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
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.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Women’s and gender studies
Professor Bernadette J. Brooten, who was awarded the MacArthur Fellowship, 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.

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.

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.

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.

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, MA’02, manages educational materials that promote the values of global citizenship for the American Jewish World Service. Jeffrey Stackert, PhD’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 MA degrees such as the five-year NEJS BA-MA, the DeLeT program for Jewish educators or the Hornstein Jewish Leadership Program.

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.