Northwestern | Program in Jewish Studies
WEINBERG COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

WINTER 2027				
COURSE	**COURSE TITLE**	**DISTRO/FD**	**INSTRUCTOR**	**TIME**
GSS 321-0-20 (also JWSH_ST 390-0-1, HISTORY 393-0-22)	Sex and Nazi Germany	IV	Z. Nunn	TTH 3:30 – 4:50
HEBREW 111-2-20	Hebrew I		R. Alexander	MWF 12:30 – 1:50
HEBREW 121-2-20	Hebrew II		R. Alexander	MWF 11:00 – 12:10
HEBREW 216-0-1	Hebrew III: Parents and Children in Israeli Society	VI	H. Seltzer	MW 2:00 – 3:20
HEBREW 316-0-1	Hebrew IV: Biblical Stories and Poems; Canonical Biblical Texts through the Lens of Modern Hebrew	VI	H. Seltzer	MW 11:00 – 12:20
HISTORY 203-3-20 (also JWSH_ST 203-3-1)	Jewish History III: Modern, 1789-1948	IV	Y. Petrovsky-Shtern	MW 9:30 – 10:50
HISTORY 300-0-28 (also JWSH_ST 390-0-2, MENA 390-4-1)	Jews in Iran	IV	J. Brack	TTH 11:00 – 12:20
HISTORY 393-0-26	Gender, Race and the Holocaust	IV	T. Maznick	TTH 12:30 – 1:50
HISTORY 395-0-20 (research seminar)	Jewish Autobiography as a Historical Source	IV	Y. Petrovsky-Shtern	MW 3:30 – 4:50
HISTORY 492 (graduate seminar)	The Holocaust	IV	B. Frommer	TH 9:30 – 12:20
JWSH_ST 280-4-1 (also HISTORY 292-0-26, MENA 290-4-2)	Violence in Palestine/Israel: A History	IV	S. Pinhas	MW 12:30 – 1:50
JWSH_ST 280-4-2 (also HISTORY 292-0-24, MENA 290-4-3)	Fossil Fuels and Climate Change in Palestine/Israel: A Global Perspective	IV	S. Pinhas	TTH 12:30 – 1:50
JWSH_ST 290-0-1 (also GSS 231-0-22 /HISTORY 292-0-22)	Jews and Gender in Modernity	IV	G. Engelstein	MW 2:00 – 3:20
PSYCH 317-0-1	Psychological Perspectives on the Holocaust	III	B. Gorvine	MW 9:30 – 10:50
RELIGION 339-0-21 (also JWSH_ST 339-0-1)	Reading the Talmud	V	B. Wimpfheimer	TTH 11:00 – 12:20
SESP 323-0-20	Holocaust Memory, Memorial and Museums		D. M. Cohen	TTH 12:30 – 1:50

What is Jewish Studies?

Jewish Studies refers to the study of Judaism, Jewish history, Jewish identity, and Jewish culture over time and around the world. Our professors rely on tools of historical research, textual analysis, ethnography, political science, and more as they seek to understand and teach these topics.

Jewish Studies is truly an interdisciplinary way of analyzing and understanding the world. Jewish Studies courses are open to students of all backgrounds. While some students who take our classes are Jewish, many are not. We offer a major and minor for anyone looking to go deeper into the study of Jewish experience. On the other hand, if you're just looking for something a little different from what you usually study, you'll be glad to know that many of our courses satisfy Weinberg distribution requirements.

Jewish Studies also partners with Middle East and North African (MENA) Languages to provide Hebrew language classes, which are offered at three levels.

For more information: www.jewish-studies.northwestern.edu

Jewish Studies Winter 2027 Course Descriptions

GENDER STUDIES

GSS 321-0-20 (also HISTORY 393-0-22/JWSH_ST 390-0-1): Sex and Nazi Germany
Z. Nunn, TTH 3:30 -4:50
A History of Sex Is sex binary? Does "biology" mean destiny? Can sex change? What, precisely, is sex? These questions shape contemporary political debates, from reproductive rights to trans politics, but they also have deep historical roots. This course examines how "sex" has been defined, debated, regulated, and lived across different times and places. Rather than treating sex as a fixed biological fact, we will approach it as a historical category whose meanings have shifted alongside transformations in science, law, empire, medicine, media, and governance. Drawing on case studies from the Enlightenment to the present, this course traces how anxieties about sex and gender have structured ideas of human difference and shaped understandings of the relationship between body, self, and society. We will examine how concepts of sex have organized bodies, identities, classifications, and institutions, shaping social life from the intimate to the geopolitical. By historicizing a concept often treated as timeless, the course shows that sex changes not only at the level of individual bodies and identities, but across history itself.

HEBREW

Students with prior knowledge of Hebrew (learned either through school or at home) will need to take the Hebrew placement exam before registering, unless they have previously taken Hebrew at Northwestern or have permission from the instructor. For more information, please contact Hanna Seltzer at hanna.seltzer@northwestern.edu

HEBREW 111-2-21: Hebrew I
R. Alexander, MWF 12:30 – 1:40pm
This course is designed to develop all four language skills (speaking, writing, listening and reading comprehension) as well as provide a cultural foundation. The course is based on Hebrew from Scratch, a comprehensive textbook with grammar and interactive exercise for the beginning adult learner. . Hebrew 111-2, taught in the Winter Quarter, builds on material learned in the first quarter. You will learn the impersonal form widely used in everyday Hebrew, adjectives and more question words, as well as numbers, and the direct object, a unique form in Hebrew. All these new words and structures will be integrated into short texts and lively conversations which are part of the wider context of Israeli culture. As always, students will have ample opportunities to practice and expand all skills.

HEBREW 121-2-20: Hebrew II
R. Alexander, MWF 11:00am – 12:10pm
Second-Year Hebrew is a three-quarter sequence which will cover comprehensive grammar explanations and examples as well as cultural themes. The purpose of this course is to enlarge the students' vocabulary, and to reinforce and expand their knowledge of Hebrew grammar, as well as to deepen their knowledge of Israeli culture. Class will consist of interactive exercises for the intermediate learner, readings in a level-appropriate difficulty with more information of Israeli daily life and reality, and listening in the form of songs and clips in Hebrew. During Hebrew 121-2, students will practice the words already familiar from the previous year and expand their vocabulary. We will continue learning more binyanim of the past tense. Students will also learn conjugations or basic prepositions they were introduced to last year. We will also learn the body parts, colors and more useful concepts, and we will integrate this knowledge into exploration of Israeli artworks. The readings will be in a level-appropriate difficulty with more information on Israeli daily life and reality.

HEBREW 216-0-1: Hebrew III: Parents and Children in Israeli Society
H. Seltzer, MW 2:00 – 3:20pm
In this class we will dive into the universal topic of relationships between parents and children as it is reflected in Israeli society. We will examine this topic through the lens of various genres, such as short stories, blogs, films, parental guides and TV shows, and we might even taste a bit of creative writing. As we discuss the complexities and dilemmas of the relationships we encounter and ask ourselves if there is something like "Israeli parenthood" or "Israeli childhood", we will also pay close attention to the varied language levels and styles, grammar structures and vocabulary. The materials and discussions will be in Hebrew, and the level of the course is intermediate high to advanced novice (in ACTFL scale). Please contact Prof. Hanna Tzuker Seltzer with any questions or concerns: hanna.seltzer@northwestern.edu

HEBREW 316-0-1: Hebrew IV: Biblical Stories and Poems; Canonical Biblical Texts through the Lens of Modern Hebrew
H. Seltzer, MW 11:00am – 12:20pm
Many define the Hebrew Bible as the best literature ever written. Indeed, the Hebrew Bible inspired numerous canonical novels and poems, not to mention paintings and sculptures, in Western culture. In the case of Hebrew literature, the connection to the Hebrew Bible is even more binding, as the biblical texts informed and inspired Zionist ideology and the revival of Hebrew as a modern language. In this class we will read a selection of biblical stories in their original language, biblical Hebrew, a reading which will enable us to see the immense influence of biblical Hebrew on Modern Hebrew language. We will then read contemporary Hebrew poems that are based on the stories we have read. We will analyze both the biblical stories, the Hebrew poems, and the connections between them. The poems we will read in class are interpretations of the biblical stories; both the biblical texts and the modern poems are in Hebrew, but beyond the grammatical and periodical differences between the texts and the poems (Biblical Hebrew vs. Modern Hebrew), the poems can be political, ideological, social, or personal critique of or a dialogue with the biblical story. All course materials will be in Hebrew, as well as class discussions, and the level of the course is advanced intermediate to advanced advance (in ACTFL scale). This class is intended for students who are either heritage speakers of Hebrew or are in a very advanced level of Hebrew. The class level is equal to Hebrew fourth year. Please contact Prof. Hanna Tzuker Seltzer with any questions or concerns: hanna.seltzer@northwestern.edu

HISTORY

HISTORY 203-3-20 (also JWSH_ST 203-3-1): Jewish History III: Modern, 1789 - 1948
Y. Petrovsky-Shtern, MW 9:30 – 10:50
Modernity has dramatically changed the profile of Western Civilization and had a major impact on the European Jews. The course will take students from French Revolution that started integrating the Jews into the fabric of European society to the establishment of the State of Israel. It will highlight the plurality of models of Jewish integration and acculturation, the formation of new Jewish identities, the split of the traditional community under the impact of Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment), the rise of Liberal and Orthodox trends within Judaism, and the spread of Jewish political movements such as socialism and nationalism. Based on a plethora of English-language documents, the course will introduce students to those problems of interaction between the general society and the Jewish minority that pointed toward the twentieth century transformation of modernity. In sum, the course will explore the fascinating response of Jews to modernity on political, societal, theological, and cultural levels.

HISTORY 300-0-28 (also JWSH_ST 390-0-2, MENA 390-4-1): Jews in Iran
J. Brack, TTH 11:00 – 12:20

Iran is home to one of the oldest, and currently, the largest Jewish communities in the Middle East outside of Isreal. This course follows Jewish Iranian history from the 7th century to the present introducing students more broadly to the history of Iran and the historical role that religious minorities played in Iranian and Middle Eastern histories. We will situate the stories of Iranian Jews in comparison to that of other Jewish communities in the Middle East. We will focus on questions of identity, assimilation, and historical agency: To what extent were Jews integrated into their Persian speaking environment? How did Jews shape Iranian history? And how does the Jewish community of Iran endure to this day while other lively Jewish communities in Iraq, Yemen, Morocco, and Egypt emigrated elsewhere?

HISTORY 393-0-26: Gender, Race and the Holocaust
T. Maznick, TTH 12:30 – 1:50
The aim of this seminar is to introduce students to the history and historiography of race and gender during the Holocaust. As in many historical contexts, race and gender interacted dynamically and created the particular context of Nazi-occupied Europe, which was a place where Jewish men and women suffered in particular ways, German men and women participated in particular ways, and other racial groups - men and women alike - were targeted, collaborated, resisted and rescued. We will read a variety of texts that explore the influences that shaped the behavior and response of an array of people during the Holocaust. Racism sat directly in the center of the Nazi world view. Once the Nazis got into power, they sought to translate ideology into policy. Still, their racial policies evolved over time, spurred by opportunism, innovation, and war. And too, Jewish men and women responded in ways similar and divergent to the Nazi onslaught. Sexism was also seemingly an important aspect of the Nazi perspective. While they indeed embraced an anti-feminist stance, the Nazis nevertheless sought to incorporate "German" women into the national community and women participated actively in the implementation of Nazi racism.

HISTORY 395-0-20 (research seminar): Jewish Autobiography as a Historical Source
Y. Petrovsky-Shtern, MW 3:30 – 4:50
Autobiography, and Jewish autobiography in particular, presents a fascinating, in most cases unparalleled opportunity to look at history and historical realities through the lens of a private individual. Yet the purpose of the autobiography is to tell the story, not history. The autobiography is a quintessential narrative that borders on the literary. If so, is it possible to use autobiography in historical research? This course opens up a variety of ways to neutralize the literary ingredient in autobiography to make it a usable historical source. This course takes the participants through five hundred years of Jewish personal narratives including the autobiographies of rabbis and mystics, schismatics and philosophers, merchants and writers, dissidents and historians, politicians, and even converts.

HISTORY 492 (graduate seminar): The Holocaust
B. Frommer, TH 9:30 – 12:20
This seminar focuses on the development of scholarly knowledge of the Holocaust and historical debates about the causes of the genocide, connections between victim groups, and questions of collaboration with and resistance to the Nazis and their helpers. We will discuss methodological and epistemological approaches to the study of the Holocaust.

JEWISH STUDIES

JWSH_ST 280-4-1 (also HISTORY 292-0-26, MENA 290-4-2): Violence in Palestine/Israel: A History
S. Pinhas, MW 12:30 – 1:50
"Guns don't kill people, people kill people" (American proverb). "You are different with a gun in your hand; the gun is different with you holding it" (Bruno Latour, Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies, 179). These two sayings present diametrically opposed views of the relationship between weapons and society: one regards weapons as a neutral medium that merely executes violent human intentions, while the other attributes to them agency in shaping those very intentions. This course examines this tension through the history of violence and arms in Palestine/Israel, spanning the periods of the Ottoman Empire, British rule, and the establishment of the State of Israel up to the present day. Violence is a human experience unlike any other. It leaves deep emotional and physical imprints, and sometimes transforms the very way people perceive and sense the world. To examine this, we will engage with poetry, music, and film alongside archival sources, inquiring into how violence has shaped the subjectivities of perpetrators, victims, witnesses, and bystanders across various times and contexts. Can violence form a collective identity or experience? Rather than considering these questions abstractly, we will situate them in the material realities of technology. We will analyze how changing forms of surveillance, policing, and bombing have shaped ideas of humanity, delineating who belongs to it and who is excluded from it. Throughout the course, we will ask: What made different people at different points in time decide to use arms or object to their use? How and to what extent did the materiality of arms - their production, dissemination, design, or operation - influence these choices?

JWSH_ST 280-4-2 (also HISTORY 292-0-24, MENA 290-4-3): Fossil Fuels and Climate Change in Israel/Palestine: A Global Perspective
S. Pinhas, TTH 12:30 – 1:50
With a warming rate double the global average and half of the world's oil reserves, the Middle East is a pivotal site for understanding the history, present, and future of climate change. Although Israel/Palestine is not today an oil-producing country, historically it was imagined differently: in the 19th and 20th centuries it was considered a promising frontier for oil exploration and became a regional hub of fossil fuel infrastructures, channeling Middle Eastern oil and North African gas to Europe. This seminar examines how the rise of fossil fuels and the dynamics of climate change played out in Palestine/Israel and shaped both the Zionist-Palestinian struggle and Palestine's place within the Middle East. We will consider how the Middle East became "Middle" through the interplay between energy sources, infrastructures, and colonial powers. We will explore how carbonization in the region gave rise to new forms of political rule, reshaping identities and altering environments, and how seemingly mundane infrastructures - from coaling depots to automobility - enabled and managed colonial power as well as resistance to it. Drawing on archival materials alongside fiction, poetry, and film in Arabic and Hebrew (all provided in English translation), we will analyze the intimate, everyday, and affective dimensions of carbonization and warming, exploring how these forces shaped subjectivities and societies. Finally, we will consider how different notions of heat and cooling technologies were tied to specific constructions of gender, race, and class.

JWSH_ST 290-0-1 (also GSS 231-0-22, HISTORY 292-0-22): Jews and Gender in Modernity
G. Engelstein, MW 2:00 – 3:20
The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed a profound transformation of Jewish life in almost every facet. What changes when we look at modern Jewish history through the lenses of gender and sexuality? This course explores the major themes in Jewish history of the Modern era - emancipation, assimilation, and modernization itself - with a focus on the impact of ideas and experiences of gender and sexuality. We will follow the changing relationships of Jews to the societies of which they formed an integral part, with a focus on the European and Ottoman empires, the nation states that came to replace them, and the United States. Throughout this historical progression, the class will showcase how ideas about normative masculinity and femininity defined how Jews experienced and made sense of the historical forces they faced: secularization and religious revival, acculturation, immigration, racism, and nationalism.

PSYCHOLOGY

PSYCH 317-0-1: Psychological Perspectives on the Holocaust
B. Gorvine, MW 9:30 – 10:50
This course will be an exploration of how particular psychological theories and concepts can inform our understanding of the events of the Holocaust at both a group and individual level. Material from the fields of Social and Clinical Psychology will be a particular focus of the course. Six major topics will be explored vis-à-vis literature, historical accounts, film, and psychological theory: (1) Perpetrators and Bystanders; (2) Upstanders/Resisters; (3) Survivors; (4) Children of survivors; (5) Deniers; (6) Modern American Jewish identity, culture, and humor in the wake of the Holocaust. Questions of how to utilize an understanding in the Holocaust in a modern context, and the applicability of the Holocaust as a historical example for understanding current events, will also be explored. Students will be evaluated on the basis of class attendance and participation, essay exams, short writing assignments, and a group project/ presentation. There is no text for the course; readings will either be distributed in class or posted on Canvas throughout the quarter. Note: This course is not open for pre-registration for Psych majors/minors so that interested students from any department have an opportunity to register. The course will be open during the regular registration window.

RELIGION

RELIGION 339-0-21 (also JWSH_ST 339-0-1): Reading the Talmud
B. Wimpfheimer, TTH 11:00 – 12:20
The Talmud is one of the most important works of Jewish literature. For the last millennium, Talmud study has been a central part of Jewish religious and cultural practice. Despite the splintering of Judaism into different denominations, Jews the world over are unified by their commitment to studying Talmud. The Talmud is an unusual work of literature, and it has been credited as an influence on codes of law, sermons, modern works of Jewish literature, and even Seinfeld. This course will explain the Talmud's import and durability within Jewish culture while introducing students to the rigors of legal analysis that lie at the heart of most talmudic passages. The course is ideal for those interested in religion, law, logic games and questions of textual interpretation. The course will study the Talmud entirely in English translation; there is neither a language prerequisite nor an expectation of prior experience reading the Talmud.

SESP

SESP 323-0-20 Holocaust Memory, Memorial and Museums
D. M. Cohen, TTH 12:30 – 1:50
What is Holocaust memory? How has Holocaust memory changed over time, and how does the Holocaust continue to affect our understanding of trauma, atrocity, and human rights today? This course addresses individual memory, including survivor and witness testimony, memory and trauma, and the impact of the Holocaust on survivors' families and communities. We also explore collective Holocaust memory and the development of mainstream framings of Holocaust history. We consider Jewish, Roma, and other victim narratives, including national memorialization, rituals of commemoration, and the development of Holocaust memorials, museums, and institutions in the United States and around the world. And we study how we have come to remember the Nazi perpetrators and their collaborators. We draw on course texts, including film and fiction, to ask questions about the relationships between individual and collective memories, as well as between commemoration and education.