

Jewish Studies Minor Courses 2025-2026

Fall 2025

For questions about whether any other course counts toward the minor please check with Professor Yael Aronoff at aronoffy@msu.edu.

ENG 356 Readings in Jewish Literature, S. Rachman (3 credits)

Mon Wed 10:20 AM-11:40 AM This course sets out to explore English-language-based Jewish-American writing in global literary-historical contexts. The last decades have seen a virtual explosion of important and interesting works by writers of Jewish backgrounds writing in American and global literary traditions. This writing ranges from sophisticated work from major established literary figures like Philip Roth and Cynthia Ozick to newer writers like Nicole Krauss, Dara Horn, and Nathan Englander. It reflects both a flowering of literary creativity and a cultural moment in which the lineaments of Jewish-American culture and tradition are being contested, re-imagined, and redrawn in global and historical terms. During the term we will read six recent works using a variety of shorter texts (stories and essays) as points of reference in the history of Jewish-American culture as it has emerged in the U.S. and in global literary context. We will also have recourse to several landmark films addressing Jewish-American experience and themes.

HEB 101 (4 cr.) Elementary Hebrew I

Sec. 001 – Mon-Thu, 9:10-10:00 AM

Sec. 002 – Tuesday and Thursday 2:40-4:30

Introduction to spoken and written Hebrew for conversation, reading, and research. Basic grammatical analysis of modern Hebrew.

HEB 201 (4 cr.) Second-Year Hebrew I – Mon-Thu, 10:20-11:10 AM

Intermediate level spoken and written Hebrew for conversation, reading, and research. Advanced grammatical analysis of modern Hebrew.

HST 317: American Jewish History (3 credits)

Mon Wed 2:40 PM-4:00 PM This course will trace the development of the American Jewish community from 1654, when 23 Jewish refugees fled Brazil and landed by mistake in the city that would become New York, to the present, when American Jews have become such a successful and well-integrated ethnic and religious community that bagels, schmucks and Seth Rogen have become familiar parts of popular American culture. Composed of many different groups, including Ashkenazic and Sephardic, Reform, Orthodox and Conservative, Reconstructionist, feminist, atheist, and secular, as well as many different racial and gender identities, including Black, Latino, Asian, gay, lesbian, and transgender, the American Jewish community is not easily typed, and we will devote some of the class to examining battles over what it means to be an American Jew. Focusing on successive waves of immigration, we will also explore the changing ways in which Jews have been included as integral members of the American nation, as well as the ways that they have been excluded as outsiders.

IAH 207-040: Literatures, Cultures, Identities I, V. Weiss (4 credits)

Focus: Monsters in Film and Literature

Mon Wed 10:20 AM-12:10 PM The twenty-first century has seen a surge in depictions of monsters in films and literature, from the extraordinary success of the *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings* franchises, to *Godzilla*. What is the allure of monsters and why do we enjoy this kind of fear? What do monsters represent, and what hidden desires and anxieties do they allow authors and filmmakers to express? Throughout the eras and in every culture, we find variations of monstrous creatures that embody social boundaries, norms, and values. The course explores literary and cinematic texts that represent a variety of heroes, anti-heroes, monsters and others. We will review how these characters construct the notions of the “I” and the “other” and how they reflect cultural paradigms and socio-political changes.

IAH 241G–002: Creative Arts and Humanities: Film and Culture (D), V. Weiss (4 credits)

Focus: Israeli Cinema and Television

Mon Wed 12:40 PM-2:30 PM Through academic engagement with Israeli cinema and television, this course opens a window into the beauty and complexities of Israeli society. We will explore the plurality and diversity of Israeli society, which encompasses various sociopolitical, cultural communities. This course considers the various ways the filmic medium has portrayed Israel's complex matrix of cultural identities. The different sessions address some of the major factors shaping Israeli culture (e.g., immigration; the regional conflict; gender politics; and queer identities).

MC 335: Israeli Politics, Cultures, and Society, A. Tal (4 credits)

Tue Thu 12:00 PM-3:00 PM Analysis of Israeli politics and society. Relationship between society and: social and ethnic cleavages, culture and politics, political institutions and parties, and democracy and the Jewish nature of the state. Israel's foreign policy and its influence of foreign policy on shifting national-ism and political contestations.

MC 450: International Environmental Policy A. Tal (3 credits)

Tue Thu 4:00 PM-7:00 PM The environment in the Middle East reflects the impacts of millennia of continued human activities, with degraded soils, biodiversity loss and contaminated water resources. In a trial-and-error process since its inception, Israel has pursued an ambitious program of ecological restoration through afforestation, aggressive water management and environmental conservation. Yet, the country's population has grown by over 800% creating health hazards and damage to natural resources. This course evaluates the effectiveness of different environmental policies in Israel and involving its neighbor from a variety of perspectives. It also assesses potential regional ecological cooperation as part of a Middle Eastern peace process.

MC 387: Jews and Antisemitism, B. Lorch (4 credits)

Mon Wed 10:20 AM-11:40 AM MC 387 studies antisemitism both as a pressing problem in contemporary public affairs and as “the longest hatred,” a stubborn prejudice that has persisted for thousands of years. Since the beginning of Christianity, Jews have been singled out for persecution by communities in which they lived as a minority. In recent years, antisemitism has surged in the United States and Europe, after having declined in the decades following the Holocaust. We will attempt to understand this troubling phenomenon by examining its history, underlying causes, and contemporary manifestations.

The first part of the course studies the history of antisemitism from the rise of Christianity to the Holocaust. We will look at how hostility to Judaism emerged in early Christianity; why antisemitism persisted in modern societies based on equality and individual rights; and how Nazi antisemitism led to the near annihilation of the Jewish population in Europe during the Holocaust. We will also trace the origins of stereotypes about Jewish malevolence, power, and greed; pay particular attention to how different ideologies have been used to justify antisemitism, including traditional religion, western liberalism, Marxism, and pseudo-scientific racism; and consider how Jews have responded to antisemitism both politically and theologically throughout their history.

The second part of the course will study contemporary antisemitism with a focus on the United States. We will study the current resurgence of antisemitism both in light of the history of antisemitism and by trying to understand its more immediate causes. We will consider how antisemitism plays a role in the ideology of new right-wing movements, as well as sources of antisemitism on the political left. We will pay particular attention to the connection between the creation of the State of Israel and increasing antisemitism worldwide, and current debates over the relation between anti-Zionism and antisemitism.

REL 150: Exploring Biblical Literature, C. Frilingos (3 credits)

Mon Wed 1:00 PM-2:20 PM A critical survey of biblical texts, including the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and writings found in the Apocrypha/Deuterocanon, that combines historical and literary analysis with attention to the ancient religious context of this literature.

IAH 211C-008: Judaism in America, L. Yares (3 credits)

Mon Wed 3:00-4:50 PM This course explores the rich history and evolving identities of American Jews from the colonial era to the present day. We will investigate how immigration, ideas about Jewish religion, culture, and politics have shaped American Jews and American Judaism. The course will pay particular attention to the production of American Jewish culture and art.

Spring 2026

ESHP 491 Sec. 001: International Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Harry Yuklea Mon, Wed 12:40-2:00

Entrepreneurship and Innovation (E&I) are recognized today as the most effective economic growth engines everywhere around the world. Within this context it is imperative for any future manager to understand and acquire operational skills in the various aspects of E&I management from an international perspective, both as competitive landscape and source of opportunities.

The course combines the variety of academic perspectives with practitioners' views, thus making it appropriate both for students interested in pure academic research and for those looking to improve their entrepreneurial skills and knowledgebase for real practice. It will leverage the extended Israeli (known as "The Startup Nation") accumulated experience in the field by using case studies and interacting occasionally with Israeli practitioners.

The first couple of classes will be designated to introduce, understand and discuss the E&I internationalization phenomenon within the context of fundamental theories and models taught in other classes (ideation, planning, competitiveness, economics, finance and IP). Students are required to leverage the knowledge acquired in other classes and actively participate in the open debates around the subjects presented.

The second module of the course will consist of a series of case studies, including guest speaker lectures, that emphasize the theoretical background connection to real practice.

In the third module we shall deal with recent and expected developments in the field (impact of AI, international trade policies, labor mobility, etc.)

Most classes will run in-person, while international speakers' lectures will be over zoom.

FI 491 Sec. 011: Economics/Finance Innovation

Harry Yuklea Tue, Thu 2:20-3:40

Entrepreneurship and Innovation (E&I) is known as the most effective growth engine in modern economies, making it an imperative management skill requirement. Although the foundations of the course reside in the classical financial theory, the higher risk factor, information asymmetry and capital access constraints lead to development of specific models and instruments that mitigate these gaps.

This Special Topics in Finance course aims to complement the EC491 and FI444 courses by adding specific modules like global financing, capacity planning, emerging financing instruments, policy design, etc.

The course combines the variety of academic perspectives with practitioners' views, making it appropriate both for students interested in pure academic research and for those looking to improve their entrepreneurial skills and knowledge base for field practice. Within this context, we will leverage the experience accumulated in the Israeli ecosystem, recognized as "The Startup Nation," using REAL cases as base for analyzing their relevance for other economies, in particular for Michigan.

HEB 102: Elementary Hebrew – 4 credits

Yore Kedem Mon-Thu 9:10-10:00 Further work on spoken and written Hebrew for conversation, reading, and research. Further basic grammatical analysis of modern Hebrew.

HEB 202: Second-year Hebrew – 4 credits

Yore Kedem Mon-Thu 10:20-11:10 Further intermediate level spoken and written Hebrew for conversation, reading, and research. Further advanced grammatical analysis of modern Hebrew.

HST 388: WWII Causes, Conduct, and Consequences – 3 credits

Matthew Pauly Tue, Thu 3:00-4:20 This course will broaden our understanding of the Second World War by considering the war in multiple European theatres of combat and the perspective of different belligerents. It will give particular attention to the Soviet German conflict and events in Eastern Europe to underscore their importance to the outcome of the war. The course does not offer a strict account of battlefield movements but rather seeks to explore how soldiers and civilians alike experienced the war by examining primary accounts (including those by Soviet Jews) of their participation. By focusing on the European context of a global war, it aims to better introduce students to blur the divide between the battlefield and the home front.

HST 392: History of the Holocaust – 3 credits

Karrin Hanshaw Tue, Thu 2:40-4:00 Nazi persecution and genocide in Europe, 1933-1945. Jewish experience within broader context. Perpetrators, victims, bystanders, and resisters. Post-Holocaust memory, film, literature, and philosophical implications.

IAH 207 Sec. 021: Literatures, Cultures, Identities – Monsters in Film and Literature – 4 credits

Vered Weiss Tue, Thu 12:40-2:30 The twenty-first century has seen a surge in depictions of monsters in films and literature, from the extraordinary success of the *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings* franchises to *Godzilla*. What is the allure of monsters and why do we enjoy this kind of fear? What do monsters represent, and what hidden desires and anxieties do they allow authors and filmmakers to express? Throughout the eras and in every culture, we find variations of monstrous creatures that embody social boundaries, norms, and values. The course explores literary and cinematic texts that represent a variety of heroes, anti-heroes, monsters and others. We will review how these characters construct the notions of the “I” and the “other”

and how they reflect cultural paradigms and socio-political changes. We will also read Kafka, and Asimov, and the Golem, as well as two other short stories by Israeli authors, and watch the Israeli tv show *Juda*.

IAH 211C: Area Studies and Multicultural Civilizations: The Americas – American Jewish Culture – 4 credits

Matthew Kaufman Mon, Wed 12:40-2:30 This class is designed to help students reflect on the significance of culture and how it structures and gives meaning to experience. It will introduce students to key issues and debates in modern American Jewish culture, with particular attention paid to ways in which Jewish identity is constructed and contested. Students will develop an appreciation for the diverse ways in which Jewish culture creates community and provides an interpretive framework for living. Students will come to appreciate how culture is continually created.

IAH 221C Great Ages: The Modern World – Human Migration: A Global Issue from Local Perspectives – 4 credits

Yore Kedem Tue, Thu 12:40-2:30 Focus: Human Migration: A Global Issue from Local Perspectives. Arts and humanities of the modern world, examined through the frame of urban and intellectual life. Literature, visual arts, music, religion and philosophy presented in historical context.

IAH 231A Sec. 007: Themes and Issues: Human Values and the Arts and Humanities – Twentieth Century Jewish Israeli and Jewish American Women Writers – 4 credits

Vered Weiss Tue, Thu 10:20-12:10 This course surveys Jewish American and Jewish Israeli women writing by focusing on the effects and influences of gender, ethnicity, race, historical experience, religion, class, and cultural practice. Students will explore a spectrum of Jewish American and Jewish Israeli women writing considering themes and issues pertinent to a global tradition of women's writing. Among others, we will read *All the Rivers* by Dorit Rabinyan, *New York 1, Tel Aviv 0* by Shelly Oria, and *Gowing Up Below Sea Level* by Rachel Biale.

IAH 241G Sec. 002: Creative Arts and Humanities: Film and Culture – Israeli Cinema and Television – 4 credits

Vered Weiss Tue, Thu 8:00-9:50 Through academic engagement with Israeli cinema and television, this course opens a window into the beauty and complexities of Israeli society. We will explore the plurality and diversity of Israeli society, which encompasses various sociopolitical, cultural communities. This course considers the various ways the filmic medium has portrayed Israel's complex matrix of cultural identities. The different sessions address some of the major factors shaping Israeli culture (e.g., immigration; the regional conflict; gender politics; and queer identities).

MC324a: Regional Politics, Cooperation, and Conflict in the Middle East – 4 credits

Yael Aronoff Tue-Thu 10:20-11:10 This course will focus on the causes for conflict and cooperation between states, within states, and between state and non-state actors, in the modern Middle East. One focus of the course will be on conflict/wars and efforts at cooperation between Syria and Israel, Lebanon, and Israel, and especially Palestine and Israel. Israel and the Palestinian Authority. We will focus on the main actors in negotiations between Israel and Syria, Israel and Palestine, and Israel and Lebanon, as well as the role of the United States, regional actors, and the international community in facilitating negotiations. All three dyads of conflict have included violent conflict, as well as periods of serious negotiation. We will examine conditions for conflict and cooperation as they relate to non-state actors involved, as well as state actors. We will discover how amid violent conflict unofficial negotiations can pave the way to cooperation and official negotiation and what the conditions are for successful negotiations. The cases allow for a greater understanding of the domestic and foreign policies of these countries immersed in conflict and enable comparisons of different types of conflict and cooperation. One of the books for the course will be Alan Dowty, *Israel/Palestine*, 5th Edition, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2023). There will be simulations, policy memos, and a research paper.

MC 202 Sec. 008: Intro to Study of Public Affairs: From Ethnic Diversity to Ethnic Cleansing: The Transformation of Vilnius (1920-1944) – 4 credits

Sherman Garnett Tue, Thu 3:00-4:50 This writing-intensive, research seminar will focus on the city of Vilnius (Lithuania) and its surrounding region from its incorporation into Poland in the aftermath of the First World War

until Soviet liberation of the city from the Nazis (1920-1944). For many of you, Vilnius and its region are a blank slate. My primary aim in this course is not to convert you into scholars of the region but to use the city and the region around it as providing case studies of virtually every central issue of politics, economic development, international relations, social movements, war, and interethnic and religious conflict that bedevil us today.

In 1920, Vilnius became a contested part of the new Polish state. It was at that time an historically important, ethnically diverse and culturally rich city of Poles, Jews, Lithuanians, Belarussians, Russians, Germans, and other groups. The largest of these groups—the Poles and the Jews—looked upon Vilnius (Wilno for Poles, Vilna for the Jews) as a place that helped defined their identity. The Jews considered Vilna the “Jerusalem of the North,” a city rich in religious tradition and learning, as well as the modernizing and secularizing spirit that made it a home for Zionist and Socialist parties and politics. The Poles saw Wilno as a city of poets and baroque churches, a cultural rival to Krakow and Warsaw. By 1948, these groups were gone, the Jews in the Holocaust and the Poles in the postwar Communist rearranging of ethnic groups.

Yet the history of the city from 1920 to 1939 is one of complicated interethnic cooperation, friction, and even violence. The different communities within the city were divided by a diversity of religious and secular orientations, political parties, and a strong urban-rural divide. Each had been influenced by modern nationalist notions of a community, as well as fascist and communist ideologies. Vilnius became a testing ground for a Polish political struggle as nationalist, antisemitic, and authoritarian elements in Polish politics gained greater sway. These political conditions and a poor economy, heavily burdened by policies designed to favor ethnic Poles, the Great Depression and the closure of borders with both Lithuania and the USSR, made Vilnius a source of a steady stream of economic, intellectual, and political emigrants to Warsaw, to Paris, to the United States, to what was then Palestine, and to the Soviet Union.

But as Vilnius and the surrounding region suffered from a range of internal problems, its external environment worsened. Relations between Poland and Lithuania were frozen over who should own Vilnius, while large and increasingly hostile neighbors, the Soviet Union and, after 1933, Nazi Germany,

threatened the independence of both Poland and Lithuania. These militarized and authoritarian states with different but equally radical notions of social transformation eventually did bring war, military occupation, annexation, and the Holocaust to the region.

We are fortunate that we can approach these important issues and this amazing city through the works of major Yiddish and Polish writers (Chaim Grade, Abraham Sutzkever, and Czesław Miłosz), social historians, memoirs and chronicles, films, and photographs. In parallel to our intellectual inquiry, we will come to know the building blocks of conceiving, writing, organizing, and writing a research paper. This introduction to the city of Vilnius in this crucial period will provide you both intellectual and writing foundations for the remainder of your Madison career and beyond.

REL 310: Judaism – 3 credits

Laura Yares Mon, Wed 1:00-2:20 This course explores the construction of Judaism throughout the long course of Jewish history. It takes as a presumption that there is no one “Judaism” that is normal and normative – rather, throughout Jewish history Jews have thought about, created, and re-created what Judaism is all about relative to their time and place. Beginning with the earliest texts of the Hebrew Bible, our course will begin in the Ancient Near East, and take us to Iran, Spain, North Africa, and Europe, before landing in the contemporary United States. The paradigmatic story of the Jewish people, a story that is told each year during the Passover Seder, is the story of the exodus from Egypt. Our course will build towards a final assignment in which you will analyze a Haggadah (the ritual text of the Passover seder) from the MSU library’s special collection. In this course, and through this final assignment, you will learn about the ways that different Jewish people have negotiated their own understandings of Jewish ritual, Jewish history, and Jewish religion, and have told stories about belonging, liberation, freedom, and responsibility.

UGS 201 Sec. 740: Historical and Contemporary Antisemitism – 1 credit

Morgan Shipley Asynchronous 1/12/2026-03/06/2026 This seminar will afford students from across the university the opportunity to learn about the historical roots and contexts of contemporary antisemitism, to define

antisemitism, and to identify key tropes in the history of antisemitism. Antisemitism is at historic levels in the United States, and we know some students have also experienced it on our campus. This course will help students recognize antisemitism and understand its historical roots. Class is primarily online asynchronous with attendance required at one of three in-person events. While this course is ordinarily restricted to first- and second-year students, requests for overrides for juniors and seniors may be granted by emailing lucasaly@msu.edu and robil233@msu.edu.