For Undergraduate Students

NEJS 25a: Introduction to Talmud
Reuven Kimelman (TF 11:00-12:20)
Prerequisite: A 30-level Hebrew course or the equivalent is recommended. An introduction to Treatise Sanhedrin, on the subject of judicial procedure and capital punishment. Attention is paid to modes of argument, literary form, and development of the Talmudic text. No previous study of Talmud is presupposed.

NEJS 132a: The Jews of Latin America
Dalia Wassner (TF 12:30-1:50)
Through historical analysis of literature, theater and art, this course will explore the multiple understandings of Jewishness that arose in Latin America from the colonial times to the present, as well as how the idea of Jewishness and Jewish inclusion in society was incorporated into larger national conversations of identity and belonging.

NEJS 135a: The Modern Jewish Experience
ChaeRan Freeze (TF 11-12:20)
Themes include Enlightenment, Hasidism, emancipation, Jewish identity in the modern world (acculturation 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 138a: Genocide and Mass Killing in the Twentieth Century
Laura Jockusch (MWTh 11-11:50)
An interdisciplinary seminar examining history and sociology of the internationally punishable crime of genocide, with the focus on theory, prevention, and punishment of genocide. Case studies include Armenians in Ottoman Turkey, Stalin’s Russia, the Holocaust, Cambodia, Bosnia, and Rwanda.

For Both Undergraduate and Graduate Students

FA/NEJS 183a: Breaking Boundaries in Contemporary Israeli Art
Ilana Szobel/Gannit Ankori (MW 2-3:20)
Explores how the Creative Arts reflect, challenge, and reconfigure various cleavages and barriers that characterize contemporary Israeli society. This course will focus on literary, visual and cinematic artworks, organized around thematic clusters and major theoretical issues.

NEJS 110b: Readings in the Hebrew Bible: Proverbs
Jacqueline Vayntrub (Th 2-4:50)
Prerequisites: NEJS 10a or demonstrated knowledge in biblical Hebrew grammar. A close study of Proverbs against the background of ancient Near Eastern wisdom texts. The course focuses on literary structure and the concept of divine reward and punishment.

NEJS 111a: The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
Jacqueline Vayntrub (Th 5-6:20)
A survey of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). Biblical books will be examined from various perspectives and compared to other ancient Near Eastern compositions. No knowledge of Hebrew is presumed.

NEJS 113a: Jewish and Christian Aramaic
David Wright (TF 11-12:20)
Prerequisite: HBRW 122a or b, NEJS 10a, or permission of the instructor. A study of the language and text of the Targumim, Qumran Aramaic Paraphrases, and the Syriac Peshitta.

NEJS 124b: Divinity, Difference and Desire: An Introduction to Jewish Mysticism
Yehudah Mirsky (MW 2-3:20)
A study of Jewish mysticism through history. While investigating the nature of mysticism and the idea of mysticism itself and the transformation of key motifs of Judaism into a mystical key, the course will also be concerned with how to read a Jewish mystical text. All readings are in English.

NEJS 126b: Agadic Literature: The Ethics of the Fathers with Avot d’Rabbi Nathan
Reuven Kimelman (TF 9:30-10:50)
A study of the Mishnah Avot and its classical commentaries. Focuses primarily on literary and historical questions.

NEJS 128a: Introduction to Christianity
Bernadette Brooten (TTh 2:00-3:20)

NEJS 156a: Modern Responsa Literature: The Sephardic Tradition
Zvi Zohar (W 2-4:50)
The genre of Jewish literature known as Responsa has long been central to Jewish law. This course will focus on a large spectrum of responsa with significant attention being given to ones written by Israeli rabbis on a host of contemporary issues.

NEJS 158a: Divided Minds: Jewish Intellectuals in America
Eugene Sheppard (MW 2-3:20)
Jewish intellectuals in the United States have exerted tremendous influence on the changing landscape of American culture and society over the last century. Explores the political, cultural, and religious contours of this diverse and controversial group.

NEJS 164b: The Sociology of the American Jewish Community
Sylvia Fishman (TTh 3:30-4:50)
A survey exploring transformations in modern American Jewish societies, including American Jewish families, organizations, and behavior patterns in the second half of the twentieth century. Draws on social science texts, statistical studies, and qualitative research; also 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 9:30-10:50)
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.

NEJS 166b: Who is a Jew: Converts and Conversion in Jewish Law
Zvi Zohar (M 2-4:50)
Highlights the central role the question of “Who is a Jew” occupies in modern Jewish life and consciousness against the backdrop of social-scientific writings on status and identity, the history of conversion to Judaism, and present day Israel-Diaspora relations.

NEJS 170a: Studying Sacred Texts
Jon Levisohn (Th 2-4:50)
What does it mean to study a sacred text? What are the problems with doing so? What is sacred about a sacred text? How do different religious traditions study texts differently?

NEJS 174b: Israeli Women Writers on War and Peace
Ilana Szobel (MW 3:30-4:50)
Taught in Hebrew.
An exploration of nationalism and gender in Modern Hebrew literature. By discussing various Hebrew texts and Israeli works of art and film, this course explores women’s relationship to Zionism, war, peace, the state, politics, and processes of cultural production.
NEJS 181b: Film and the Holocaust
Sharon Pucker-Rivo (T 2-4:50)
Examines the medium of film, propaganda, documentary, and narrative fiction relevant to the history of the Holocaust. The use of film to shape, justify, document, interpret, and imagine the Holocaust. Beginning with the films produced by the Third Reich, the course includes films produced immediately after the events, as well as contemporary feature films. The focus will be how the film medium, as a medium, works to (re)present meaning(s).

NEJS 183b: Global Jewish Literature
Ellen Kelman (MWTh 1-1:50)
May not be taken for credit by students who took NEJS 171a in prior years. Introduces important works of modern Jewish literature, graphic fiction, and film. Taking a comparative approach, it addresses major themes in contemporary Jewish culture, interrogates the “Jewishness” of the works and considers issues of language, poetics, and culture significant to Jewish identity.

NEJS 191a: Biblical Narratives in the Qur’an
Suleyman Dost (MW 2-3:30)
The Qur’an retells many narratives of the Tanakh and the New Testament. Compares the Qur’anic renditions with those of the earlier scriptures, focusing on the unique features of the Qur’anic versions.

NEJS 194b: Sufism: Mystical Traditions in Classical and Modern Islam
Suleyman Dost (MWTh 12-12:50)
An examination of the teaching and practices of the Sufi tradition. Explores the foundations of Sufism, its relation to other aspects of Islam, the development of Sufi teachings in both poetry and prose, and the manner in which Sufism is practiced in lands as diverse as Egypt, Turkey, Iran, India, Malaysia, and Europe.

For Graduate Students

NEJS 200b: Old Babylonian Akkadian Texts
Staff (TBD)
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. Usually offered every year.

NEJS 211b: The History of Israelite Religions and Law
David Wright (TF 9:30-10:50)
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 259a Renaissance, Revolution, Redemption: Readings in Early Zionist Thought
Yehudah Mirsky (M 9-11:50)
Explores the writings of a fascinating group of figures - including Bialik, Brener, Gordon, Kook, Rachel - poised on the cusp of traditional Jewish society and the nascent Zionist revolution. They explored the dilemmas of Jewish identity and modern politics and philosophy with great literary power and intellectual intensity.

NEJS FACULTY:
Tzvi Abusch – Languages and cultures of ancient Mesopotamia
Guy Antebi – Hebrew language
Bemadette Brooten – Christian studies
Jonathan Decter – Medieval Judaism; Sephardic Jewry
Chair, NEJS
Suleyman Dost – Classical Islam
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
ChaeRan Ree – East European history
Sara Hascal – Hebrew language
Interim Director, Hebrew Language & Literature Program
Laura Jockusch – Modern Jewish history/Holocaust studies
Ellen Kelman – Yiddish language and literature
Reuven Kimelman – Talmud, Midrash & Liturgy
Jonathan Krasner – Jewish education
Undergraduate Advising Head
Jon Levisohn – Jewish education
Yehudah Mirsky – Israeli studies
Sharon Rivo – Jewish film
Jonathan D. Sarna – American Jewish history
Eugene Sheppard – Modern Jewish history and thought
Director of Graduate Studies
Esther Shorr – Hebrew language
Ellen Smith – Museum, visual & material culture
Ilana Szobel – Modern Hebrew literature
Jacqueline Vasyutin – Hebrew Bible
David Wright – Languages and literatures of the Ancient Near East

For course prerequisites & limits, please consult the 2017-2018 Brandeis University Bulletin: www.brandeis.edu/registrar/bulletin/provisional/

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