

Proposal for Major in Religious Studies with a Concentration in Jewish Studies

Updated April 12, 2011

1. Rationale

The field of Jewish Studies explores the history, literature, culture and religious life of Jews in their interaction with other peoples from the Biblical period to the present. Jewish Studies is by necessity interdisciplinary, and Jewish Studies programs at Carolina and peer institutions typically draw their faculty from a variety of units in the humanities, including religious studies, history, American studies and various languages and literatures departments. Both its chronological scope and the range of geographical areas that it touches on make Jewish Studies an appealing field for undergraduates from diverse backgrounds, and the historical experience of Jews as a diasporic people makes Jewish Studies a rich field for exploring the interaction between cultures, traditions and religions. Thus, an interdisciplinary major in Jewish Studies represents both an exemplar of an undergraduate liberal arts education and a compelling perspective from which to pursue work in the humanities more generally.

Since the creation of the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies in 2003, student interest in Jewish Studies courses has been consistently strong. The College of Arts and Sciences already has more than thirty-five courses in Jewish Studies on the books in Jewish Studies in seven different departments, and more than 1,000 undergraduates take Jewish Studies courses each year. The minor in Jewish Studies graduates several students per year, and JWST 100/RELI 123 (Introduction to Jewish Studies), a new course introduced in fall 2009, regularly enrolls more than sixty undergraduate students each fall. There is currently no institution in the state of North Carolina that offers a major in Jewish Studies. By creating a major in this field, UNC will join peer institutions such as the University of Virginia, the University of Michigan, the University of California at Los Angeles, Indiana University, and the Ohio State University, all of which already offer majors in Jewish Studies.

2. Requirements

Core requirements.

- Credit for 4 levels of Biblical or Modern Hebrew study (through RELI 404 or HEBR 204/JWST 204 or the equivalents)
- 8 courses including:
 - JWST 100/RELI 123 (Introduction to Jewish Studies)
 - JWST 697 (Capstone Course: Themes and Methodologies in Jewish Studies), generally taken in the fall semester of the senior year
 - 1 course on the ancient period (CLAR/JWST/RELI 110, 512, JWST/RELI 103, JWST/RELI 106, JWST/RELI 205, JWST/RELI 206, JWST/RELI 503, JWST/RELI 602, RELI 109, RELI 605, RELI 608)

- 1 course on the medieval or early modern period (GERM 225, RELI 108, RELI 450, RELI 565, RELI 566)¹
- 1 course on the period from 1750 to the present (AMST 360, AMST/JWST 486, AMST/JWST/WMST 253, ASIA 235, ASIA/HIST/PWAD 277, CMPL 270/GERM 270/JWST 239/RELI 239, ENGL/JWST 289, HEBR 305/JWST 305, HEBR 306/JWST 306, HEBR 436, HIST/JWST/PWAD 262, JWST/SLAV 469, JWST/PLSH 412, JWST/PWAD/SLAV 465, JWST/RELI 107, JWST/RELI 143, JWST/RELI 243, JWST/RELI 343, JWST/RELI 444, JWST/SLAV 464, RELI 446)
- At least 3 courses from the following list of courses taught outside the Department of Religious Studies (AMST 360, AMST/JWST 486, AMST/JWST/WMST 253, ASIA 235, HEBR 305/JWST 305, HEBR 306/JWST 306, ASIA/HIST/PWAD 277, CMPL 270/GERM 270/JWST 239/RELI 239, ENGL/JWST 289; GERM 225, HEBR 436, HIST/JWST/PWAD 262, JWST/SLAV 469; JWST/PLSH 412; JWST/PWAD/SLAV 465, JWST/SLAV 464)
- Courses used to meet the requirement for courses taught outside of the Department of Religious Studies can also be used to meet the requirements for courses in the ancient, medieval/early modern, and modern periods. Courses listed more than once, however, can be counted for only one category

Additional requirements

- Students must take 2 courses at or above the 400 level, exclusive of the capstone seminar.

3. JWST 697 (Capstone Course: Themes and Methodologies in Jewish Studies)

JWST 697 is a new course, to be taught once each fall by a faculty member located in any one of a number of different departments, but with teaching interest and research competence in some area of Jewish Studies. Topics for the course will vary according to instructor. Of the twelve faculty members affiliated with Jewish Studies at present, several have expressed interest in teaching the capstone seminar. Marcie Ferris (AMST), for instance, is interested in offering a capstone course on American Jewish material culture. Ruth von Bernuth (GERM) is eager to teach a capstone seminar on early modern Jewish popular culture. Yaron Shemer (ASIA) is interested in teaching a capstone course on ethnicity in Israeli cinema. Jonathan Hess (GERM) is eager to teach a capstone seminar on literature and Jewish modernity. Erin Carlston (ENGL) is interested in offering a capstone seminar on “The Invention of the Modern Jew.” Capstone seminars will be open to majors as well as non-majors.

4. Housing of the Major

The Department of Religious Studies has housed the minor in Jewish Studies since its inception in 2003. In December, 2010, the Department of Religious Studies voted unanimously to house the major in Jewish Studies. For administrative purposes, majors in Jewish Studies will count as religious studies majors. The director of the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies,

¹ With the arrival of Flora Cassen, a new, tenure-track assistant professor in HIST working in medieval and early modern Jewish history, in July, 2011, we anticipate that this list will grow quickly in the immediate future.

however, will be responsible for advising Jewish Studies majors, just as s/he is currently responsible for advising minors. Formally and on student transcripts, the degree will be presented as a major in Religious Studies with a Concentration in Jewish Studies. Students majoring in Jewish Studies will ordinarily not be permitted to pursue minors offered by the Department of Religious Studies. Jewish Studies will bear the responsibility for negotiating with faculty members' home departments to enable JWST 697 to be offered on a regular basis.

Appendix

Master List of Courses Counting Toward the Jewish Studies Major²

AMST 360 The Jewish Writer in American Life
AMST/JWST 486 Shalom Y'all: The Jewish Experience in the American South
AMST/JWST/WMST 253 A Social History of Jewish Women in America
ASIA 235 Israeli Cinema: Gender, Nation, and Ethnicity
HEBR 305/JWST 305 Advanced Modern Hebrew I
HEBR 306/JWST 306 Advanced Modern Hebrew 2
ASIA/HIST/PWAD 277 The Conflict over Israel/Palestine
CLAR/JWST/RELI 110, 512 The Archaeology of Palestine in the New Testament Period
CMPL 270/GERM 270/JWST 239/RELI 239 German Culture and the Jewish Question
ENGL/JWST 289; Jewish American Literature and Culture of the 20th Century
GERM 225 Pop and Pious: Early Modern Jewish Literature
HEBR 436 Language, Exile, and Homeland in Zionist Thought and Practice
HIST/JWST/PWAD 262 History of the Holocaust: The Destruction of the European Jews
JWST/SLAV 469 Coming to America: The Slavic Immigrant Experience in Literature
JWST/PLSH 412 20th-Century Polish Literature and Culture
JWST/PWAD/SLAV 465 Literature of Atrocity: The Gulag and the Holocaust in Russia and Eastern Europe
JWST 100/RELI 123 Introduction to Jewish Studies
JWST/RELI 103 Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Literature
JWST/RELI 106 Introduction to Early Judaism
JWST/RELI 107 Introduction to Modern Judaism
JWST/RELI 143 Judaism in Our Time
JWST/RELI 205 Legends of Genesis
JWST/RELI 206 Prophecy and Divination in Ancient Israel and Judah
JWST/RELI 243 Introduction to American Judaism
JWST/RELI 343 Religion in Modern Israel
JWST/RELI 444 Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Judaism
JWST/RELI 503 Exploring the Dead Sea Scrolls
JWST/RELI 602 What Are the Holy Scriptures? The Formation of the Hebrew Canon
JWST/SLAV 464 Imagined Jews: Jewish Themes in Polish and Russian Literature
RELI 108 Jewish Writing through History
RELI 109 History and Culture of Ancient Israel
RELI 446 Christian-Jewish Relations throughout the Ages
RELI 450 Sexuality and Marriage in Jewish Tradition and History
RELI 565 Medieval Jews and the Bible
RELI 566 Jewish Legal Literature
RELI 605 Joseph—King of Dreams: Joseph in Bible and Tradition
RELI 608 The Messiah and the Apocalypse

² As of January 24, 2011, all of these courses, with the exception of ASIA 235 and RELI 566, have already been approved to count toward the undergraduate minor in Jewish Studies. Paperwork is in the process of being submitted to request that these courses count toward the minor.