Hebrew

The Department of Jewish, Islamic and Near Eastern Languages and Cultures offers a major and a minor in Hebrew. As a major in Hebrew, students can expect to gain proficiency in the language, study the area's literary and cultural landmarks, and gain familiarity with the historical context.

Language Placement: Placement tests are required for all students entering our language programs. Students may be eligible for up to 6 units of back credit based on advanced placement and successful completion of the recommended course. Native speakers are not eligible for back credit; evidence of secondary or post-secondary study of the language is required. Any units received from back credit cannot be counted toward the major or minor.

Phone: 314-935-5110 or 314-935-8567
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Faculty

For a list of affiliated faculty, please visit the Department of Jewish, Islamic and Near Eastern Languages and Cultures faculty page.

Majors

The Major in Hebrew

Prerequisites

1. Two years language (Hebrew) by course work or by placement
2. JINE 210C Introduction to Islamic Civilization and JINE 208F History, Text and Identity: Introduction to Jewish Civilization
   - Students with substantial prior course work may substitute an additional upper-level course with permission of adviser and the director of undergraduate studies (DUS).

Requirements

24 upper-level (3xx or 4xx) credits, including:

• 3 credits in departmental capstone course to be taken senior year. (Students may take it junior year with permission of adviser and DUS).

and

• 21 credits as follows:
  • 12 credits of upper-level language (3xx or 4xx) courses
  • 6 credits in literature, society, history, culture, religion

Additional Information

• 3 credits in another culture (for Hebrew – Islamic Studies, Arabic, South Asian or Hindi)

Minors

The Minor in Hebrew

Prerequisites:

• Beginning Modern Hebrew I (HBRW 105D), Beginning Modern Hebrew II (HBRW 106D) (or Advanced Beginning Modern Hebrew I (HBRW 151D)) — whether by course work or placement

Required courses (18 units)

• History, Text and Identity: Introduction to Jewish Civilization (JINE 208F)
• 9 credit units from 200-, 300-, or 400-level courses in Hebrew language
• 6 credit units from 300- or 400-level courses in Jewish studies and Hebrew literature and culture

Additional Information

Regulations for all language and culture minors

• Two semesters of the language must be taken at Washington University.
Courses


L74 HBRW 1011 First Year Modern Hebrew
For the student with no knowledge of Hebrew. Students with background in Hebrew are required to take the placement exam. Foundation for modern Israeli Hebrew. Skills for writing and speaking are introduced. Limit: 16 students per section. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD EN: H

L74 HBRW 1012 First Year Modern Hebrew
Spring Semester - For the student with no knowledge of Hebrew. Students with background in Hebrew are required to take the placement exam. Foundation for modern Israeli Hebrew. Skills for writing and speaking are introduced. Limit: 16 students per section. Credit 3 units.

L74 HBRW 101D Beginning Biblical Hebrew I
This course prepares the student to read Biblical literature in Hebrew. Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM

L74 HBRW 105D Beginning Modern Hebrew I
For the student with no knowledge of Hebrew. Students with background in Hebrew are required to take the placement exam and encouraged to consider HBRW 151D. Foundation for modern conversational Hebrew. Skills for writing and speaking introduced. Five class hours a week plus laboratory work. Limit: 15 students per section. Credit 5 units. A&S: LA A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM

L74 HBRW 106D Beginning Modern Hebrew II
Foundation for modern conversational Hebrew. Skills for writing and speaking introduced. Three class hours a week plus laboratory work. Limit: 15 students per section. Credit 5 units. A&S: LA A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM, IS EN: H

L74 HBRW 151D Advanced Beginning Modern Hebrew I
Designed for the student with some background in Hebrew. Emphasis is on review of grammar, increased fluency and vocabulary enrichment. This course prepares students for HBRW 106D. Limit 15 students. Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM

L74 HBRW 179 Freshman Seminar: Midrash
The aim of this course is to introduce students to Midrash, the highly fascinating literature of rabbinic biblical interpretation. Among the topics studied are: How did the classical rabbis read the Bible? What is the relationship between the plain meaning of the biblical text and the polyphone interpretations of Midrash? How can numerous, at times even contradictory, interpretations of the same verse coexist? What is the function of imaginative narratives, parables and folklore in Midrash? Initially the Midrashic logic may seem elusive from the viewpoint of a modern Western reader; in turn its creative thinking proves to be smart, playful, at times even slippery, and yet substantial. Addressing the literary, historical and cultural context in which rabbinic Midrash developed, we get to know a variety of Midrashic collections and styles covering a time span from late antiquity to the Middle Ages. All primary sources are read in translation. Throughout the semester we devote time to discussing practical questions such as how to use the library’s catalogue and (electronic) reference sources, as well as techniques for structuring and writing students essays. Same as L75 JINE 179 Credit 3 units. A&S: TH A&S IQ: HUM BU: ETH EN: H

L74 HBRW 2011 Second Year Modern Hebrew
Reading and discussion on the intermediate level of selected topics pertaining to contemporary Israel. Review and further study of grammar and development of conversational skills. Prerequisite: grade of B- or better in Beginning/First Year Modern Hebrew or placement by examination. Limit: 16 students per section. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD EN: H

L74 HBRW 2012 Second Year Modern Hebrew
Spring Semester - Reading and discussion on the intermediate level of selected topics pertaining to contemporary Israel. Review and further study of grammar and development of conversational skills. Prerequisite: grade of B- or better in Beginning/First Year Modern Hebrew or placement by examination. Limit: 16 students per section. Credit 3 units.

L74 HBRW 208F History, Text, and Identity: An Introduction to Jewish Civilization
The anthropologist Clifford Geertz once famously invoked Max Weber in writing that “man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs.” The main goal of this course — designed...
as an introduction to Jewish history, culture and society — is to investigate the "webs of significance" produced by Jewish societies and individuals, in a select number of historical periods, both as responses to historical circumstances and as expressions of Jewish identity. Over the course of the semester we focus on the following historical settings: seventh-century BCE Judah and the Babylonian exile; pre-Islamic Palestine and Babylonia (the period of the Mishnah and the Talmud); Europe in the period of the Crusades; Islamic and Christian Spain; Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries; North America in the 20th century; and the modern State of Israel. For each period, we investigate the social and political conditions of Jewish life; identify the major texts that Jews possessed, studied and produced; determine the non-Jewish influences on their attitudes and aspirations; and explore the efforts that Jews made to define what it meant to be part of a Jewish collective.

Same as L75 JINE 208F
Credit 3 units. A&S: TH A&S IQ: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, IS EN: H

L74 HBRW 213D Intermediate Modern Hebrew I
Reading and discussion on the intermediate level of selected topics pertaining to contemporary Israel. Review and further study of grammar and development of conversational skills. Prerequisite: grade of B- or better in HBRW 106D or placement by examination.
Credit 5 units. A&S: LA A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM

L74 HBRW 214D Intermediate Modern Hebrew II
Intermediate modern Hebrew reading and discussion of modern Hebrew fiction. Development of language skills in special drill sessions. Conducted in Hebrew. Prerequisite: HBRW 213D or equivalent.
Credit 5 units. A&S: LA A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM

L74 HBRW 300 Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
A survey of the religious ideas and cultural history of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and its context in the ancient Near East. Traditional Jewish and Christian interpretation of the Bible is discussed. No knowledge of Hebrew required; no prerequisites. Same as L23 Re St 300
Credit 3 units. A&S: TH A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM

L74 HBRW 301C Kings, Priests, Prophets and Rabbis: The Jews in the Ancient World
We trace Israelite and Jewish history from its beginnings in the biblical period (circa 1200 BCE) through the rise of rabbinic Judaism and Christianity until the birth of Islam (circa 620 CE). We explore how Israel emerged as a distinct people and why the rise of the imperial powers transformed the political, social and religious institutions of ancient Israel. We illuminate why the religion of the Bible developed into rabbinic Judaism and Christianity and how rabbinic literature and institutions were created.
Same as L75 JINE 301C
Credit 3 units. A&S: TH, CD A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Art: HUM BU: BA, HUM

L74 HBRW 3082 From the Temple to the Talmud: The Emergence of Rabbinic Judaism
This course offers a survey of the historical, literary, social, and conceptual development of Rabbinic Judaism from its emergence in late antiquity to the early Middle Ages. The goal of the course is to study Rabbinic Judaism as a dynamic phenomenon — as a constantly developing religious system. Among the topics explored are: How did Judaism evolve from a sacrificial cult to a text-based religion? How did the "Rabbis" emerge as a movement after the destruction of the Second Temple and how could they replace the old priestly elite? How did Rabbinic Judaism develop in its two centers of origin, Palestine (the Land of Israel) and Babylonia (Iraq), to become the dominant form of Judaism under the rule of Islam? How did Jewish ritual and liturgy develop under Rabbinic influence? How were the Rabbis organized and was there diversity within the group? What was the Rabbs' view of women; how did they perceive non-Rabbinic Jews and non-Jews? As Rabbinic Literature is used as the main source to answer these questions, the course provides an introduction to the Mishnah, the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, and the Midrash-collections — a literature that defines the character of Judaism down to our own times. All texts are read in translation.
Same as L23 Re St 3082
Credit 3 units. A&S: TH A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Art: HUM BU: HUM

L74 HBRW 320D Third-Level Modern Hebrew I
Improves proficiency in the oral and written use of modern Hebrew through reading and discussion of short stories, Israeli newspaper articles, and other selected materials. Students discuss, in Hebrew, current events and public issues related to contemporary Israeli society. Prerequisite: grade of B- or better in HBRW 214D or placement by examination.
Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM EN: H

L74 HBRW 322D Third-Level Modern Hebrew II
Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM

L74 HBRW 324 Hebrew of the Media
Reading and discussion of newspaper articles. Viewing and analysis of television news programs and films. Prepares students to become familiar with the language and typical issues of the Israeli media and to discuss in writing and speech the issues in the news. Prerequisite: HBRW 322 or by departmental approval.
Credit 3 units. A&S: LA

L74 HBRW 335C Becoming "Modern": Emancipation, Anti-Semitism and Nationalism in Modern Jewish History
This course offers a survey of the Jewish experience in the modern world by asking, at the outset, what it means to be — or to become — modern. To answer this question, we look at two broad trends that took shape toward the end of the 18th century — the Enlightenment and the formation of the modern state — and we track changes and developments in Jewish life down to the close of the 20th century with analyses of the (very different) American and Israeli settings. The cultural, social, and political lives of Jews have undergone major transformations and dislocations over this time — from innovation to revolution, exclusion to integration, calamity to triumphs. The themes that we will be exploring in depth include the campaigns for and against Jewish "emancipation"; acculturation and religious reform; traditionalism and modernism in Eastern Europe; the
rise of political and racial anti-Semitism; mass migration and the formation of American Jewry; varieties of Jewish national politics; Jewish-Gentile relations between the World Wars; the destruction of European Jewry; the emergence of a Jewish nation-state; and Jewish culture and identity since 1945.

Same as L22 History 335C
Credit 3 units. A&S: TH, CD A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM

L74 HBRW 340 Israeli Women Writers
Study of selected novels and shorter fiction by women. Attention to the texts as women's writing and as products of Israeli literature. No knowledge of Hebrew necessary; all readings in English translation.
Credit 3 units. A&S: TH, CD, SD, WI A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, SD, WI Art: HUM BU: HUM

L74 HBRW 349 Yidishkayt: Yiddish Literature in English Translation
This course traces the emergence, development, flourish and near-decline of Yiddish literature, beginning with some of the earliest writings to appear in Yiddish in the late Middle Ages and early modern period, continuing with 19th-century attempts to establish a modern Yiddish literature and the 20th-century emergence of both a classical canon and a literary avant-garde, and ending with post-Holocaust attempts to retain a Yiddish literary culture in the near absence of Yiddish-speaking communities. Focusing on the role of Yiddish as the "national" language of Ashkenaz, the course examines the ways in which Yiddish literature has responded to the social conditions of European Jewish life, exploring among others the relationship between Yiddish and the non-Jewish cultures in which it existed, the tensions between secular trends versus religious tradition, life in the shtetl and in the metropolis, immigration from the old world to the new, and Yiddish literary responses to the Holocaust.
Same as L75 JINE 349
Credit 3 units. A&S: TH, CD A&S IQ: HUM, LCD BU: IS EN: H

L74 HBRW 350 Israeli Culture and Society
An examination of critical issues in contemporary Israeli culture and society, such as ethnicity, speech, humor, religious identity, and the Arab population, using readings in English translation from a variety of disciplines: folklore, literary criticism, political science, sociology, psychology, anthropology. Prerequisite: sophomore standing, or permission of instructor.
Same as L75 JINE 350
Credit 3 units. A&S: TH, CD, SD A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, SD Art: HUM BU: HUM, IS

L74 HBRW 359 Travelers, Tricksters, and Storytellers: Jewish Travel Narratives and Autobiographies
Jewish literature includes a number of highly fascinating travel accounts and autobiographies that are still awaiting their discovery by a broader readership. In this course, we will explore a broad range of texts originating from the Middle Ages to the 19th century. They were written by both Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews hailing from countries as diverse as Spain, Italy, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire. Among the authors were pilgrims, rabbis, merchants, and one savvy business woman. We will read their works as responses to historical circumstances and as expressions of Jewish identity, in its changing relationship to the Christian or Muslim environment in which the writers lived or traveled. Specifically, we will ask questions such as: How do travel accounts and autobiographies enable their authors and readers to reflect on issues of identity and difference? How do the writers produce representations of "other," against which and through which they define a particular sense of self? To what extent are these texts reliable accounts of their authors' personal experiences, and where do they serve their own self-fashioning? How do the writers portray Christians, Muslims and Jews from other cultural backgrounds than their own? How do they construe the role of women in a world dominated by men? How do they reflect on history, geography, and other fields of knowledge that were not covered by the traditional Jewish curriculum; and how do they respond to the challenges and opportunities of early modernity? This course is open to students of varying interests, including Jewish, Islamic, or Religious Studies, medieval and early modern history, European or Near Eastern literatures. All texts will be read in English translation.
Same as L75 JINE 359
Credit 3 units. A&S: TH, CD A&S IQ: HUM, LCD BU: IS EN: H

L74 HBRW 384 Intro to Biblical Hebrew
This course enables students to read the Bible in the original Hebrew. Review of Hebrew grammar. History of the Hebrew language. Intended for students with a foundation in modern Hebrew. Prerequisite: HBRW 214D or instructor's permission.

L74 HBRW 385D Topics in Biblical Hebrew Texts
Prerequisite: HBRW 384 or permission of the instructor.
Credit 3 units. A&S: TH A&S IQ: HUM BU: HUM BU: IS

L74 HBRW 387C Topics in Hebrew Literature
Hebrew works read in English translation. Prerequisite: sophomore standing; previous courses in literature recommended.
Credit 3 units. A&S: TH Art: HUM

L74 HBRW 390 Topics in Migration and Identity: Genocide and Migration: Flight and Displacement under Nazi Regime
The course examines migration movements that are related to the Nazi genocide in Europe. Grounded in a study of the Nazi project to reshape the European geopolitical map, students explore how the mass movement of people is impacted by geopolitics, political violence, and economical considerations. Class materials address the relationship between identity formation and social exclusion, thus opening up a critical investigation of concepts of citizenship, human rights, and their institutional frameworks (states, international organizations, etc.) more generally. Students work with a variety of sources, including primary sources, scholarly analyses, podcasts, literary works and film to study migrations related to the prehistory, policies and aftermath of the Nazi regime. The class provides insights into issues of expulsion, refuge, forced migration, settlement projects, ethnic cleansing and others, but also demonstrates the global impact and long-term repercussions of political and genocidal violence. Looking at the Nazi regime through the lens of migration shows that the Nazi genocide is embedded in a history of racism, colonialization and mass violence.
Same as L97 IAS 390
Credit 3 units. A&S: TH A&S IQ: HUM BU: IS EN: H
L74 HBRW 4001 Capstone Seminar
The capstone course for Jewish, Islamic and Near Eastern Studies majors, Arabic majors, and Hebrew majors. The course content is subject to change.
Same as L75 JINE 4001
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM EN: H

L74 HBRW 4010 Fourth-Level Modern Hebrew I
Introduction to modern Israeli literature and literary analysis for the advanced student of Hebrew. Topics include selected genres, influential writers, and the relationship between literature and society. Conducted in Hebrew. Prerequisite: grade of B- or better in HBRW 321D, or permission of instructor.
Credit 3 units. A&S: LA, WI A&S IQ: LCD, WI BU: HUM, IS

L74 HBRW 401W Seminar in Hebrew Literature
This course is designated as Writing Intensive.
Credit 3 units. A&S: LA, WI A&S IQ: LCD, LS, WI EN: H

L74 HBRW 420 Topics in Modern Hebrew Literature
Various themes in Hebrew belles lettres, e.g., the intertwining of politics and literature, the survival of rabbinic metaphors.
Credit 3 units. A&S: LA A&S IQ: LCD Art: HUM

L74 HBRW 421 Study of Selected Texts in Modern Hebrew Literature
Major works in Hebrew belles lettres by writers such as Bialik and Agnon studied in detail and depth.
Credit 3 units. A&S: TH A&S IQ: LCD Art: HUM

L74 HBRW 440 Topics in Rabbinic Texts: Mishnah and Gemara
The course aims to introduce students to independent reading of selected rabbinic texts in the original language. We focus on a number of topics representing the range of rabbinic discussion, including legal, narrative and ethical issues. At the same time, we study the necessary linguistic tools for understanding rabbinic texts. Prerequisites: HBRW 385 or HBRW 401 or instructor's permission.
Credit 3 units. A&S: TH A&S IQ: LCD Art: HUM

L74 HBRW 444 The Mystical Tradition in Judaism
What is Jewish "mysticism"? What is its relationship to the category of "religion"? Is Jewish mysticism just one form of a general phenomenon common to a variety of religious traditions or is it a specific interpretation of biblical, rabbinic, and other Jewish traditions? Taking the above questions as a starting point, this course aims at a systematic and historically contextualized analysis of a broad range of Jewish texts that are commonly classified as "mystical." (All primary texts are read in translation.) At the same time, we explore such overarching themes as: the interplay of esoteric exegesis of the Bible and visionary experiences; the place of traditional Jewish law (halakhah) within mystical thought and practice; the role of gender, sexuality, and the body in Jewish mystical speculation and prayer; the relationship between mysticism and messianism; Ashkenazic and Sephardic traditions and their mutual impact on Jewish mysticism; the "absence of women" from Jewish mystical movements; esoteric traditions of an elite vs. mysticism as a communal endeavor; and the tension between innovation and (the claim to) tradition in the history of Jewish mysticism.
Same as L23 Re St 444

L74 HBRW 488 Independent Work for Senior Honors
This course to be taken in the fall semester. Prerequisite: senior standing, eligibility for honors, and permission of the department.
Credit 3 units.

L74 HBRW 489 Independent Work for Senior Honors
This course to be taken in the spring semester. Prerequisite: senior standing, eligibility for honors, and permission of the department.
Credit 3 units.

L74 HBRW 4973 Guided Readings in Hebrew
Prerequisites: senior standing, and permission of the instructor and the department chair.
Credit variable, maximum 5 units. A&S: LA

L74 HBRW 4982 Guided Readings in Akkadian
Prerequisites: permission of the instructor and the department chair.
Credit variable, maximum 6 units.

L74 HBRW 4983 Guided Readings in Hebrew
Prerequisites: senior standing, and permission of the instructor and the department chair.
Credit variable, maximum 5 units. A&S: LA

L74 HBRW 4984 Guided Readings in Aramaic
Prerequisites: permission of the instructor and the department chair.
Credit variable, maximum 6 units.

L74 HBRW 4985 Guided Readings in Biblical Hebrew
Prerequisites: permission of the instructor and the department chair.
Credit variable, maximum 6 units.