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.

**NEJS 3a: Introduction to Judaism, Christianity and Islam**

Jonathan Decter  
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.

**NEJS 2a Understanding Judaism: An Introduction**

David Ellenson  
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 141b: Human Rights: Law, Politics, and Theology**

Yehudah Mirsky  
(MW 2:30-3:20)  
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 humanitarisn alleviate human suffering?

**NEJS 145a: History of the State of Israel**

Rachel Fish  
(MWTh 9:30-10:20)  
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 145b: 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 12:30-1:20)  
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)  
Examines 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 11:30-12:20)  
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 171b: Tikkun Olam/Repairing the World: Service and Social Justice in Theory and Practice
Jon Levisohn (MWTh 11-11:50)
What does tikkun olam mean? What is a life of service? What should one learn from service-learning? Does “social justice” actually do any good? This is a service-learning course, and includes a service component in the field

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.

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

NEJS 184a: Introduction to Jewish Museum Studies
Ellen Smith (TTh 5-6:20)
Using readings, case studies, field trips, and class discussions, this course gives students introductory theoretical, historical, bibliographic, and hands-on skills for interpreting and producing exhibitions, museums, and historic sites in America, Europe, and Israel

NEJS 195a: Muhammad: Life, Teachings and Legacy
Suheil Laher (TTh 5-6:20)
Studies the life of Muhammad based upon the earliest biographical accounts and the academic analyses in both Islamic and non-Islamic sources, accompanied by an examination of his legacy in different aspects of Islam, such as Shi’ism and Sufism.

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 (T 5 – 7:20)
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 Brooten – Christian studies
Jonathan Decter – Medieval Judaism; Sephardic Jewry
Chair, NEJS
David Ellenson – Israel Studies
Carl Sharfi 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
ChaeRan 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
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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