For Undergraduate Students

**NEJS 2a Understanding Judaism: An Introduction**
David Ellenson (TTh 2-3:20)
No prior knowledge of Judaism or Hebrew required. Does not count toward the major in NEJS, but minors are encouraged to take this course.
Topics to be discussed include: the People of the Book; the rabbinic tradition; the Jewish calendar; the prayer book; life-cycle of the individual; Christianity, Islam, and the Jews; from anti-Judaism to anti-Semitism; Holocaust; the land of Israel and the Jews; Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist Judaism; American Jewry; Jewish geography today. Usually offered every second year.

**NEJS 3a: Introduction to Judaism, Christianity and Islam**
Jonathan Decter (TF 9:30-10:50)
An introduction to the three major religions originating in the Near East: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Areas of focus include historical development, sacred texts, rituals, and interpretive traditions. Usually offered every second year.

Visiting, Part-time Faculty
Suheil Laher—Islamic studies Robert McChesney—Akkadian Ryan Winters—Akkadian

For Both Undergraduate and Graduate Students

**NEJS 115b Gender and the Bible**
Jacqueline Vayntrub (MWTh 1-1:50)
The Hebrew Bible, a complex work, reflects a wide range of attitudes toward gender. This course examines these attitudes as they are reflected in issues such as the legal status of women, women in myths, leadership, prostitution, masculinity, and the gender of ancient Israel's deity. Perspective. Topics covered will include the Qur'an, tradition, law, theology, politics, Islam and other religions, modern developments, and women in Islam.

**NEJS 121b: Biblical Poetry: Love and Death**
Jacqueline Vayntrub (MW2-3:20)
Prerequisite: An advanced knowledge of biblical Hebrew.
A close reading of biblical poetic texts, with a consideration of what makes these texts poetic. Topics will change from year to year and the course may be repeated for credit.

**NEJS 126a: Intermediate Talmud**
Reuven Kimelman (TF 11-12:20)
Tractate Sanhedrin, chapter three, deals with the issue of voluntary and compulsory arbitration and the binding nature of gambling agreements.

**NEJS 127b: The Jewish Liturgy**
Reuven Kimelman (T 2-4:50)
A study of the literature, theology, and history of the daily and Sabbath liturgy. Emphasis will be placed on the interplay between literary structure and ideational content, along with discussion of the philosophical issues involved in prayer.

**NEJS 128a: Introduction to Christianity**
Bernadette Brooten (MW 3:30-4:50)

**NEJS 135a: The Modern Jewish Experience**
Eugene Sheppard (MW 2-3:20)
Themes include Enlightenment, Hasidism, emancipation, Jewish identity in the modern world (acclimatization and assimilation), development of dominant nationalism in Judaism, Zionism, European Jewry between the world wars, Holocaust, the creation of the State of Israel, and contemporary Jewish life in America, Israel, and Europe.

**NEJS 141a: Russian Jews in the 20th Century**
ChaeRan Freeze (TF 9:30-10:50)
Examines Russian Jewish history from 1917 to the present including the tsarist legacy, Russian Revolution, the creation of a new socialist society, development of Yiddish culture, the "Great Turm" under Stalin, Holocaust, post war Judaism, anti-Semitism, emigration, and current events. It also provides an overview on the social and political history of Nazi Germany (1933-1945).

**NEJS 141b: Human Rights: Law, Politics, and Theology**
Yehudah Mirsky (MW 2-3:20)
How did human rights work arise in recent decades, and why only then? Is it a new sort of religion? What critical thinking will help this vast work of advocacy, international law, democratization and humanitarianism alleviate human suffering?

**NEJS 145a: History of the State of Israel**
Rachel Fish (MWTh 9-9:50)
Examines the development of the State of Israel from its foundation to the present time. Israel’s politics, society, and culture will be thematically analyzed.

**NEJS 154b: Zionism, Israel, and the Crises of Jewish Modernity**
Yehudah Mirsky (MW 3:30-4:50)
Explores the relations between pluralism, religious resurgence, secularism and democracy in our time through readings in history, literature, philosophy, sociology, theology and law. Focuses on one fascinating, contentious and deeply consequential place: The State of Israel.

**NEJS 159b: The Yiddish Classics: Fiction and Drama**
Ellen Kellman (MWTh 12-12:50)
Reading and analysis of major works of fiction and drama by best Yiddish writers of 19th & 20th centuries. Taught in English. Add'l weekly section for students able to read some original Yiddish texts.

**NEJS 164b: The Sociology of the American Jewish Community**
Sylvia Fishman (TTh 3:30-4:50)
Explores transformations in modern American Jewish societies, including American Jewish families and behavior patterns in the second half of the twentieth century. Draws on social science texts, statistical studies, and qualitative research; makes use of a broad spectrum of source materials, examining evidence from journalism, fiction, film, and other cultural artifacts.

**NEJS 166a Carnal Israel: Exploring Jewish Sexuality from Talmudic Times to the Present**
ChaeRan Freeze (TF 11-12:20)
Explores the construction of Jewish sexuality from Talmudic times to the present. Themes include rabbinic views of sex, niddah, illicit relations, masculinity, medieval erotic poetry, Ashkenazi and Sephardic sexual practices, and sexual symbolism in mystic literature; the discourse on sex, race, and nationalism in Europe; debates about masculinity, sexual orientation, and stereotypes in America and Israel. Usually offered every third year.

**NEJS 169a: Inside the Religious School Classroom**
Sharon Feiman-Nemser (W 2-4:50)
Analyzing "records of practice" from their own and others' classrooms will open up a broader conversation about the purposes of religious education and the role of supplementary schooling. Requirement: Students must have a teaching position in a local religious school which can serve as their "experiential" site.
NEJS 170a: Studying Sacred Texts
Jon Levisohn (MWTh 11-11:50)
What does it mean to study a sacred text? What are the problems with doing so? What is sacred about a sacred text? How is studying a sacred text similar to and different from studying other texts? How do different religious traditions study texts differently?

NEJS 176b: Jewish Graphic Novels
Ellen Kellman (TTh 3:30-4:50)
Examines the complex genre of the Jewish graphic novel. Explores how Jews have used graphic narratives to grapple with issues of acculturation, trauma, and identity, in the history of Zionism and the politics of the State of Israel.

NEJS 181a Jews on Screen: "Cohen's Fire Sale" to the Coen Brothers
Sharon Rivo (T 2-4:50)
Open to all students.
Ms. Rivo

For Graduate Students

NEJS 200b: Old Babylonian Akkadian Texts
Robert McChesney (TTh 3:30-4:50)
Prerequisite: NEJS 101a or the equivalent. Formerly offered as NEJS 101b.
Review of grammar and reading of old Babylonian historical inscriptions, laws, letters, and literary texts.

NEJS 201b: Akkadian Literary Texts II
Ryan Winters (TTh 5-6:20)
Prerequisite: NEJS 201a or the equivalent.

NEJS 206a: Advanced Northwest Semitics
David Wright (TF 9:30-10:50)
Continued reading of various Northwest Semitic texts with attention to historical grammar and content. May be repeated for credit.

NEJS 211b: The History of Israelite Religions
David Wright (TF 11-12:20)
Examines recent scholarly reconstructions of the development and nature of popular and elite-sanctioned religions in ancient Israel in view of textual and archaeological evidence.

NEJS Faculty:
Tzvi Abusch – Languages and cultures of ancient Mesopotamia
Guy Antebi – Hebrew language
Bernadette Broten – Christian studies
Jonathan Decter – Medieval Judaism; Sephardic Jewry
Chair, NEJS
David Ellenson – Israel Studies
Carl Sharif El-Tobgui – Arabic & Islamic Studies
Director of Arabic Language Program
Sharon Feiman-Nemser – Jewish education
Sylvia Barack Fishman – Contemporary Jewry and American Jewish sociology and literature
Chiae Ran Freeze – East European history
Director of Graduate Studies
Sarah Hascal – Hebrew language
Laura Jockusch–Modern Jewish history/ Holocaust studies
Ellen Kellman – Yiddish language and literature
Reuven Kimelman – Talmud, Midrash & Liturgy
Jonathan Krasner – Jewish education
Undergraduate Advising Head
Jon Levisohn – Jewish education
Yehudah Mirsky–Israel studies
Ari Ofergenden – Hebrew language
Director, Hebrew Language & Literature
Sharon Rivo – Jewish film
Jonathan D. Sarna – American Jewish history (sabbatical)
Eugene Sheppard – Modern Jewish history and thought
Esther Shorr – Hebrew language
Ellen Smith – Museum, visual & material culture
Ilana Szobel – Modern Hebrew literature (sabbatical)
Ilan Troen – Israel studies
Jacqueline Vayntrub – Hebrew Bible
David Wright – Languages and literatures of the Ancient Near East

For course prerequisites & limits, please consult the 2016-2017 Brandeis University Bulletin:
www.brandeis.edu/registrar/bulletin/provisional/

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