

### Why Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis?

Brandeis has one of the strongest and largest departments of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies (NEJS) outside of Israel. NEJS faculty examine a wide variety of fields, including the Bible and the ancient Near East, the modern Middle East, Jewish civilization from its inception through contemporary times, as well as Christianity and Islam. Courses are taught at many levels and introduce a wide variety of scholarly approaches, including historical, textual, sociological, and literary. Students of all backgrounds are encouraged to explore the diverse traditions represented in the department.

### Curriculum Overview

Students have the option of completing a bachelor of arts with a major or a minor in NEJS, or a combined BA/MA. The minor requires five courses; the major requires eight courses in addition to advanced language courses. Two tracks are available within the major: Judaic Studies, and Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Studies.

Additionally, students may consider majors and minors in Hebrew language and literature, and Islamic and Middle Eastern studies, as well as the minor in Yiddish and East European Jewish culture. Many students also choose to major in NEJS in addition to another major, such as history, English, psychology, philosophy, politics, women's and gender studies, and biology.

### NEJS offers electives in the following areas:

The Bible and the ancient Near East (languages, literatures, and cultures), Rabbinic texts and culture, Christianity, Jewish history, Jewish philosophy and thought, Jewish sociology, Jewish education, Jewish literature (in Hebrew and other languages), Near Eastern and Judaic Studies and the arts, modern Middle East, Israel studies, and feminist approaches to Near Eastern and Judaic Studies. Many NEJS students complete independent studies and senior honors theses, working one-on-one with a faculty member.

### Hands-On Learning Experience

The NEJS department encourages students to design internships that integrate academic study with experiential knowledge. The department sponsors credit-bearing internships for junior and senior majors and minors.

### Features of the NEJS Program

The interdisciplinary nature of the NEJS program provides students with the tools to critically engage and appreciate central cultural, religious, and political traditions from multiple

perspectives. Students also benefit from a wide variety of cultural events, and may participate in the annual student-faculty softball and basketball games. Most NEJS courses are relatively small, and offer excellent opportunities for interaction with faculty members.

## Related Resources at Brandeis

The department maintains close ties with a diverse group of centers and institutes that offer many opportunities for students. These include the Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, the Steinhardt Social Research Institute, the Fisher-Bernstein Institute for Jewish Philanthropy and Leadership, the Tauber Center for the Study of European Jewry, the Jacob and Libby Goodman Institute for the Study of Zionism, the Bernard G. and Rhoda G. Sarnat Center for the Study of Anti-Jewishness, the Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education, the Gralla Fellows Program for Journalists, the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, Hornstein: The Jewish Professional Leadership Program, the Institute for Informal Jewish Education, the Crown Center for Middle East Studies, the Brandeis University Summer Institute for Israel Studies, the Genesis Program, and the National Center for Jewish Film.

## Career and Education Options

Majoring in NEJS opens up all the career opportunities afforded by a liberal arts education. Past majors have entered the fields of education, law, medicine, business, advertising, entertainment, government, diplomatic service, and journalism. Many students move on to graduate school to prepare for careers in Jewish education, the rabbinate and ministry, and academia.

## Faculty

Following is a list of department faculty members and their areas of specialization:

- **David Wright, chair**  
Biblical studies
- **Tzvi Abusch**  
Languages and cultures of ancient Mesopotamia
- **Guy Antebi**  
Hebrew language
- **Marc Brettler**  
The Bible and its interpretation
- **Bernadette Brooten**  
Christian studies
- **Aliza Brosh**  
Hebrew language
- **Jonathan Decter, undergraduate advising head**  
Sephardic studies
- **Sharon Feiman-Nemser**  
Jewish education
- **Sylvia Barack Fishman**  
Contemporary Jewry
- **ChaeRan Freeze**  
East European Jewish history
- **Sara Hascal**  
Hebrew language
- **Ellen Kellman**  
Yiddish language and literature
- **Reuven Kimelman**  
*Talmud*, Midrash, liturgy
- **Jon Levisohn**  
Jewish education
- **Avigdor Levy**  
Middle Eastern studies
- **Joseph Lumbard**  
Classical Islam
- **Kanan Makiya**  
Middle Eastern studies
- **Antony Polonsky**  
East European Jewish history
- **Bonit Porath**  
Hebrew language
- **Benjamin Ravid**  
Medieval and early modern Jewish history
- **Jehuda Reinhartz**  
Modern Jewish history
- **Vardit Ringvald, director, Hebrew and Arabic languages**  
Hebrew language
- **Jonathan Sarna**  
American Jewish history
- **Eugene Sheppard, graduate adviser**  
Modern Jewish history and thought
- **Esther Shorr**  
Hebrew language
- **Ilana Szobel**  
Modern Hebrew literature
- **Ilan Troen**  
Israel studies