

Mission Statement

The mission of Jewish Studies in the City College's Bulletin for 1972 simply states "the scope of this Program is as broad as the Jewish experience. It embraces history and sociology, languages and literature, philosophy and mysticism, religion and nationalism. Nothing Jewish is alien to it, though not every matter of Jewish interest is the subject of a full course in this Department".

Now, three decades later, our mission is similar but reflects the change in our campus since then: our desire is to serve as an important, introductory bridge into Jewish life and religion for those with generally no prior background in this material. We define Judaism after that proposed by Mordecai Kaplan: as an evolving, religious civilization. This definition suggests that while the major component of this civilization is its religion, it must be defined and then examined as much more than that. To understand Judaism is not only to be conversant with its rituals and beliefs, but also its poetry, music and literature. Kaplan's definition also implies that this civilization is dynamic: what it means to be Jewish now is not the same as it was during the Biblical or Rabbinic periods, or even fifty years ago. At base, our mission echoes and remains loyal to the initial philosophy maintained by the department some 35 years ago.

We further define our mission in the university as providing an essential source in providing our undergraduates with a more integrated, interdisciplinary education. The challenges that we face in an increasingly interconnected world are rarely resolved, it seems, within the neat boundaries of academic departments. To be a good technologist, a background steeped in the humanities and social sciences should be a co-requisite. The material that we examine in Jewish Studies, we feel, adds much of that needed dimension. Also of much importance, we understand that the revival of the program can serve as a potentially powerful bridge back into the City College community for many alumni who may have distanced themselves from the school in recent years. We understand the potential of our program to serve as one needed door back to them and are well aware of our responsibility to assist the college in this area.

Learning Outcomes

Because of the nature of the material covered in Jewish Studies, we tend to emphasize the creative analysis of ideas rather than the simple memorization of fact. This has a direct impact on how we assess how much our students learn. Many of our courses do not offer in-class exams; we tend, with some exceptions, to provide week-long take home examinations. This format allows us to not only assess student learning in a more careful manner, but also gives the student another opportunity to grapple with and continue to synthesize what they have learned in class.

Student with a B.A. in Jewish Studies will:

1. Analyze primary Jewish sources in translation, whether they be biblical, rabbinic or modern in origin.
2. Be able to critically and independently evaluate and reflect on secondary sources that interpret these texts.
3. Demonstrate a basic knowledge of the various stages in the evolution of Jewish civilization and how historical factors have impacted these changes.
4. Formulate new and creative approaches to these traditions based on their own research.
5. Connect what has been learned in class via fieldwork experience with specific and tangible elements of Jewish life today.
6. Be able to read, write, and converse on a basic level in Modern Hebrew.

Learning Outcome Grid

Courses	Learning Outcomes							
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
JWST 10000: INTRODUCTION TO JEWISH LIFE & RELIGION	x	x	x	x	x			
HEBREW 12100: ELEMENTARY HEBREW			x			x		
HEBREW 12200: ELEMENTARY HEBREW 2	x		x			x		
HEBREW 22500: 3RD SEMESTER LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE	x	x	x			x		
PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION	x	x	x	x				
THE HOLOCAUST	x	x	x	x	x			
THE HOLOCAUST IN FILM		x	x	x	x			
JEWS IN FILM AND FICTION		x	x	x				
JEWISH HUMOR IN FILM		x	x	x				
JEWISH LAW AND ETHICS	x	x	x	x	x			
HUMOR AND DESPAIR IN MODERN JEWISH FICTION		x	x	x				
THE WOMAN IN MODERN JEWISH FICTION		x	x	x				
ANGELS AND DEMONS IN MODERN JEWISH FICTION		x	x	x				
THE BIBLE AND ITS STORIES	x	x	x	x				
HISTORY OF THE AFTERLIFE	x	x	x	x	x			
THE JEWISH MESSIAHS	x	x	x	x				
KABBALAH/MYSTICAL PATHS	x	x	x	x	x			
INTRODUCTION TO THE TALMUD	x	x	x	x				
HERETICS AND BELIEVERS	x	x	x	x				
JESUS THE JEW	x	x	x					
CONTEMPORARY ISRAELI & PALESTINIAN CINEMA		x	x	x	x			
THE JEWS OF LATIN AMERICA	x	x	x	x	x			
THE JEWS OF SOSUA		x	x	x	x			
JEWISH SPIRITUAL MEDICINE	x	x	x	x	x			
JEWISH LIFE IN NEW YORK		x	x	x	x			
INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY	x	x	x	x	x			
INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE	x	x	x	x	x			
INTRODUCTION TO JEWISH MUSIC	x	x	x	x	x			