



Bachelor of Arts in Hebrew

Course Handbook

Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

Academic Year 2026-27

Course Co-ordinator –

Prof Adriana Jacobs

This handbook applies to students who, in Michaelmas 2026, are starting their course (for information relating to the FPE), or are entering the Final Honour School (for information relating to the FHS). The information in this handbook may be different for students starting in other years.

The Examination Regulations relating to this course are available here ([Exam Regulations](#)).

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, [Edmund Howard](#).

The information in this handbook is accurate as at Michaelmas Term 2026; 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.

General faculty-wide information can be found in the [General Undergraduate Handbook](#).

This Handbook

The handbook sets out the basic framework for the BA in Hebrew. You should consult the current edition of the Examination Regulations 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, [Edmund Howard](#).

Version history

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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. 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 Asian and Middle Eastern 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.

Equality and Diversity

A key part of our course involves texts from the Hebrew Bible. Notoriously, Judaeo-Christian scriptures have been used to preserve gender, social, and racial hierarchies over many

centuries. However, studying texts in the original languages of Hebrew and Aramaic helps us get behind the inevitably distorting veils of translations into modern European languages. A close reading of those texts in the original languages better reveals how they were produced over many centuries by a very small nation surrounded, and even conquered, by more powerful kingdoms and empires. More subversive messages emerge from the Hebrew Bible than is apparent from mainstream religious readings of the texts, which contain many key protagonists who are female, non-Israelite, or enslaved. Hebrew prophetic literature is particularly keenly focused on issues of social justice and the correct use of power.

Later, until 1948 and the founding of the State of Israel, the Jewish people lived in scattered communities as an often persecuted ethnic and religious minority. Texts written over the course of these two millennia show how the religious authorities for those communities set about providing cohesion through religious law and the maintenance of tradition, while medieval poetry from Spain reflects the longing for a lost homeland. Medieval legal documents and letters from Cairo provide an astonishing window into the lives of women and enslaved persons.

In their study of Modern Hebrew literature, which spans from the late nineteenth century to the present day, students encounter texts that are increasingly attentive to gender, sexuality, class, race and their intersection. The current curriculum focuses on poetry and short fiction and includes works by non-native writers of Hebrew, Palestinian Hebrew authors, as well as Mizrahi and diasporic Hebrew writing.

Our syllabus and course options for both Hebrew and Jewish Studies cover many of these texts and themes, and we encourage students to explore them further, particularly in their undergraduate dissertations.

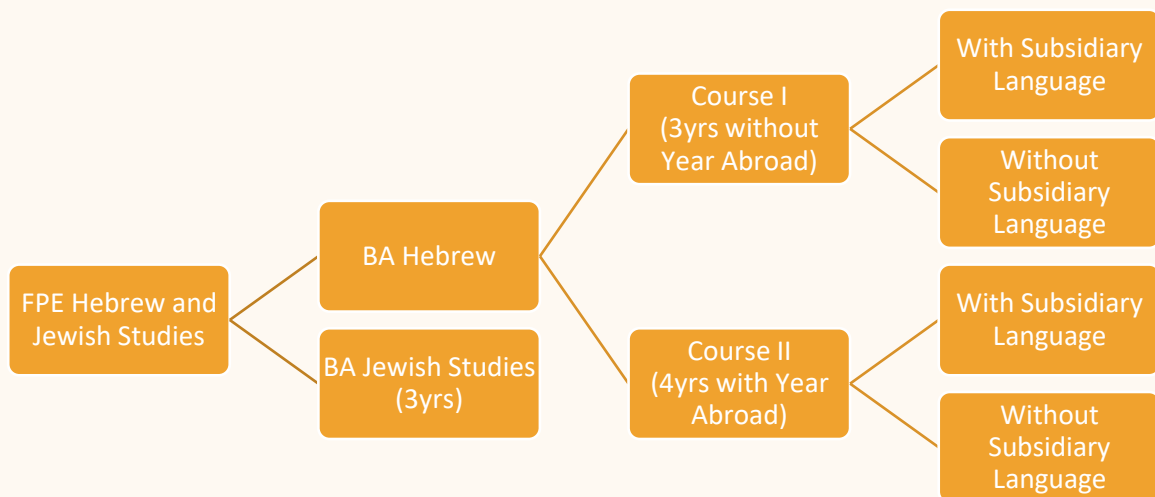
Course Outline

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 Studies (see separate course handbook) or Hebrew.

If they choose Hebrew, they must then choose whether to take the 3-year course (Hebrew Course I), or the 4-year course that includes the compulsory year abroad for Hebrew language study (Hebrew Course II).

On both Hebrew Course I and Course II, students may take a subsidiary language for three of their papers for Final Honour School (FHS).

The decisions which students taking the FPE in Hebrew and Jewish Studies can take (subject to availability) may be represented in the following flowchart:



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 for this paper 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.

You must pass Prelims in order to proceed to Finals. In the unlikely event of failure, it is possible to resit the paper(s) in question later on.

Candidates who perform exceptionally well in Biblical Hebrew in Prelims are eligible for the Junior Pusey and Ellerton Prize.

All examinations are held at the end of Trinity Term.

Year 2: Course I and Course II

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.

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

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 the course syllabus for the Final Honour School below.

Students on Course II will be expected to carry out during their year abroad such work as the Board of the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies may require. For guidance about preparing for the year abroad, consult with the acting year abroad coordinator (for 2026–27: Prof. Meron Piotrkowski).

Year 3: Course II Only

Students taking Course II will spend their third year abroad at the Rothberg International School of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. When this is not possible, the Faculty will endeavour to make suitable alternative arrangements.

Final Honour School

Studying Hebrew for FHS, whether Course I or Course II, must decide whether to take it on its own or in combination with a 'subsidiary' language.

Hebrew	Hebrew with a subsidiary language
1. (for Course I): Hebrew composition and	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 texts 3. Prepared texts II: Rabbinic and Medieval Hebrew texts 4. Prepared texts III: Modern Hebrew literature 5. History, Culture and Society 6. and 7. One of the papers in Jewish Studies paper c (see restrictions below) 8. Dissertation 9. (for Course II) Oral.	unprepared translation OR (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, 6, 7. Three papers from one of the following subsidiary languages (see below) 8. Dissertation 9. (for Course II) Oral.
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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
- Egyptian
- Persian
- Turkish

If you would like to learn either Latin or Ancient Greek it may be possible to transfer to the Joint Honours course Classics with Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, which would enable you to take one of these classical languages as a subsidiary language.

For further information on these subsidiary languages, please see the AMES UG Subsidiary Languages Handbook.

Papers for Prelims

All papers for Prelims are compulsory.

Hebrew Texts I: Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew and 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 Dorota Molin and others

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: Prof. Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, Prof. Meron Piotrkowski

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. Most texts are taught in class, but you will be expected to prepare others 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 include Prof. Judith Olszowy-Schlanger; Prof. Adriana X. Jacobs; Dr Peter Bergamin; Dr Zoe Waxman; Prof. David Rechter; Prof. Meron Piotrkowski; Dr Vladimir Olivero

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.

Available Jewish Studies options in 2026–27

You can take two papers from the list of options in the Jewish Studies handbook, also reproduced below. Not more than one paper from Section V may be taken.

Please note that not all options may be available in a given year, and some options require adequate knowledge of the relevant language:

- Section I
 - Biblical Narrative
- Section II
 - Second Temple Judaism

- Second Temple History
- Jewish Aramaic Literature
- Section III
 - Israel: History, Politics, and Society
 - Modern Hebrew Literature
 - Thinking about the Holocaust
- Section IV
 - History of Jewish-Christian Relations
 - History of Jewish Bible Interpretation
- Section V
 - Biblical Religion
 - Modern Jewish Thought
 - Modern Jewish History
 - Modern Judaism
 - Jewish Mysticism

Subsidiary Language Papers

Please refer to the conventions for FHS examinations for the papers to be taken, available on the [Student Hub](#) towards the end of Michaelmas Term. Further information on how subsidiary languages are taught will be also be available in the relevant handbook.

Hebrew as a subsidiary language

Students taking BA Arabic, BA Assyriology, BA Egyptology, and BA Classics with Asian and Middle Eastern 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 Assyriology and BA Egyptology – Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew
- BA Classics with Asian and Middle Eastern Studies – Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew, or Medieval Hebrew

Please refer to the conventions for FHS examinations for the papers to be taken, available on the [Student Hub](#) towards the end of Michaelmas Term.

For more information, please see the AMES UG Subsidiary Languages Handbook.

Recommended Patterns of Teaching (RPT)

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

Summary

For the BA Hebrew, 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.

FPE – Year 1

In the first year, teaching for the BA Hebrew and the BA Jewish Studies is combined. Students offer the same four papers. Over the year, they receive:

- Language instruction: 182 hours
- Lectures/Classes: 67 hours
- Tutorials: 12 hours

Paper	Term	Faculty		College		Comments
		Lectures	Classes	Tutorials	Classes	
[1.] Hebrew Texts I: Biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew	MT					<i>Figures in this table are in hours unless otherwise stated.</i>
	HT		32	2		
	TT		24	2		
	Year Total		56			
[2.] Hebrew Texts II: Medieval and Modern Hebrew	MT		72			
	HT		48			
	TT		36			
	Year Total		156			
[2.] Grammar and translation into Hebrew	MT					
	HT					
	TT					
	Year Total					

[3.] General Paper	MT	8		4	
	HT	8		4	
	TT	4		4	
	Year total	20		12	

FHS (Final Honour School)

The papers taken depend on whether students are on Course I (no year abroad) or Course II (with year abroad).

Paper	Term	Year 1 of FHS			Year 2 of FHS			Comments
		Faculty		College	Faculty		College	
		Lectures/Classes	Lang. Classes	Tutorials	Lectures/Classes	Lang. Classes	Tutorials	
								Figures in this table are in hours unless otherwise stated.
[1.] Hebrew composition and unprepared translation (Course I)* OR [1.] Essay in modern Hebrew and unprepared translation (Course II)*	MT		8-24			8–24		Language papers are taught in classes, and the number of hours depends on the period of Hebrew: for Modern Hebrew, there are at least 3 hours per week, for Classical/Rabbinic or Medieval Hebrew, 1–2 per week.
	HT		8-24			8–24		
	TT		8-24			6–18		
	Year Total		72			22–66		
[2.] Prepared texts I: Biblical texts	MT	16		1	16		1	All papers involving set texts are taught in classes of around 12-16 hours per term, plus 2 tutorial hours per term for related essays for each paper
	HT	16		1	16		1	
	TT	16		1	12			
	Year Total	54		3	44		2	
[3.] Prepared texts II: Rabbinic and Medieval Hebrew texts	MT	12		2	12		1	
	HT	12		2	12		1	
	TT	12		2	8			
	Year Total	36		6	32		2	
[4.] Prepared texts III: Modern Hebrew Literature	MT	12		2	12		1	
	HT	12		2	12		1	
	TT	12		2	6			

Paper	Term	Year 1 of FHS			Year 2 of FHS			Comments
		Faculty		College	Faculty		College	
		Lectures/Classes	Lang. Classes	Tutorials	Lectures/Classes	Lang. Classes	Tutorials	
								<i>Figures in this table are in hours unless otherwise stated.</i>
[5.] History, Culture and Society	Year Total	36		6	30		2	Tutorial-based options are normally covered in 8-12 contact hours over two terms
	MT						2	
	HT						2	
	TT						2	
	Year Total						6	
[6.] Paper chosen from Jewish Studies options I	MT	8		8				Tutorial-based options are normally covered in 8-12 contact hours over a term; or 8 lectures and 8 tutorials, depending on the option selected
	HT							
	TT							
	Year Total	8		8				
[7.] Paper chosen from Jewish Studies options II	MT				8		8	
	HT							
	TT							
	Year Total				8		8	
[8.] Dissertation	MT						2	
	HT						2	
	TT			2				
	Year Total			2			4	
[8.] Oral Examination (Course II only)	MT	24				16		
	HT	24				16		
	TT	24						
	Year Total	72				32		

Notes:

The number of contact hours for optional papers is approximate. The exact number of hours may vary according to the size of the class, and the background knowledge and needs of students taking them. The hours will be set by the tutors teaching a given option.

Tutorial-based options may require substantially more hours of independent study in order to prepare essays.

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](#), Lecturer in Classical Hebrew Language (Wadham College)
- Professor [Judith Olszowy-Schlanger](#), Director of the Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, President of OCHJS (Corpus Christi College)
- Professor [Meron Piotrkowski](#), Associate Professor of Jewish History (Antiquity) (Wolfson College)
- Professor [Alison Salvesen](#), Professor of Early Judaism and Christianity (Mansfield College), Polonsky Fellow of OCHJS (on leave 2026–27)
- Professor [David Taylor](#), Professor of Aramaic and Syriac (Wolfson College)
- Dr [Zoe Waxman](#), Departmental Lecturer in Modern Jewish History
- Professor David Rechter, Professor of Modern Jewish History (Brasenose College)
- Dr [Vladimir Olivero](#), Departmental Lecturer in Bible Interpretation and Classical Hebrew
- Mr [Gil Zahavi](#), Lecturer in Modern Hebrew Language

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.

Examinations and Assessment

Please refer to the [Examination Regulations for Prelims and FHS in Asian and Middle Eastern 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.

Students on **Course I** will take a total of 7 written and/or take-home examinations and will submit their dissertations in Hilary 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 Hilary Term of Year 4.

For details on the assessment of individual AMES papers, please refer to the [exam rubrics and conventions](#) available on the Student Hub.

Deadlines

Date	Year of Course	Event	How
Monday 9 th Week Trinity Term	1	Provisional start date of the First Public Examinations.	
Monday 6 th Week Trinity Term	Penultimate Year (2 or 3)	Special Subject Offered	Options Approval Form available through the Intranet Approval Forms page For any questions, contact academic.administrator@ames.ox.ac.uk
Thursday 4 th Week Michaelmas Term	Final Year (3 or 4)	Deadline for exam entry.	Via Student Self Service
12 noon Monday 0 th Week Hilary Term	Final Year (3 or 4)	Deadline for applications for approval for AMES dissertation titles.	Online Thesis Title Approval Form available through the Intranet Approval Forms page
12 noon Friday 10 th Week Hilary Term	Final Year (3 or 4)	Deadline for submission of AMES dissertation.	Via Inspira
0 th Week Trinity Term	Final Year 4	Oral examinations for Hebrew language (Course II only).	
Monday 7 th Week Trinity Term	Final Year (3 or 4)	Provisional start date of the Final Honour School examinations.	

Reading List for Hebrew and Jewish Studies

These are intended as general background for the course. More specific reading lists will be given to students as they choose options, but see below for reading for two prepared text courses.

General Background Reading

- John Barton, *A History of the Bible* (2019)
A critical survey of the origins of the books of Hebrew Scripture and of the New Testament, and their reception in both Judaism and Christianity.
- Jan Christian Gertz, Angelika Berlejung, Konrad Schmid, and Markus Witte, eds., “Part 1: Sources and Methods,” in *T&T Clark Handbook of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Literature, Religion and History of the Old Testament* (2012)
- Jacqueline Vayntrub, “Hebrew,” in *How Literatures Begin: A Global History*, eds. Joel B. Lande and Denis Feeney. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021, pp. 149-166.
- Martin Goodman, *A History of Judaism* (2018, Yale UP)
A comprehensive survey of Jewish religious history from biblical times to the present.
- For a general introduction to the Hebrew Bible, we also recommend Christine Hayes’s online lecture series *Introduction to the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible)*, especially episode 1, “The Parts of the Whole”: <https://youtu.be/mo-YL-lv3RY>
- “The Dead Sea Scrolls,” *In Our Time*, BBC:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001ljc0>
Featuring the commentary of George Brooke, Charlotte Hempel, and Sarah Pearce.

*

- Liora H. Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920-1948* (2014, Yale UP)
A cultural history of Hebrew vernacularisation in the twentieth century. Highlights the persistent, dynamic multilingualism of the Jewish population in Mandatory Palestine and the State of Israel.
- Ammiel Alcalay, *Keys to the Garden: New Israeli Writing* (1996, City Lights)
Groundbreaking multi-genre anthology of twentieth-century Israeli literature, including English translations of works originally written in Arabic.
- Orly Castel-Bloom, *Dolly City*, translated by Dalya Bilu (1997, reprinted 2010)
First published in 1992, Castel-Bloom’s gruesome and satiric critique of Israeli society became an instant and enduring classic.

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- Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, “Rabbinic Literature” in *A Companion to Late Ancient Jews and Judaism*, ed. N. Koltun-Fromm and G. Kessler (Wiley Blackwell: Hoboken, 2020), pp. 87–103.
- “The Talmud,” *In Our Time*, BBC: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b044j7pd>

This episode features the commentary of Philip Alexander, Norman Solomon and Laliv Clenman.

- Peter Cole, translator, *The Dream of the Poem: Hebrew Poetry from Muslim and Christian Spain, 950-1492* (2007, Princeton UP)

Acclaimed anthology of medieval Hebrew poetry. The Hebrew originals are available online: <https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691121956/the-dream-of-the-poem>.

Prepared Texts II: Rabbinic and Medieval Hebrew Texts

Recommended reading:

- M. Fishbane, *Judaism: Revelations and Traditions*, New York 1987.
- Martin Goodman, *A History of Judaism* (2018)
- 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.

Prepared Texts III: Modern Hebrew Literature

Recommended reading:

- 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.

Student Information and Support

Student Hub

The [Student Hub](#) is an ongoing project to provide a live online version of the handbook, together with more detailed course information and further resources such as forms and exam conventions, as well as archived documents from previous years. You can also access the Student Hub through the top bar of the Faculty Website, through the '**NEW Faculty Intranet**' button. You will need to log in using your SSO.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In accordance with our [Statement of Values](#), the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies is committed to creating a teaching, learning, and research environment in which every member of our community – at every academic level from undergraduate to senior academic, and among library and administrative staff – can achieve their full professional potential without discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender, marriage or civil partnership, nationality, pregnancy or parenthood, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

We welcome suggestions for making our courses more diverse and inclusive. In general, you are encouraged to tell us if you see any ways in which the courses or this handbook might be improved. Staff and students are welcome to contact the Equality and Diversity team with any suggestions or concerns:

Hebrew, Jewish and Eastern Christian Studies Group Equality and Diversity

Representative: [Zoe Waxman](#)

Faculty Equality and Diversity Officer: TBC

Welfare and Support

Our community aims to encourage and support all students. The student experience at Oxford offers lots of opportunities for you to thrive, grow, and look after your own wellbeing, but we know that sometimes there can be stresses and challenges too.

We want to give you the agency to navigate welfare support, and to make your own decisions. This includes by:

- Keeping in touch with your College and Department, and letting them know if you need help
- Seeking support when needed
- Supporting your fellow students
- Registering with Disability Advisory Service for structured support if you have a disability

Should you have any concerns, or for guidance and support, please do not hesitate to contact the following people:

Disability Coordinators: [Thomas Hall](#) and [Edmund Howard](#)

Welfare Contact: [Edmund Howard](#)

Harassment Officers: [Leyla Najafzada](#)

Details of the range of sources of support available in the University are available from the [Oxford Students](#) website, including in relation to mental and physical health and disability.

More information about the support and resources available can be found in the general Undergraduate Handbook and on the Faculty and University websites.