

JEWISH STUDIES M.A.

Degree: Master of Arts

<https://www.towson.edu/cla/departments/interdisciplinary/grad/jewishstudies/>

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The Jewish Studies M.A. is a liberal arts program that offers students immersion in the history, literature and culture of Judaism as well as comprehension of the scope of the Jewish experience. Graduates of this program typically go on for a Ph.D. or seek employment requiring a depth of Judaic knowledge. The program consists of a five-course core sequence and a concentration in one of five fields: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Civilization, Rabbinic Literature, Jewish Thought and Mysticism, Jewish History, or Contemporary Jewish Studies.

Admission Requirements

- Bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university**
- Minimum of a "B" average: overall GPA of 3.00/4.00

Submit the online application plus the following:

- Official transcript from all post-secondary institutions
- Statement of Intent: a one-page essay describing your academic and professional goals and how this degree program can help you achieve these goals.
- Writing sample: an academic research paper, thesis chapter or a published writing sample, no more than 20 pages
- Three letters of recommendation, at least one from an academic source.
- Interview with the director, in person or by phone
- Current résumé
- Applicants from other countries are subject to the same requirements for admission as applicants from the U.S. Applicants from countries where English is not the language of university-level instruction will be required to submit the results of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). JDST prefers a minimum score of 223 (computer-based) and 84-85 (internet-based). For information about testing center locations, visit the TOEFL website.
- Applicants from other countries will be required to demonstrate proof of funding in order to obtain a visa to attend school in the U.S. This information is not required for admissions consideration.
- Applicants may be required to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or Miller Analogies Test (MAT).

Non-immigrant International Students

Program Enrollment: F-1 and J-1 students are required to be enrolled full-time. The majority of their classes must be in-person and on campus. See the list of programs that satisfy these requirements, and contact the International Student and Scholars Office with questions.

Admission Procedures: See additional information regarding Graduate Admission policies and International Graduate Application online.

See **Exceptions to Policy in Graduate Admissions.

Degree Requirements

The M.A. in Jewish Studies requires successful completion of 35 units with an average GPA of 3.00 or higher. Core Courses: 15 units; Concentration Courses: 12 units; Jewish Studies Seminar: minimum 2 units; Culminating Experience (either Master's Thesis or Comprehensive exams): 6 units.

Code	Title	Units
Jewish Studies Core Courses		
Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Civilization		
JDST 600	BIBLICAL LITERATURE AND CIVILIZATION	3
Rabbinic Literature		
JDST 680	INTRODUCTION TO RABBINIC LITERATURE AND HISTORY	3
History		
JDST 630 or JDST 631	MEDIEVAL JEWISH HISTORY JEWS IN THE MODERN WORLD	3
Jewish Thought and Mysticism		
JDST 666	INTRODUCTION TO JEWISH THOUGHT	3
Contemporary Jewish Studies		
Examples of courses that fulfill this requirement include:		3
JDST 610	DIASPORA JEWISH COMMUNITIES	
JDST 611	AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY	
JDST 663	CONTEMPORARY JEWISH ETHICS: RESHAPING THE JEWISH IDENTITY IN OUR GENERATION	
Concentration		
Select 4 courses in a concentration: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Civilization; Rabbinic Literature and History; Jewish Thought and Mysticism; Jewish History; or Contemporary Jewish Studies		12
Degree Completion		
Select one of the following options:		6
Option 1 - Take additional Jewish studies electives and sit for a Comprehensive Exam in their major field of study		
Option 2 - Write a thesis in their major field of study:		
JDST 897	JDST THESIS (6 units—one term)	
JDST 898	JDST THESIS (3 units—two consecutive terms)	
JDST 899	THESIS CONTINUUM (1 unit—thesis continuum)	
Jewish Studies Practicum Seminar		
The following is required every term until student graduates (2-unit minimum):		2
JDST 719	JEWISH STUDIES SEMINAR	
Total Units		35

Hebrew Requirement

Knowledge of Hebrew is the foundation of Judaic learning. All entering students must take the Hebrew placement examination. In order to receive the degree, students must demonstrate proficiency in the Hebrew equivalent to the level of two years of college Hebrew (through Biblical or Modern Hebrew IV). Beginning with their first term of matriculation, students must study Hebrew every term until this proficiency is attained. Students taking Hebrew course work at TU must attain a grade of "B" or

better each term in order to be considered proficient. Courses through Biblical Hebrew IV or Modern Hebrew IV do not count toward the 35 units required for the degree.

Code	Title	Units
HEBR 101	ELEMENTS OF HEBREW I	3
HEBR 102	ELEMENTS OF HEBREW II	3
HEBR 201	HEBREW INTERMEDIATE I	3
HEBR 202	HEBREW INTERMEDIATE II	3
JDST 544	BIBLICAL HEBREW I	3
JDST 545	BIBLICAL HEBREW II	3
JDST 546	BIBLICAL HEBREW III	3
JDST 547	BIBLICAL HEBREW IV	3

1. Students will demonstrate content knowledge in Jewish Studies ranging from the world of the Bible and ancient Near East to modernity in the West and Middle East.
2. Students will acquire a mastery of the Hebrew language that will be sufficient to facilitate serious academic work in Jewish Studies.
3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of research techniques in order to:
 - access information effectively and efficiently
 - evaluate critically the sources and content of information
 - use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose, be it ones thesis or a research paper for a particular course

Courses

JDST 544 BIBLICAL HEBREW I (3)

Introduction to Hebrew with emphasis on the grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and style of Biblical Hebrew. The fundamentals of Hebrew language; preparation to read and translate classical Hebrew texts. Foundation for continued studies of the classical Hebrew of the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic texts as well as the Hebrew of the contemporary idiom.

JDST 545 BIBLICAL HEBREW II (3)

Introduction to the fundamentals of Hebrew language; foundation for continued studies of the classical Hebrew contain in the Hebrew Bible and rabbinic texts as well as the Hebrew of the contemporary idiom. Prerequisites: JDST 544 Biblical Hebrew I or consent of instructor.

JDST 546 BIBLICAL HEBREW III (3)

Continued study of Biblical Hebrew tests with concentration on more complicated structures of Hebrew grammar, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary. Prerequisites: Six units of Biblical Hebrew or consent of instructor.

JDST 547 BIBLICAL HEBREW IV (3)

Reinforcement and expansion of existing knowledge of Biblical Hebrew; use of classical Hebrew texts to review Biblical Hebrew grammar and to build vocabulary; introduction of literary features in Biblical Hebrew narrative. Prerequisites: JDST 546 or consent of instructor.

JDST 600 BIBLICAL LITERATURE AND CIVILIZATION (3)

The Bible as the primary vehicle for the understanding of Israelite civilization. Critical examination of the Bible and its literature. Insights on literary form, style and function in ancient Israel; Israel's culture and history during the first millennium BCE; and Israel's religious ideas, institutions and theology.

JDST 607 II SAMUEL - THE RISE AND FALL OF DAVID, THE KING (3)

Critical historical and literary analysis of the text of II Samuel, the narrative of the rise of the Davidic Kingdom centered in Jerusalem. Dramatic rise and tragic decline of David himself. Read and analyzed from a variety of exegetical perspectives. Exploration of viewpoints of author and audience and of the historical reality of the formative epoch of the ancient Israelite Kingdom.

JDST 608 I KINGS: REFLECTIONS OF A GOLDEN AGE (3)

Careful reading and study of I Kings from a variety of exegetical perspectives.

JDST 609 II KINGS; SOCIO-LITERARY PERSPECTIVES (3)

Survey of II Kings; the literary portrayal of ideological, historiographic, literary, theological and overarching cultural issues; nature of literary genres in II Kings.

JDST 610 DIASPORA JEWISH COMMUNITIES (3)

Survey of Jewish world following World War II, examining Jewish communities in Israel, North America, Western, Central and Eastern Europe, South America, South Africa and Australia. Jewish life in each region, diverse challenges to maintaining Jewish distinctiveness; Diaspora Jewish communities' changing relationship to Israel and Zionism; shifting role of Israeli Jewry and American Jewry on the world stage in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

JDST 611 AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY (3)

Comprehensive introduction to the 350-year history of the American Jewish community. The colonial and revolutionary periods: Jewish immigration to the U.S. from Central Europe (1840-1880) and Eastern Europe (1881-1924); life in the United States during the first half of the 20th century, including the impact of World War I, the depression, the Holocaust and the founding of Israel on American Jewish life; post-World War II developments including the crisis in Jewish liberalism, and complicated relations between Blacks and Jews; ethnic revival following the Six-Day War in 1967; debates over affirmative action; contemporary Jewish issues.

JDST 615 GLOBAL JEWISH LITERATURE (3)

Analysis of Jewish literature from around the world. Special focus on Asia, Africa, and South America. Focuses on issues of diaspora, globalization, anti-Semitism, and race.

JDST 617 JEWISH STUDIES INTERNSHIP (3)

Practical experiences within the historical profession. Special Permit required. Prerequisites: Approval of the program director.

JDST 625 RACE, GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND JUDAISM (3)

In-depth look at critical social issues in contemporary Judaism. Significant primary and secondary source analysis. Focus on Jewish law, tradition, practice, and identity.

JDST 630 MEDIEVAL JEWISH HISTORY (3)

Jewish history from the seventh century through the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492.

JDST 631 JEWS IN THE MODERN WORLD (3)

Major transformations in Jewish history from the enlightenment through the conclusion of the twentieth century. Topics include: Jewish emancipation in Europe, religious transformations, the rise of modern anti-Semitism, East European Jewry and the emergence of Jewish politics and secular Jewish ideologies, the Zionist movement, the Holocaust, the founding and impact of the state of Israel, and the emergence of a vibrant American Jewish community.

JDST 641 CLASSICAL HEBREW LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE II: SECOND SAMUEL (3)

Advanced Hebrew course that surveys the biblical book of 2 Samuel. Prerequisites: 12 units of college-level Biblical Hebrew or consent of instructor.

JDST 650 SPECIAL TOPICS IN JUDAIC STUDIES (3)

Diverse topics in the study of Judaism. May be repeated for a maximum of 6 units provided a different topic is selected.

JDST 661 THE TANYA: THE MAGNUM OPUS OF HASIDIC LITERATURE (3)

Themes from the Tanya: the religious stature of the righteous; the influence of evil on the soul; the praxis of human attachment to divine reality; Hasidic gates of repentance and forgiveness; communion with the divine through spiritual happiness; letters of and words as diving ontology; the religious process of speech, thought, and action; and spiritual living in a state of nothingness.

JDST 662 MYSTERIES OF THE HOLY ZOHAR (3)

Exploration of some of the focal Zoharic of the Holy Zohar, the most influential Kabbalistic composition, important to core beliefs of Jewish spirituality. Zoharic language symbolism, the mystery of Ein-Sof and the Ten Sefirot, and other esoteric doctrines in the Zohar. Attention to basic Zoharic terminology in Hebrew and Aramaic.

JDST 663 CONTEMPORARY JEWISH ETHICS: RESHAPING THE JEWISH IDENTITY IN OUR GENERATION (3)

Innovative trends of Jewish ethics and spirituality in the new modern Jewish world. Contemporary ideologies of both secular and religious Judaism since the rise of Haskalah and Zionism. Reflections on the Jewish community in America, and on the Jewish people in Israel. Influential authors including Rosenzweig, Buber, Heschel, Kaplan, Soloveitchik, Agnon, Scholem, and Leibowitz. Jewish authenticity and individuality; existential freedom and ethical responsibility; assimilation and secularism; contemporary spirituality and creativity.

JDST 666 INTRODUCTION TO JEWISH THOUGHT (3)

Examination of the religious ideas and the historical developments of Jewish thought over the last two thousand years.

JDST 680 INTRODUCTION TO RABBINIC LITERATURE AND HISTORY (3)

Exploration of the history, literature and major personalities of the period from the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile (516 BCE) until the Arab conquest of Palestine (c. 634 CE).

JDST 681 RABBINIC THOUGHT (3)

Major topics in the thought of rabbis who lived between the 1st century BCE and the 7th century CE. Focus on the historical context, namely how to live a spiritual life without the Temple; the role of the Torah and rabbis without the Temple; and universal questions such as interpersonal ethics and treatment of the other.

JDST 683 DIRECTED INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH (1-4)

Research and reading with a topic to be selected by the instructor and student. May be repeated for a maximum of 6 credits. Special Permit required. Prerequisites: Graduate standing, 18 units of graduate work, and consent of program director.

JDST 685 JEWISH LAW AND ETHICS (3)

Cutting edge issues of ethical and legal concern as understood by traditional Jewish legal and ethical sources and by contemporary Jewish thinkers. Basic structure and methodology of Jewish law. Understanding of the system through examination of different issues.

JDST 697 DIRECTED READING IN JEWISH STUDIES (2-4)

Reading in areas with a topic to be selected by the instructor and the student. No more than 6 units of 697 and 797 may be applied toward a degree. Course may be repeated for a maximum of 6 credits. Special Permit required. Prerequisites: Graduate Standing, 18 units of graduate work, and consent of instructor and program director.

JDST 719 JEWISH STUDIES SEMINAR (0.5)

The seminar will be held three evenings each semester and be a combination of scheduled lecturers and faculty and student presentations. Register for this course every semester. Required of all Master's students.

JDST 781 FOR THE SAKE OF THE BOUND WOMAN, THE RABBIS WERE LENIENT (3)

Applications and adaptations of Jewish law regarding the issue of a man's disappearance: due to war, persecution or tragedy, that left his wife legally bound to a husband who was possibly dead; historical examples where this situation was prevalent including the Hadrianic Persecutions, the Crusades, the Holocaust and 9/11.

JDST 783 HISTORY OF JEWISH BIBLICAL EXEGESIS I: FROM THE BIBLE TO THE CLOSE OF THE TALMUD (3)

Exploration of different ways the Bible was read and interpreted in ancient Jewish History Analysis of early history of different tools and approaches. Ways in which the Bible was understood within the Bible itself. Discussion of mechanisms such as trope and conscious preservation of variant reading. Examination of Bible interpretation in Philo, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Apocrypha. Rabbinic literature from the 2nd through the 7th centuries C.E. and the Bible.

JDST 784 HISTORY OF JEWISH BIBLICAL EXEGESIS II: FROM THE CLOSE OF THE TALMUD TO THE MODERN PERIOD (3)

Course will analyze the history of different approaches to understanding the Biblical text used by Jewish scholars from the 8th Century to contemporary times.

JDST 797 DIRECTED INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH IN JEWISH STUDIES (3)

Research and reading with a topic to be selected by the instructor and student. Special Permit required. Prerequisites: Graduate standing and 18 units of JDST core courses.

JDST 890 JDST DOCTORAL SEMINAR (0.5)

The seminar will be held three evenings each semester and be a combination of scheduled lecturers and faculty and student presentations. Register for the course in the second term. Required of all doctoral students.

JDST 897 JDST THESIS (6)

Thesis research in Jewish Studies. An original investigation, using research methods and design, of a research problem. Students who have completed all other course requirements for the master's degree must register for JDST 897 for 6 units or take JDST 898 for three units for two consecutive semesters following completion of their didactic coursework. Special permit required. Prerequisites: Permission of graduate program director.

JDST 898 JDST THESIS (3)

Thesis research in Jewish Studies. This is JDST 897 taken over two consecutive semesters. Prerequisite: Permit from graduate program director.

JDST 899 THESIS CONTINUUM (1)

Continuation of thesis work until completion. Prerequisites: 6 units of Thesis JDST 897 or JDST 898.

JDST 997 JDST DOCTORAL THESIS (6)

Thesis research in Jewish Studies. An original investigation, using research methods and design, of a research problem. Prerequisite: Permission of graduate program director.

JDST 998 JDST DOCTORAL THESIS (3)

Thesis research in Jewish Studies. An original investigation, using research methods and design, of a research problem. Special Permit required. Prerequisite: Permission of graduate program director.

JDST 999 JDST DOCTORAL CONTINUUM (1)

Doctoral thesis continuum.