



#### ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies (NEJS) is home to a strong and diverse international faculty whose members research the Bible and ancient Near East, the modern Middle East, Jewish civilization from its beginnings through historical and contemporary times, Israel studies, Rabbinic Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Our classes are taught on many levels, in disciplines including textual and literary studies, history, social sciences, intellectual history and philosophy, religion and the arts.

#### What makes the program distinctive?

Brandeis is home to one of the strongest Judaic studies departments in the United States. NEJS classes, which cross the boundaries of historical periods, textual and artistic traditions, religions and civilizations, highlight the interaction between

diverse Jewish, Christian, Muslim and secular cultures. We encourage students of all backgrounds and levels of study to explore the multicultural offerings represented in our department.

#### FAST FACTS

**Current number of majors and minors:** 62

**Number of faculty:** 26

**Can you minor in this program?** Yes

**Emphasis within the major:** ancient Near Eastern texts and culture; Christianity and Islam; classical Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism; Hebrew, Arabic and Yiddish languages and literatures; Israel studies; Jewish history, literature and culture

**Popular second majors:** English; history; sociology

**Website:** [brandeis.edu/departments/nejs](http://brandeis.edu/departments/nejs)

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## ACADEMICS AND RESEARCH

### Three NEJS tracks

Students can major in NEJS within three tracks: Bible and ancient Near East, Judaic studies or Hebrew.

### One-on-one with NEJS faculty

Many NEJS students complete independent studies and senior honors theses working one-on-one with faculty members.

### Multicultural offerings

NEJS students often take courses in Hebrew language and literature, Islamic and Middle Eastern studies, Arabic language and literature, and Yiddish and European Jewish culture.

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## AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

### Women's and gender studies

Professor Bernadette J. Brooten, who was awarded the MacArthur "genius grant," is founder and director of the Feminist Sexual Ethics Project, which works toward Jewish, Christian and Muslim sexual ethics rooted in freedom, mutuality and meaningful consent.

### Reading the Bible through new eyes

Professor Marc Z. Brettler transformed college approaches to biblical texts with his widely acclaimed book "How to Read the Bible," and he co-edited the National Jewish Book Award-winning "Jewish Study Bible."

### Cross-cultural religious models

For his "Iberian Jewish Literature: Between al-Andalus and Christian Europe," Professor Jonathan P. Decter was awarded the Salo Baron Prize for the Best First Book in Jewish Studies by the American Academy for Jewish Research in 2009.

### Holocaust studies

Professor Antony Polonsky, editor of "Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry," was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Warsaw and had a University College, London, conference held in his honor in June 2010.

### American Judaism

Professor Jonathan D. Sarna was the first scholar of American Jewry elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. His "American Judaism: A History" won six awards, including the Jewish Book of the Year Award from the Jewish Book Council.

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## BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

### Arts and culture opportunities

NEJS students have access both in and outside of classes to learning more about filmmaking at the National Jewish Film Center/Brandeis Film Festival. They can join B'yachad, Brandeis' semiprofessional Israeli folk dance group, or the Bellydance Ensemble, where members learn traditional Egyptian and Turkish dance, or Manginah, a coed a cappella chorus focusing on Jewish music.

### Internships

The NEJS department encourages students to participate in internships that integrate academic knowledge and practical experiences in organizations as diverse as Facing History and Ourselves, the Collegiate Internship Program and the Museum of Jewish Heritage.

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## AFTER BRANDEIS

### Notable alumni

Ayala Cohen '92 is a Saturday Night Live writer who was hired for her depth of knowledge about Jewish culture and affairs. Lisa Exler '01, M.A.'02, manages educational materials that promote the values of global citizenship for the American Jewish World Service. Jeffrey Stackert, Ph.D.'06, received the 2010 John Templeton Award for Theological Promise for his first book, "Rewriting the Torah: Literary Revision in Deuteronomy and the Holiness Legislation," which is based on his dissertation.

### Diverse career opportunities

NEJS graduates go on to careers in law, health care, business, politics, writing and the arts. Some NEJS grads build on their outstanding undergraduate education to continue their academic pursuits in doctoral programs. Others pursue Brandeis M.A. degrees such as the five-year NEJS M.A., the DeLeT program for Jewish educators, or the Hornstein Jewish Leadership Program.



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