Learning Goals of the Near Eastern and Judaic Studies Department

The learning goals of the Near Eastern and Judaic Studies Department encompass the three categories stressed in Brandeis University's general learning goals: Knowledge, core skills, and social justice. This statement of the learning goals of NEJS reflects our conviction that knowledge, values, and skills are often interconnected in the university and in the lifelong learning process as well—indeed that articulating skills and social justice as they are embedded in knowledge acquisition is, for us, the most useful and concrete way of formulating our objectives.

Knowledge:

1. Students will understand the principal tenets and religious practices of one or more of the religious traditions currently taught in the department: ancient Near Eastern religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

2. Students will be familiar with and recognize scholarly conventions and contemporary knowledge concerning Near Eastern or Judaic Studies to critically assess claims in the academic literature of those fields and in the popular media.

3. By reading texts in their original languages, students will appreciate language as a shaper and reflection of the people and cultures they study.

Core Skills:

4. Students will be able to synthesize, as well as articulate orally and in writing, a cogent narrative about the history, religions, cultures, and societies of the Near East or those that developed from the Near East, including the Jewish experience generally.

5. Students will be able to frame questions, investigate problems, and evaluate conclusions using one or more academic disciplines or approaches (e.g., literary and artistic criticism, philology, historical analysis, social scientific analysis, women’s and gender studies, and religious studies).

6. Students will be able to situate texts, documents, traditions, ideas, artistic productions, and other data in their contexts and assess their meaning in the light of those contexts.

Social Justice:

7. Students will learn to appreciate diversity in and between religious and cultural traditions and thus contribute to greater understanding in the service of a more peaceful and just society.