incorporate subject matter and modes of inquiry from across the college, including religious studies, literature, history, anthropology, and politics, in order to understand the global Jewish diaspora and its contact with other civilizations.
3. Study one of the languages in which Jews have expressed themselves throughout the centuries, especially Hebrew and/or Yiddish.

Faculty

This area of study is administered by the Jewish Studies Committee:

Mara Benjamin, Irene Kaplan Leiwant Professor of Jewish Studies
Daniel Czitrom, Professor of History on the Ford Foundation, Teaching Spring Only
Sohail Hashmi, Professor of International Relations on the Alumnae Foundation and Professor of Politics
Jeremy King, Professor of History, On Leave 2021-2022
Karen Remmler, Mary Lyon Professor of Humanities

Requirements for the Minor

A minimum of 16 credits:

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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 credits in Jewish Studies at the 200 or 300 level</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td></td>
<td>At least 4 credits in Jewish Studies at the 300 level</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Total Credits</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
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Additional Specifications

- 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.
- Students should consider taking Hebrew language as part of the Jewish studies minor and, in addition to the approved Jewish Studies courses at Mount Holyoke, are encouraged to consider Jewish studies offerings at the other Five Colleges.
- Elementary Hebrew is offered regularly at Smith College. The course will be conducted in person at Smith and through a simultaneous video connection for students at Mount Holyoke. Mount Holyoke students can register for this Smith class (JUD-101) through regular Five College interchange procedures, and then will have the option to participate in the class directly from Mount Holyoke via simulcast without regularly having to travel to Smith for class meetings.
- Other courses in Jewish studies are offered regularly on campus. Consult with the program chair for a list of current courses in other departments that may be taken for credit toward a Jewish Studies minor. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the Jewish studies course offerings at Smith College (https://www.smith.edu/academics/jewish-studies/), the University of Massachusetts (http://www.umass.edu/jne/courses-judaic-studies/), Hampshire College (https://www.hampshire.edu/jewish-studies/jewish-studies-at-hampshire/), and Amherst College (https://www.amherst.edu/).

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.
Course Offerings

JWST-112 Introduction to Judaism
Fall. Credits: 4
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.
Crosslisted as: RELIG-112
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
M. Benjamin

JWST-216 Middle East Politics
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
Introduction to the cultures and politics of the Middle East. Includes the situation of the region at the time of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire; the emergence of independent states before and after World War II; the rise of Arab and Zionist nationalism; the Arab-Israeli conflicts; and the superpower rivalry and its influence on regional politics. Other topics include the Iranian revolution, the domestic and regional role of Islamic movements, and the political economy of oil.
Crosslisted as: POLIT-216
Applies to requirement(s): Social Sciences; Multicultural Perspectives
S. Hashmi
Prereq: POLIT-116.

JWST-225 Topics in Judaism
JWST-225HC Topics in Judaism: Remembering the Holocaust in Global Perspectives
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
This course explores the impact of different cultural forms of remembering the Holocaust within a global perspective. At the same time that the European Holocaust continues to be remembered, subsequent genocides and related mass murder are being remembered through multiple forms of memorialization, such as art, film, memorials, and narratives that mirror particular material and virtual forms of remembering the Holocaust. We explore how the interrelationship between Holocaust remembrance and other atrocities drives discussions about subsequent genocides, current antisemitism and racism, and forms of remembering violence.
Crosslisted as: GRMST-231HC
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive
The department
Notes: Taught in English

JWST-225HH Topics in Judaism: 'The Habsburgs, Hitler, and the Law'
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
This course explores the complex, often comic, and ultimately tragic history of Bohemia, a territory located today in the Czech Republic, but previously a part of the Habsburg Monarchy, then of Czechoslovakia, and then of Hitler's Third Reich. Students will complement historical studies with autobiographical material and contemporary fiction, beginning with the Revolution of 1848, progressing through the achievements and worrisome trends of Emperor Francis Joseph's 68-year reign, and concluding with the world wars. Emphasis on the interplay among Czechs, Germans, Jews, and other pivotal players: the House of Habsburg and its supporters, and the political elites of neighboring countries.
Crosslisted as: HIST-260HH
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
J. King

JWST-225NT Topics in Judaism: 'Black, Jewish, and Muslim Cultures in Germany: Intersectionalities of Othering'
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
As much as German culture is riddled with extreme examples of persecution and nationalism, the presence of those deemed non-German, such as Black Africans, African Americans, Jews, and Muslims, shaped cultural expression and cultural exchange. In this seminar we explore the expression of otherness as portrayed in literature, film, and art from the eighteenth through twenty-first Centuries. Drawing from critical race theory, critical ethnic studies, and gender studies, we consider work by non-Germans as well as the representation of others in German canonical and popular cultural production.
Crosslisted as: GRMST-231NT, CST-249NT
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives
Other Attribute(s): Speaking-Intensive, Writing-Intensive
The department

JWST-234 Women and Gender in Judaism
Spring. Credits: 4
This course examines gender as a key category in Jewish thought and practice. We will examine different theoretical models of gender, concepts of gender in a range of Jewish sources, and feminist Jewish responses to those sources.
Crosslisted as: RELIG-234, GNDST-210JD
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
M. Benjamin

JWST-240 The Holocaust in History
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
An attempt at understanding the Nazi-led assault on Europe's Jews. Course units include an exploration of origins, both German and European; an analysis of the evolving mechanics of genocide (mobile killing squads, death camps, etc.); comparisons (Germany proper vs. Poland, the Holocaust vs. other instances of state-sponsored mass murder); legal dimensions; and an introduction to the politics of Holocaust remembrance since 1945.
Crosslisted as: HIST-240
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
J. King
**JWST-254 Eat This Book: A Cross-Cultural Introduction to Sacred Text**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

Scripture is not only read or interpreted; it is also sung, illuminated, held aloft, buried, recited, eaten, and worn. In this thematic course, students examine what makes a text "scripture" by examining the idea of sacred text across multiple traditions. Students will become familiar with hermeneutic theory and will analyze embodied, material, and performative aspects of religious life as they pertain to the broad category of scripture.

*Crosslisted as: RELIG-254*

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives*

M. Benjamin

**JWST-269 Citizens and Subjects: Jews in the Modern World**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

This course examines key themes in Jewish intellectual, religious, and political life from the late 17th century to the present. We examine: the effect of civil emancipation and the Enlightenment on Jewish philosophy and theology; Jews as both architects of modern thought and the paradigmatic Other in European liberal nation-states; the transformation of traditional Jewish religious rituals and belief systems in response to dramatic social and political life; new patterns of gender and family organization; the effect of antisemitism, Zionism, and imperialism on Jewish politics; and contemporary Jewish intellectual innovation, including feminist and queer thought.

*Crosslisted as: RELIG-269, CST249JM*

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

M. Benjamin

**JWST-295 Independent Study**

*Fall and Spring. Credits: 1 - 4*

The department

*Instructor permission required.*

**JWST-343 The Sabbath**

*Spring. Credits: 4*

The practice of a weekly sacred day of rest has organized Jewish life for millennia. In this seminar, students will examine the Sabbath using narrative, folk, and legal primary sources from the biblical, Second Temple, rabbinic, medieval, and modern periods. Key themes include sacred time, cultural identity, and the transformation of religious practice. Experiential learning, and critical thinking about your experiential learning, are integral to this seminar.

*Crosslisted as: RELIG-343*

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

M. Benjamin

Restrictions: Course limited to sophomores, juniors and seniors

**JWST-350 Special Topics in Jewish Studies**

**JWST-350CH Special Topics in Jewish Studies: 'Childhood and Children in Religion'**

*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*

This course explores a diversity of religious approaches to the meaning of childhood and the nature of children. We critically examine influential writings, rituals and liturgy, fiction, and other types of literature to understand the construction of childhood as distinctive life stage that entails special rights and responsibilities. We will also examine how gender, power, race, social structures, and economic arrangements produce divergent understandings of what it means to be a child.

*Crosslisted as: RELIG-331CH, CST-349CH*

*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*

M. Benjamin

Restrictions: Course limited to sophomores, juniors and seniors

Notes: Students wishing to take this course for credit in Jewish studies must choose a research topic that builds on Jewish sources.