

Bachelor of Arts in Hebrew

Course Handbook

Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

Academic Year 2022-23 (VERSION 1)

Course Co-ordinator - Prof [Judith Olszowy-Schlanger](#) (MT) and Prof [Alison Salvesen](#)
(HT/TT)

The Examination Regulations relating to this course are available here (LINK TO BE ADDED WHEN 2022-23 EXAMINATION REGULATIONS PUBLISHED).

If there is a conflict between information in this handbook and the Examination Regulations then you should follow the Examination Regulations. If you have any concerns please contact the Senior Academic Administrator, Chris Mitchell (christine.mitchell@orinst.ox.ac.uk).

The information in this handbook is accurate as at Michaelmas Term 2022; however, it may be necessary for changes to be made in certain circumstances, as explained at www.ox.ac.uk/coursechanges. If such changes are made the faculty will publish a new version of this handbook together with a list of the changes and students will be informed.

THIS HANDBOOK

The handbook sets out the basic framework for the BA in Japanese. You should consult the current edition of the Examination Regulations (LINK TO BE ADDED WHEN 2022-23 EXAMINATION REGULATIONS PUBLISHED) for information regarding your course. The information in this handbook should be read in conjunction with:

- the Faculty's general Undergraduate handbook;
- the Examination Regulations;
- the [University Student Handbook](#)
- your college handbook.

If there is a conflict between information in this handbook and the Examination regulations, then you should follow the Examination regulations.

Comments and criticism of the handbook are always welcome; they should be sent to the [Director of Undergraduate Studies](#) or the Senior Academic Administrator, [Chris Mitchell](#).

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Introduction

The undergraduate course in Hebrew at Oxford embraces the study of the Hebrew language in all its major phases (Classical, Rabbinic and Medieval, and Modern). Some of the most important texts are studied in detail with attention not only to language but also to their literary, historical and religious significance. In order to set all this in context, students may choose also to study one or more periods of Israelite or Jewish history and can take papers on such wider literary topics as Biblical narrative or prophecy, Jewish Bible interpretation, medieval Hebrew poetry or prose, and modern Hebrew literature.

In recent years the particular interests of those who have taken the course have included Biblical studies, Jewish literature, modern Israel, the Ancient Near East, the New Testament and early Christianity, Semitic languages, and Rabbinic thought. The flexibility of the course can accommodate a wide range of interests and one of the hallmarks of the course is the individual attention that students receive.

History

Oxford has been an important centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies since the sixteenth century. Outstanding scholars have held a number of different positions in Hebrew and Jewish Studies in the University and students from all over the world come to Oxford for both undergraduate and graduate studies. We boast unrivalled collections of Hebrew manuscripts and printed books in the Bodleian Library. The Leopold Muller Memorial Library of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, housed in the Clarendon Institute Building, also contains invaluable Hebraic and Judaica collections. Additionally, the archaeology and material culture of the land of Israel are strongly represented in the Ashmolean Museum.

Over the centuries the study of Hebrew has evolved to take account of new developments, most obviously the growth of literature in Modern Hebrew and major discoveries such as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Our courses therefore cover all the main phases in the long history of the Hebrew language in its historical, literary and cultural contexts. (It is also possible to study for a separate BA in Jewish Studies.) As the disciplines of Hebrew and Jewish Studies have developed, different approaches and fields of study have evolved, from the study of classical Hebrew and the Hebrew Bible to all other aspects of medieval and modern Jewish culture and society. The University's posts in the Faculty of Oriental Studies reflect that diversity, with expertise ranging from the study of Classical Hebrew, the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple and early Rabbinic periods, through rabbinical literature and medieval to early modern history and literature, to modern Hebrew and other Jewish literatures and modern Jewish history.

Outline

There are 2 courses that students may take as part of this degree. Students taking the 3-year course must decide at the end of Year 1 whether to focus on [Jewish](#) or Hebrew Studies and, if Hebrew Studies, whether to take a subsidiary language. Students taking the 4-year course must also decide whether to take a subsidiary language, and if so, they will participate in the Year Abroad in Year 3.

First year (First Public Examination)

For those taking Hebrew or Jewish Studies, the first three terms of the course comprise intensive class instruction in the Hebrew language in all its main periods (Classical/Biblical; Rabbinic and Medieval; Modern). The aim is to cover basic grammar in the first term and to consolidate this information in the second and third terms, when simple texts in each form of the language are also taught. This demanding objective is essential in order to achieve a level of reading proficiency that will stand you in good stead for the rest of the course. There are three class hours a week in both Classical (Biblical) and Modern Hebrew. Readings in Rabbinic, Medieval and Modern Hebrew texts are introduced in the second and third terms.

Students also prepare for a general paper which provides an introductory framework for the rest of the course. Outline surveys are given in lectures through the year, but the main form of teaching is in tutorials, for which there is recommended reading and an essay to be written.

Four papers are set for Prelims, taken at the end of the third term.

1. Hebrew Texts I: Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew.
2. Hebrew Texts II: Medieval and Modern Hebrew.
3. Grammar and Translation into Hebrew.
4. General Paper.

Candidates who perform exceptionally well in Biblical Hebrew in Prelims are eligible for the Junior Pusey and Ellerton Prize. In the unlikely event of failure, it is possible to resit the paper(s) in question later on. You must pass Prelims in order to proceed to Finals. All examinations are held at the end of Trinity Term.

Second Year: Course I and Course II (Year Abroad)

There are two Hebrew courses: a three-year course (Course I), or a four-year course (Course II) in which the third year is spent on a prescribed course of study at a university in Israel.

Candidates for Course I are required to offer seven papers and a dissertation. Candidates for Course II are required to offer seven papers, a dissertation, and an oral examination. Please refer to course syllabus below. Students on Course II will be expected to carry out during their year abroad such work as the Board of the Faculty of Oriental Studies may require.

For guidance about preparing for the year abroad, consult with the acting year abroad coordinator (for 2020-21: Prof Alison Salvesen).

Final Honour School

Upon completing your Prelims, it is necessary to make a final choice about whether you wish to study Hebrew or Jewish Studies. If you are still unsure about which choice to make, any member of the teaching staff will be happy to provide guidance.

Those who choose to do Hebrew must also decide whether to take it on its own or in combination with a 'subsidiary' language.

Hebrew	Hebrew with a subsidiary language
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. (for Course I): Hebrew composition and unprepared translation OR (for Course II): Essay in modern Hebrew and unprepared translation.2. Prepared texts I: Biblical texts3. Prepared texts II: Rabbinic and Medieval Hebrew texts4. Prepared texts III: Modern Hebrew literature5. History, Culture and Society6. and 7. One of the papers in Jewish Studies paper c (see restrictions below)8. Dissertation9. (for Course II) Oral.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. (for Course I): Hebrew composition and unprepared translation OR (for Course II): Essay in modern Hebrew and unprepared translation.2. Prepared texts I: Biblical texts3. Prepared texts II: Rabbinic and Medieval Hebrew texts4. Prepared texts III: Modern Hebrew literature5, 6, 7. Three papers from one of the following subsidiary languages (see below)8. Dissertation9. (for Course II) Oral.

Students should note that not all subsidiary languages/options and Field of Concentration subjects may be available in a given year.

Available subsidiary languages:

- Akkadian
- Arabic
- Aramaic and Syriac
- Classics (for students taking Classics and Oriental Studies)
- Egyptian
- Persian
- Turkish

Jewish Studies options (Students should note that they may not take more than 1 option from Section V. Not all options may be available in a given year, and some options require adequate knowledge of the relevant language.):

- Section I
 - Biblical History
 - Biblical Archaeology
 - Biblical Narrative
 - Biblical Prophecy
- Section II
 - Second Temple Judaism

- Second Temple History
- History of the Talmudic Period
- Medieval Jewish History
- Jewish Aramaic Literature
- Section III
 - Israel: History, Politics, and Society
 - Modern Hebrew Literature
 - Yiddish Literature
- Section IV
 - History of Jewish-Christian Relations
 - History of Jewish-Muslim Relations
 - History of Jewish Bible Interpretation
 - Orthodox Judaisms
- Section V
 - Biblical Religion
 - Modern Jewish Thought
 - Modern Jewish History
 - Modern Judaism

Year 3

Students taking Course II will spend the year abroad at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Papers for Prelims

Compulsory Papers

Hebrew Texts I: Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew

Hebrew Texts II: Medieval and Modern Hebrew

For both these papers there will be passages for translation from the specified texts (all of which will have been taught in classes). There may also be some questions that ask for comment on or explanation of aspects of the language and related matters arising from the texts.

The list of set texts approved for examination in the following academic year will be published by Friday of 3rd week, Hilary term.

Grammar and Translation into Hebrew

In this paper, in which all questions must be attempted, there will be:

- (i) Five questions on specific grammatical topics in Biblical Hebrew
- (ii) One passage for translation from English into pointed Biblical Hebrew
- (iii) One passage for translation from Modern Hebrew into English

General Paper

This will be an essay paper on Israelite and Jewish history and other related topics. You will be required to answer questions on different historical periods, though there will be a wide choice within each section.

Papers for FHS

Compulsory Papers

Prepared Texts I: Biblical texts

Lecturer: Dr Harald Samuel

The list of set texts approved for examination in the current academic year will be published on Canvas by Friday of 3rd week, Hilary Term.

You should make sure that you have the list relevant to the year in which you will sit your examinations, as changes are sometimes introduced. It is advisable to check this with your teachers.

To gain a good knowledge of Biblical Hebrew two things are required: extensive reading, ideally of the whole Hebrew Bible and analytical study of the texts, which will include textual criticism, comparative philology, historical criticism and literary analysis. While the in-depth analysis will be taught in lectures, students will be expected to read a certain number of chapters on their own or with a tutor. The examination will include: a) Hebrew texts for translation (with brief comments); b) Hebrew texts for translation with detailed comments on textual and philological matters; c) a short essay on a more general topic arising from the texts.

Prepared Texts II: Rabbinic and Medieval Hebrew texts

Lecturers: Dr Benjamin Williams, Prof. Judith Olszowy-Schlanger

The development of Hebrew in the post-biblical period is complex and variegated. We will read and analyse a selection of texts (legal, philosophical, historical, and exegetical) from the rich field of Hebrew literature of the post-Biblical/pre-modern period.

Students normally begin studying these texts in their third term, when they have mastered the fundamentals of biblical Hebrew grammar and have acquired a basic working vocabulary.

All texts are taught in lectures where they are examined with attention not only to grammar and translation but also to their style, content and historical background. One tutorial hour is also arranged for each text so that students have the opportunity to explore the relevant literary and intellectual context. The examination includes passages for translation and comment as well as essays on more general topics arising from the texts.

Prepared Texts III: Modern Hebrew literature

Lecturer: Prof. Adriana Jacobs

The Hebrew literary texts for this paper range from the late 19th century to the present, and include fiction, poetry and essays. These texts are read and analysed as literature rather than used as language exercises, although their language is discussed as well. The majority of the texts are taught in class but you will be expected to prepare others, predominantly poetry, on your own, with tutorial help if necessary, as with your biblical texts. The historical and cultural background of the texts is also discussed, together with relevant critical and theoretical works. Your examination will consist of passages for translation from some of your literary texts, and essays on the texts and on the history and development of modern Hebrew literature.

History, Culture and Society

Lecturers: Prof. Judith Olszowy-Schlanger; Dr Benjamin Williams; Prof. Adriana Jacobs

The aim of this paper is to draw together the whole course in Hebrew studies, giving you the chance to relate one aspect of the subject to another and/or to reflect on wider issues arising from the detailed study of the particular periods which interest you most.

The paper is currently in four sections (ancient, medieval, modern, and a final section which cuts across all periods), with about six questions in each section. You are required to answer four questions, selecting questions from at least two sections.

Commenting on Biblical Texts: A Brief Guide

(FHS Papers 2 and 6; subsidiary Hebrew, papers 2 and 3)

1) 'Translate with full annotation'

Detailed annotation deals with all aspects of a text — background, literary context, literary form, language, textual criticism, and so on. Only texts from group (a) will be set. (NB In subsidiary Hebrew, the texts are not divided into groups; any text can be examined under any of the three rubrics described here.)

2) 'Translate with comments where necessary'

Necessary comments are directly concerned with the translation of a text; they do not include general background information or discussion of the literary context and form of a text. They should discuss briefly specific problems of text or language where there is sufficient doubt for your translation to require some form of justification — for instance, where there is doubt about the meaning of a word or phrase, or where there are major textual variants, especially if you adopt them yourself. (Even if you do not, you should remember that sometimes other scholars do because they find some problem in the biblical text, and so this itself may require explanation.) Free translations of phrases that cannot be translated literally into normal English may be annotated with a literal translation. Texts may be set from any of those prescribed, (a) or (b).

3) 'Comments on textual and linguistic problems'

Textual and linguistic comments deal with short passages that contain significant textual and/or linguistic problems. They do not include general background information or other general discussions unless these are directly relevant to textual and linguistic problems. Students may translate the passage if this is helpful in discussing the problems, but translation is not required. Passages from group (a) only will be set.

In all types of exercise, where variant readings or emendations are adopted, a translation of the MT should be given in a footnote, with an explanation of why the variant reading is preferred. Remember that you will often tell an examiner more about your knowledge of Hebrew by setting out what is the problem with the text than by remembering a proposed emendation. Standard abbreviations (e.g. MT, LXX) are perfectly acceptable.

Dissertation

The subject of your dissertation must be submitted for approval very early at the start of your third year, so that in practice it is sensible to discuss it with your teachers from the middle of the second year. Some tutorial guidance is available, but you should research and write up a topic that you find to be of particular interest; you are required to sign a statement indicating that it is your own work. The detailed regulations about how and where to do this are included in the Examination Regulations. Remember to write your candidate number and not your name on the dissertation. Also refer to the dissertation section in the General Handbook.

An Optional Special Subject

You may offer an optional 3-hour paper on a special subject. The subject must be approved at the start of your final year. Provided your choice of subject falls within the broad range of Hebrew and Jewish studies, no reasonable proposal is likely to be refused. If you are considering this, please discuss it with your teachers during the previous year. They will also make suggestions as to how you can use the summer vacation to do some of the necessary reading and research. Tutorial teaching will be made available to help you prepare.

Optional Subjects from Jewish Studies

See the [course outline](#) for the choices of options and the number to be taken. You can take two papers from the list of options here: [Jewish Studies \(handbook\)](#). The list is Section C of the Final Honour School (Second and Third Year) of the BA in Jewish Studies. Not more than one paper from Section V may be taken.

Subsidiary Language Papers

Please refer to the conventions for FHS examinations for the papers to be taken, available on Canvas towards the end of Michaelmas Term.

Hebrew as a Subsidiary Language

Students taking BA Arabic, BA Egyptology and Ancient Near Eastern Studies, and BA Classics with Oriental Studies may take Hebrew as a subsidiary language. Students will choose 1 of Biblical, Rabbinic and Medieval, or Modern Hebrew to study, of which there are limitations of choice for each course:

- BA Arabic – Biblical and Rabbinic, Medieval Hebrew, or Modern Hebrew
- BA Egyptology and Ancient Near Eastern Studies – Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew
- BA Classics with Oriental Studies – Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew or Medieval Hebrew

Please refer to the conventions for FHS examinations for the papers to be taken, available on Canvas towards the end of Michaelmas Term.

Recommended Patterns of Teaching (RPT)

Below is an indication of the type and number of teaching hours on this course.

BA Hebrew

Summary

Each student receives (maximum) to FHS:

Language Instruction: 456 hours

University lectures/classes: 163 hours

Tutorials/classes: 84 hours

Dissertation supervision: 6 hours

Over 3 years, this is an average of 236 hours teaching (maximum) per year, or c.9.8 hours per week

BA in Hebrew/Jewish Studies (Year I is combined)

YEAR 1: FPE

4 Papers

- (i) Hebrew Texts I: Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew
- (ii) Hebrew Texts II: Medieval and Modern Hebrew
- (iii) Grammar and Translation into Hebrew
- (iv) General Paper

Teaching arrangements for the year per student

Language instruction: 182 hours

Lectures/Classes: 67 hours

Tutorials: 12 hours

BA Hebrew YEARS 3 & 4: FHS

Course I: 7 Papers plus dissertation

Course II: 7 Papers plus dissertation plus oral exam

1. (for Course I): Hebrew composition and unprepared translation. (for Course II): Essay in modern Hebrew and unprepared translation.

2. Prepared texts I: Biblical texts
3. Prepared Texts II: Rabbinic and Medieval Hebrew texts
4. Prepared Texts III: Modern Hebrew literature
5. History, Culture and Society
6. One of the papers in Jewish Studies paper c. Not more than one option from Section V.
7. One of the papers in Jewish Studies paper c. Not more than one option from Section V.
8. Dissertation
9. (for Course II) Oral.

Teaching arrangements for the year per student (hrs)

Paper	Language Classes		University Lecture/Class		Tutorial (Tutorial Class)		Supervision
	Year 3	Year 4	Year 3	Year 4	Year 3	Year 4	
1	72	72			-	-	
2	66	44			8	8	
3			24	16	12	8	
4			24	16	12	8	
5						4	
6					8		
7						8	
8							Yr 3: 2; yr 4: 4

Comments

Papers 1–4: intensive language tuition continues in Years 3 & 4 -- for 24 weeks in Year 3 and 24 weeks in year 4 for Modern Hebrew and 22 weeks for Biblical Hebrew.

In Year 3, a student will receive 138 hours of intensive language teaching, up to 48 hours of University lectures or classes, and a maximum of 40 hours of tutorials.

In Year 4, a student will receive 136 hours of intensive language teaching, up to 48 hours of University lectures or classes, and a maximum of 32 hours of tutorials.

Teaching Staff

- Dr [Miri Freud-Kandel](#), Lecturer in Modern Judaism (Wolfson College)
- Professor [Adriana X. Jacobs](#), Associate Professor of Modern Hebrew Literature (St. Cross College) Dr Dorota Molin, Instructor in Classical Hebrew
- Professor [Judith Olszowy-Schlanger](#), Director of the Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, President of OCHJS (Corpus Christi College)
- Professor [Alison Salvesen](#), Professor of Early Judaism and Christianity (Mansfield College), Polonsky Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies (on leave MT22)
- Dr Harald Samuel, Departmental Lecturer in Classical Hebrew
- Professor [David Taylor](#), Professor of Aramaic and Syriac (Wolfson College)
- Dr [Zoe Waxman](#), Departmental Lecturer in Modern Jewish History
- Dr [Benjamin Williams](#), Departmental Lecturer in Jewish Studies; Fellow of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies
- Mr [Gil Zahavi](#), Instructor in Modern Hebrew

Examinations and Assessment

Please refer to the [Examination Regulations for Prelims and FHS in Oriental Studies](#).

In Trinity Term of Year 1, students will sit 4 written examinations. Students must pass all papers to proceed into Year 2 of the course.

Please refer to the conventions for FPE examinations for the papers to be taken, available on Canvas towards the end of Michaelmas Term.

Students on Course I will take a total of 7 written and/or take-home examinations and will submit their [dissertations](#) in Trinity Term of Year 3. Students on Course II will take a total of 7 written examinations, an oral examination, and will submit their [dissertations](#) in Trinity Term of Year 4.

Please refer to the conventions for FHS examinations for the papers to be taken, available on Canvas towards the end of Michaelmas Term.

Deadlines

Date	Year of Course	Event	How
Monday 9th Week Trinity Term	1	Provisional start date of the First Public Examinations.	
Monday week 6 of Trinity Term	Year 2 of Hebrew Course 1 or Year 3 of Hebrew Course 2	Special subject offered	Form to be sent to Oriental Studies Academic Administration undergraduate.administrator@orinst.ox.ac.uk
Friday 4 th Week Michaelmas Term	3 or 4	Deadline for exam entry.	Via student self service
Monday 0th Week Hilary Term	3 or 4	Deadline for applications for approval of dissertation titles, special subjects for paper 8 (as in Examination Regulations).	Form to be sent to Oriental Studies Academic Administration undergraduate.administrator@orinst.ox.ac.uk
12 noon, Friday 10th Week Hilary Term	3 or 4	Deadline for submission of dissertation.	Via Inspira
0th Week Trinity Term	3 or 4	Oral examinations for Hebrew language (Course II only).	
Monday 7th Week Trinity Term	3 or 4	Provisional start date of the Final Honour School examinations.	

Canvas

Click [here](#) for the BA Hebrew Canvas page.

Examination Regulations

The Examination Regulations relating to this course are available at <https://examregs.admin.ox.ac.uk/> . If there is a conflict between information in this handbook and the Examination Regulations then you should follow the Examination Regulations.

Set Texts and Recommended Readings

Recommended reading for [Prepared Texts II: Rabbinic and Medieval Hebrew Texts](#):

- M. Fishbane, *Judaism: Revelations and Traditions*, New York 1987.
- H. Maccoby, *Early Rabbinic Writings*, Cambridge 1998.
- Norman Solomon, *The Talmud. A Selection*, New York 2009.
- J.R. Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World: a Source-Book, 315-1791* with introduction and updated bibliographies by Marc Saperstein, Cincinnati 1999.
- P. Cole, *The Dream of the Poem: Hebrew Poetry from Muslim and Christian Spain, 950-1492*, Princeton 2007.
- G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York (1941) 1974.
- Y.H. Yerushalmi, *Zachor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, Washington (1982) 1996.
- Martin Goodman, *A History of Judaism* (2018)

Recommended reading for [Prepared Texts III: Modern Hebrew Literature](#):

- Glenda Abramson and Tudor Parfitt, eds., *The Great Transition: The Recovery of the Lost Centers of Modern Hebrew Literature* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld 1985)
- Benjamin Harshav, *Language in Time of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993)
- Simon Halkin, *Modern Hebrew Literature, From the Enlightenment to the Birth of the State of Israel: Trends and Values* (New York: Schocken Books, 1950/1970)
- Gudrun Krämer, *A History of Palestine* (Princeton University Press, 2005)
- Ariel Hirschfeld, 'Locus and Language: Hebrew Culture in Israel, 1890-1990,' in David Biale, ed. *Cultures of the Jews: A New History* (NY: Schocken, 2002): 1011-1061.