

JEWISH STUDIES

Contact Information

Jewish Studies

<https://jewishstudies.rice.edu/>

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Matthias Henze

Program Director

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Jewish Studies is an interdisciplinary field that crosses traditional boundaries between academic fields and departments. Courses in Jewish Studies allow students to study Judaism as it has evolved from an ancient set of shared religious practices into the pluralistic religion and culture that it is today. In both the humanities and social sciences, Jewish Studies broadly examines the texts, history, languages, philosophy, literature, and culture of the Jewish people from the ancient to the modern. The study of Jewish life and culture provides an opportunity to explore the continuities and diversity of Judaism as it has been lived and practiced for over three millennia all over the world.

Diversity of thought is a hallmark of Jewish culture dating back to the earliest Jewish texts, and we strive to follow this model in our courses. The diverse and interdisciplinary nature of the Program in Jewish Studies allows undergraduates the opportunity to enrich their major fields of study with a specific focus on Judaism and Jewish culture. The Program in Jewish Studies at Rice also forms an important bridge to the community, making use of the rich resources available in Houston, engaging with local institutions, and participating in timely public discussions.

Minor

- [Minor in Jewish Studies \(https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/humanities/jewish-studies/jewish-studies-minor/\)](https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/humanities/jewish-studies/jewish-studies-minor/)

Jewish Studies does not currently offer an academic program at the graduate level.

Director

Matthias Henze

Associate Director

Joshua Furman

Professors

Gisela Heffes

Matthias Henze

Richard A. Lavenda

Michael R. Maas

Paula A. Sanders

Associate Professors

Martin Blumenthal-Barby

G. Daniel Cohen

Maya Soifer Irish

Susan Lurie

Astrid Oesmann

Brian Ogren

Lecturer

Joshua Furman

Postdoctoral Fellows

Daniella Farah

Tamar Sella

For Rice University degree-granting programs:

To view the list of official course offerings, please see [Rice's Course Catalog \(https://courses.rice.edu/admweb!/SWKSCAT.cat?p_action=cata\)](https://courses.rice.edu/admweb!/SWKSCAT.cat?p_action=cata)

To view the most recent semester's course schedule, please see [Rice's Course Schedule \(https://courses.rice.edu/admweb!/SWKSCAT.cat\)](https://courses.rice.edu/admweb!/SWKSCAT.cat)

Jewish Studies (JWST)

JWST 120 - ISRAEL: LANGUAGE AND CULTURE I

Short Title: ISRAEL: LANGUAGE AND CULTURE I

Department: Jewish Studies

Grade Mode: Standard Letter

Course Type: Lecture

Distribution Group: Distribution Group I

Credit Hours: 3

Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.

Course Level: Undergraduate Lower-Level

Description: This course will combine a study of basic Hebrew vocabulary and grammar with literature, film, and popular culture from Israel. It will explore the history of Israel through a study of its culture and language, including poetry, songs, movies, and television.

JWST 121 - ISRAEL: LANGUAGE AND CULTURE II

Short Title: ISRAEL: LANGUAGE AND CULTURE II

Department: Jewish Studies

Grade Mode: Standard Letter

Course Type: Seminar

Distribution Group: Distribution Group I

Credit Hours: 3

Restrictions: Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.

Course Level: Undergraduate Lower-Level

Description: This course is a continuation of JWST 120, but is open to any student who can read basic Hebrew. It will explore Israeli culture through literature, music, current events, and film.

JWST 201 - GREAT BOOKS OF JEWISH HISTORY AND CULTURE**Short Title:** GREAT BOOKS OF JEWISH CULTURE**Department:** Jewish Studies**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Lecture**Distribution Group:** Distribution Group I**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Lower-Level**Description:** The Jewish people have often understood themselves as the “people of the book,” because of the Jewish tradition’s reliance on texts and textual study as a central component of religious culture and practice. This course will take the idea of the book as a starting point for a survey of Jewish history and culture. Spanning the biblical period to the present, we will read primary texts important to Jewish life and culture as well as scholarship from disciplines as varied as religion, history, anthropology, sociology, comparative literature, philosophy, and gender and sexuality studies. In doing so, we will learn about the varied communities that produced these texts; the languages they spoke and read; their particular religious and cultural practices; and how they have understood themselves in the context of other social and political communities over time, including in the ancient, medieval, and modern eras.**JWST 218 - RADICAL JEWISH CULTURES****Short Title:** RADICAL JEWISH CULTURES**Department:** Jewish Studies**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Seminar**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Lower-Level**Description:** In 1990s New York City, a group of musician-improvisers began to describe their artistic practice under the title of “Radical Jewish Culture.” The term raised a slew of interrelated questions: What makes culture Jewish? What makes Jewish culture radical? What are some of the aesthetic characteristics of alternative Jewish artistic practices? What social questions related to Jewish life are entangled within these practices? In what ways does alternative Jewish art expand the conversation on relevant social questions and vice versa? This course explores this core set of questions among a range of Radical Jewish Cultures across media and around the world throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Moving through Europe, the U.S., Latin America, North Africa, and Israel/Palestine, we will read, listen to, and view Jewish literature, music, theatre, dance, and film that sit outside the mainstream.**JWST 238 - SPECIAL TOPICS****Short Title:** SPECIAL TOPICS**Department:** Jewish Studies**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Internship/Practicum, Laboratory, Lecture, Lecture/Laboratory, Seminar, Independent Study**Credit Hours:** 1-4**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Lower-Level**Description:** Topics and credit hours vary each semester. Contact department for current semester’s topic(s). Repeatable for Credit.**JWST 301 - JEWISH FOOD: RELIGION, CULTURE, AND CONSUMPTION FROM THE BIBLE TO BAGELS****Short Title:** JEWISH FOOD**Department:** Jewish Studies**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Seminar**Distribution Group:** Distribution Group I**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Description:** “We are what we eat,” the saying goes. But is that true? How do choices and practices connected to eating define us and our communities? Our study of Jewish food traditions from the Bible to the present will engage this and other important issues related to religion and identity politics. Repeatable for Credit.**JWST 317 - JEWISH GRAPHIC NOVEL****Short Title:** JEWISH GRAPHIC NOVEL**Department:** Jewish Studies**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Seminar**Distribution Group:** Distribution Group I**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Description:** This course will examine contemporary works that combine image and text to depict Jewish history, culture, community, and identity in the form of the graphic novel.**JWST 318 - ISRAELI WOMEN WRITERS****Short Title:** ISRAELI WOMEN WRITERS**Department:** Jewish Studies**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Seminar**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Description:** In the last 25 years there has been an explosion of women’s poetry and fiction in Israel. In this course we will explore Israeli women’s writing since the inception of the state of Israel and examine what the work of contemporary women writers means for Israeli culture, society, and politics. Cross-list: SWGS 318.**JWST 325 - ARCHIVAL RESEARCH AND HISTORICAL METHODS: JEWISH HOUSTON****Short Title:** JEWISH HOUSTON**Department:** Jewish Studies**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Lecture/Laboratory**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Description:** Working with rare documents and materials in the Woodson Research Center, students will learn how to process archival collections, write finding aids, and conduct oral history interviews. By semester’s end, each student will produce a major work of original research on a topic of interest in Houston/South Texas Jewish history.

JWST 338 - BECOMING AMERICANS: THE JEWISH IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE IN THE UNITED STATES**Short Title:** BECOMING AMERICANS**Department:** Jewish Studies**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Seminar**Distribution Group:** Distribution Group I**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Description:** This course examines the history of the American Jewish immigrant experience from colonial times to the present as a means of trying to understand how newcomers navigate the processes of adaptation, acculturation, and integration into American life. We will travel to Galveston and New York City to visit significant historical sites and immigrant communities.**JWST 348 - SEX AND GENDER IN MODERN JEWISH CULTURE****Short Title:** SEX & GENDER IN JEWISH CULTURE**Department:** Jewish Studies**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Lecture**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Description:** How has Jewish identity historically been constructed as gendered, and how has that affected Jewish self-perception and -representation as well as the representations of others? This course explores the intersection between gender and Jewishness from several different historical and cultural perspectives, using literature, film, and philosophy. Cross-list: SWGS 348. Mutually Exclusive: Cannot register for JWST 348 if student has credit for RELI 347/SWGS 347.**JWST 351 - HOLOCAUST REPRESENTATION IN LITERATURE, ART, AND FILM****Short Title:** HOLOCAUST REPRESENTATION**Department:** Jewish Studies**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Seminar**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Description:** This course will address the representation of the Holocaust in literature, art, and film. Is the Holocaust representable? What literary and artistic techniques and devices have been employed to represent the unrepresentable? Through Holocaust narrative, poetry, fiction, art, memorials, documentary and narrative film, we will explore these questions. Cross-list: FILM 351. Mutually Exclusive: Cannot register for JWST 351 if student has credit for FILM 349/RELI 349.**JWST 401 - WHY THE JEWS? THEORIES OF ANTISEMITISM****Short Title:** THEORIES OF ANTISEMITISM**Department:** Jewish Studies**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Seminar**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Description:** This class explores some of the major theoretical statements on antisemitism produced in the modern period. Beginning with a brief look at the history of Jewish emancipation and the ensuing debates about the "Jewish Question," the course will consider the ways that antisemitism has been understood from the perspectives of history, theology, psychoanalysis, Marxism, critical theory, postcolonial thought, and more. The class will conclude with a consideration of the fraught contemporary arguments about the relationship between antisemitism and Zionism.**JWST 418 - MUSIC AND DIASPORA****Short Title:** MUSIC AND DIASPORA**Department:** Jewish Studies**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Seminar**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Description:** Though it is common for musical genres to be affiliated with nation-states, border-crossing diasporic music is in fact booming all around us. Bhangra, rai, jazz, klezmer, and many more point to longer histories and larger systems of transnational movement and social consciousness. In this course, we follow the music to explore the central place of diaspora in our world as well as the social critiques it offers. We ask two simultaneous questions: How does diaspora shape music? And what can music teach us about diaspora? Throughout the semester, we will listen to and read about Afro-diasporic music, music from the Jewish diaspora, the South Asian diaspora, "queer diaspora," and beyond. Threaded together with broader materials from ethnomusicology, anthropology, cultural studies, and more, we explore key histories of border crossing that lead to modern diasporic formations, including the transatlantic African slave trade and colonialism. Critically analyzing musical questions such as tradition and hybridity leads us to examine diasporic approaches to themes of movement, borders, home, and identity, that challenge social systems of power. This course is designed to benefit and interest students from a wide range of disciplines and interests in the subject matter. Please feel free to reach out directly to instructor with any questions you may have about the course's fit.**JWST 477 - SPECIAL TOPICS****Short Title:** SPECIAL TOPICS**Department:** Jewish Studies**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Internship/Practicum, Laboratory, Lecture, Seminar, Lecture/Laboratory, Independent Study**Credit Hours:** 1-4**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Description:** Topics and credit hours may vary each semester. Contact department for current semester's topic(s). Repeatable for Credit.

Description and Code Legend

Note: Internally, the university uses the following descriptions, codes, and abbreviations for this academic program. The following is a quick reference:

Course Catalog/Schedule

- Course offerings/subject codes: Courses from various subjects may apply towards this program

Department (or Program) Description and Code

- Jewish Studies: JWST

Undergraduate Minor Description and Code

- Minor in Jewish Studies: JWST

CIP Code and Description ¹

- JWST Minor: CIP Code/Title: 38.0206 - Jewish/Judaic Studies

¹ Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) 2020 Codes and Descriptions from the National Center for Education Statistics: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/>