Hebrew

The Department of Jewish, Islamic, and Middle Eastern Studies offers a major and a minor in Hebrew. As majors in Hebrew, students can expect to gain proficiency in the language, study the area’s literary and cultural landmarks, and gain familiarity with Jewish and Middle Eastern history and civilizations.

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 postsecondary study of the language is required. Any units received from back credit cannot be counted toward the major or minor.

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Faculty

Chair

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Professors

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Lecturers

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PhD, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Madhavi Verma (https://jimes.wustl.edu/people/madhavi-verma/)
Lecturer in Hindi Languages and Cultures
MA, Patna University
Prerequisites:

- 100- and 200-level Hebrew, by course work or by placement. (A student who skips the first four semesters of language courses by placement must successfully complete HBRW 320D Third-Level Modern Hebrew I or HBRW 384 Introduction to Biblical Hebrew. Students who complete the third-level language course with a grade of B- or better will receive 6 units of back credit.)
- JIMES 210C Introduction to Islamic Civilization and JIMES 208F Introduction to Jewish Civilization: History and Identity. (Students with substantial prior course work may substitute an additional upper-level course with permission of their advisor and the director of undergraduate studies.)

Requirements:

- 12 credits in 300- and 400-level language courses
- 6 credits in other 300- and 400-level JIMES courses, distributed as the student wishes
- At least 3 credits at the 300- and 400-level courses in a JIMES culture other than that of the selected language tradition
- 3 credits in a departmental capstone course to be taken during the senior year. (Students may take this course during their junior year with permission of their advisor and the director of undergraduate studies.)

Additional Information

Students enrolled in preapproved Washington University study abroad programs during the regular academic semester can earn a maximum of 9 credits subject to review by their advisor and the director of undergraduate studies. Summer programs and transfer courses can be granted as many as 6 credits subject to review by the student’s advisor and the director of undergraduate studies. A limit of 9 credits in total can be applied to the major, whether the credits are earned in study abroad or summer programs or via transfer credit. For more information about preapproved study abroad programs, please visit the Jewish, Islamic, and Middle Eastern Studies Study Abroad Programs website (https://jimes.wustl.edu/studyabroad/).

Students must maintain an average of B in all courses for the major. A grade of B- or higher must be earned in each language course in order to advance to the next level.

No course taken pass/fail can count toward the prerequisites or the major.

A student may request credit for courses taken outside of the department (other than those that are cross-listed) by seeking the permission of the director of undergraduate studies and the department chair.

To be eligible to write a senior thesis, a student must maintain a grade-point average of 3.65 through the sixth semester. Senior thesis writers should sign up for an appropriate 3-credit course during both the fall and spring semesters. (The 6 credits from these courses can be applied to the primary area of study.)
Minors

The Minor in Hebrew

The minor in Hebrew requires a minimum of 9 units at the 300 level or above and a minimum of 18 total units. The goal of the minor is language proficiency at the 200 level or above. Students placing into HBRW 214D Intermediate Modern Hebrew II or above must complete two consecutive semesters of language instruction at Washington University to fulfill the language requirement.

Units required: 18 units, in addition to prerequisites

Language Prerequisites:

- HBRW 105D Beginning Modern Hebrew I and HBRW 106D Beginning Modern Hebrew II, by course work or by placement

Language Requirements:

- HBRW 213D Intermediate Modern Hebrew I and HBRW 214D Intermediate Modern Hebrew II, by course work or
- If placed into HBRW 214D Intermediate Modern Hebrew II or above, two consecutive semesters of language instructions at Washington University

Required Foundational Course:

Choose one of the following courses:

- JIMES 210C Introduction to Islamic Civilization
- JIMES 208F Introduction to Jewish Civilization: History and Identity

Electives:

- 9 credits of 300- or 400-level L74 Hebrew or L75 JIMES courses, distributed as the student wishes

Additional Information

- Pass/Fail: No course taken pass/fail can count toward the minor.
- Grades: A grade of B- or higher must be earned in each language course in order to advance to the next level.
- Study Abroad: Students enrolled in preapproved Washington University study abroad programs during the regular academic semester, in summer programs, and in transfer courses can earn a maximum of 3 units subject to review by their advisor and the director of undergraduate study.
- Back Credit: Any earned back credit does not count toward the total number of units for the Language Requirement. All students are required to take at least one year of language instruction at Washington University.

Courses

L74 HBRW 210C Introduction to Islamic Civilization
A historical survey of Islamic civilization in global perspective. Chronological coverage of social, political, economic and cultural history will be balanced with focused attention to special topics, which will include: aspects of Islam as religion; science, medicine and technology in Islamic societies; art and architecture; philosophy and theology; interaction between Islam and Christianity; Islamic history in the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia as well as Africa; European colonialism; globalization of Islam and contemporary Islam.
Same as L75 JIMES 210C
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, IS: EN: H

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

L74 HBRW 214D Intermediate Modern Hebrew II
This course involves intermediate modern Hebrew reading and the discussion of modern Hebrew fiction. It will focus on the development of language skills in special drill sessions. Conducted in Hebrew. Prerequisite: Grade of B- or better in L74 213D or placement by examination.
Credit 5 units. A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM EN: H

L74 HBRW 300 Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
The Hebrew Bible is the foundational text of Judaism and Christianity. It is a complex compilation of materials, reflecting great diversity in ideology, literary expression, social and political circumstances, and theology. In this course, we shall read a significant amount of the Bible in English translation. We shall study the various approaches that have been taken by scholars in trying to understand the Bible in its historical context. We shall also study how the Bible was traditionally interpreted by Jews and Christians during the last two thousand years.
Same as L32 Re St 300
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, HUM EN: H

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 JIMES 301C
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM 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 Rabbin’s view of women; how did they perceive non-Rabbinic Jews and non-Jews? As Rabbinic Literature is used as the main source of 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 IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

L74 HBRW 320D Third-Level Modern Hebrew I
This course is designed to improve proficiency in the oral and written use of modern Hebrew through the reading and discussion of short stories, Israeli newspaper articles, and other selected materials. Students will also have an opportunity to discuss, in Hebrew, current events and public issues related to contemporary Israeli society. Prerequisite: Grade of B- or better in L74 214D or placement by examination. Note: L75 520 is intended for graduate students only.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM EN: H

L74 HBRW 321D Conversational Hebrew
Designed to focus on and strengthen oral proficiency, we will explore a variety of different topics together based on our common interests – not limited to current affairs, space travel and exploration, advances in medical technology, climate change, pandemic preparedness, economic inequality, and the future of work. With each topic, we will learn relevant vocabulary and structures and apply them in small group discussions, individual presentations, simulated interviews, and classroom debates. Students will also learn to read and write short, concise communications, and will be prepared to use the language in a variety of situations. The language of instruction is Hebrew only. PREREQ: Grade of B- or better in L74 214D Intermediate Modern Hebrew II or placement by examination. Please note: L75 521D is intended for graduate students only.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM

L74 HBRW 322D Third-Level Modern Hebrew II
Designed to develop communicative skills, this course provides opportunities for students to practice the art of speaking and writing correctly, clearly, and effectively. The course includes reading and discussion of selected short stories from modern Hebrew literature as well as articles from current Hebrew newspapers. Class discussions deal with literary topics as well as contemporary social and political issues related to life and institutions in Israel. Prerequisite: Grade of B- or better in L74 320D or placement by examination. Note: L75 522D is intended for graduate students only.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM

L74 HBRW 335C Becoming "Modern": Emancipation, Antisemitism 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, and 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 antisemitism; 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 IQ: HUM, LCD, SC, SD Art: HUM BU: HUM, IS EN: H
UColl: HEU, HSM

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 IQ: HUM, LCD, SC, SD Wt Art: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

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 Ashkenazi, 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 JIMES 349
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Art: HUM 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 JIMES 350
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, SC, SD Art: HUM Art: HUM BU: HUM, IS EN: H

L74 HBRW 359 Travelers, Tricksters, and Storytellers: Jewish Travel Narratives and Autobiographies
Jewish literature includes 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 businesswoman. 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 the following: 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 an "other," against which and through which they define a particular sense of self? This course is open to students of varying interests, including Jewish, Islamic, or Religious Studies, medieval and early modern history, and European or Near Eastern literatures. All texts will be read in English translation. Please note: L75 559 is intended for graduate students only.
Same as L75 JIMES 359
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: IS EN: H

L74 HBRW 384 Introduction to Biblical Hebrew
This course will enable students to read the Bible in the original Hebrew. It includes a review of Hebrew grammar and the history of the Hebrew language. The course is intended for students with a foundation in modern Hebrew. Prerequisite: Grade of B- or better in L74 214D or permission of instructor. Note: L75 584 is intended for graduate students only.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM EN: H

L74 HBRW 385D Topics in Biblical Hebrew Texts
The topic covered in this course varies. Recent course topics include Jeremiah, the Book of Isaiah, and Biblical Poetry. Prerequisite: Grade of B- or better in L74 384 or permission of instructor. Note: L75 585D is intended for graduate students only.
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: HUM EN: H

L74 HBRW 387 Topics in Jewish Studies
Consult Course Listings for current topics. Please note: L75 587 is intended for graduate students only.
Same as L75 JIMES 387
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD BU: IS EN: H

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 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, colonization and mass violence.
Same as L97 GS 390
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM BU: IS EN: H

L74 HBRW 4001 Capstone Seminar
The capstone course for Jewish, Islamic, and Middle Eastern Studies majors, Arabic majors, and Hebrew majors. The course content is subject to change.
Same as L75 JIMES 4001
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM EN: H
L74 HBRW 4011 Fourth-Level Modern Hebrew I
Writing intensive course for the advanced student of Hebrew. We will explore the development of the personal voice in Israeli cinema. Films will be supplemented with articles, reviews, interviews, and fiction as class texts. Graduated writing assignments will help you find your voice in Hebrew. Conducted in Hebrew. Prerequisite: Grade of B- or better in L74 322D Third-Level Modern Hebrew II or placement by examination. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, LS, WI EN: H

L74 HBRW 401W Fourth-Level Modern Hebrew I: Seminar in Israeli Culture (Writing Intensive)
This is a writing-intensive course for the advanced student of Hebrew. We will explore the development of the personal voice in Israeli cinema. Films will be supplemented with articles, reviews, interviews, and fiction as class texts. Graduated writing assignments will help students to find their voices in Hebrew. Conducted in Hebrew. Prerequisite: Grade of B- or better in L74 322D or placement by examination. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD, LS, WI EN: H

L74 HBRW 402 Fourth-Level Modern Hebrew II
Students with advanced proficiency maintain and develop reading, speaking, and writing skills. Classes are conducted in Hebrew. Readings focus on key works of Hebrew poetry and fiction from earlier in this century and from contemporary Israel are included; additional readings and discussions address essays and editorials from the current Israeli press, and we will also view films and current news broadcasts produced in Israel. Prerequisite: Grade of B- or better in L74 401W or placement by examination. Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: LCD, LS BU: HUM EN: H

L74 HBRW 405 Diaspora in Jewish and Islamic Experience
Tensions between center and periphery; migration and rest; power and powerlessness; and exile, home, and return are easily found in the historical record of both Jews and Muslims. For Muslims, it can be said that it was the very success of Islam as a world culture and the establishment of Muslim societies in all corners of the globe that lay at the root of this unease. However, the disruptions of the post-colonial era, the emergence of minority Muslim communities in Europe and North America, and the recent tragic flow of refugees following the Arab Spring have created a heightened sense of displacement and yearning for many. Of course, the very term “diaspora” -- from the ancient Greek, meaning “dispersion” or “scattering” -- has most often been used to describe the Jewish condition in the world. The themes of exile and return and of catastrophe and redemption are already woven into the Hebrew Bible, and they continued to be central motifs in Rabbinic Judaism in late antiquity and the Middle Ages. This occurred despite the fact that more Jews lived outside the borders of Judea than within the country many years before the destruction of Jewish sovereignty at the hands of the Romans. In the 20th century, European imperialism, nationalism of various types, revolution, and war -- including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict -- have done much to underscore the continuing dilemmas of diaspora and home in both Jewish and Islamic identity. The goal of this course is to offer a comparative historical perspective on the themes of migration and displacement, center and periphery, home and residence, and exile and return and give students the opportunity to examine in depth some aspect of the experience of diaspora. Note: This course fulfills the capstone requirement for Jewish, Islamic, and Middle Eastern Studies. The course also counts as an Advanced Seminar for history. (Students wishing to receive history Advanced Seminar credit should also enroll in L22 401R section 19 for 1 unit.) The course is open to advanced undergraduate and graduate students. Same as L75 JIMES 405 Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM Arch: HUM Art: HUM EN: H

L74 HBRW 4060 Conflict or Convivencia? Muslims, Jews, and Christians in Medieval Spain
This seminar will explore various facets of the coexistence (convivencia) of Muslims, Jews, and Christians in medieval Spain. Its horizons stretch from the Muslim conquest of Iberia (al-Andalus) up to the turn of the 16th century when Spanish Jews and Muslims were equally faced with the choice between exile and conversion to Christianity. Until about 1100, Muslims dominated most of the Iberian Peninsula; from then onward, Christians ruled much and eventually all of what would become modern Spain and Portugal. Through a process known as reconquista (reconquest), Catholic kingdoms acquired large Muslim enclaves. As borders moved, Jewish communities found themselves under varying Muslim or Christian dominion. Interactions between the three religious communities occurred throughout, some characterized by shared creativity and mutual respect, others by rivalry and strife. The course focuses on these cultural encounters, placing them in various historical contexts. It will explore the ambiguities of religious conversion, and the interplay of persecution and toleration. Last not least, the course will address the question of how the memory of medieval Spain’s diversity reverberates-and is utilized-in modern popular and academic discourse. All sources will be read in English translation; however, students are encouraged to make use of their linguistic and cultural expertise acquired in previous classes. This course serves as the capstone seminar for Jewish, Islamic & Near Eastern Studies majors, Arabic majors, and Hebrew majors. Graduate students, minors, and other interested undergrads are likewise welcome. Same as L75 JIMES 4060 Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM Art: HUM BU: ETH, IS 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 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 IQ: HUM, LCD Art: HUM EN: H

L74 HBRW 440 Topics in Rabbinic Texts
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 IQ: HUM, LCD EN: H

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 eschatological exegesis of the Bible and visionary experiences; the place of traditional Jewish law (halakah) 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; Ashkenazi 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
Credit 3 units. A&S IQ: HUM, LCD Arch: HUM Art; HUM BU; ETH; IS EN; H

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.

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

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.