Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies

I am delighted to have the opportunity to establish this program, which will shape intellectual concepts in the field, promote interdisciplinary research and scholarship, and perhaps most important, bring Jewish civilization to life for Princeton students—

Ronald O. Perelman

In 1995 financier and philanthropist Ronald O. Perelman, an innovative leader and generous supporter of many of the nation’s most prominent cultural and educational institutions, gave Princeton University a gift of $4.7 million to create a multidisciplinary institute focusing on Jewish studies. The Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Jewish Studies allows undergraduate students to earn a certificate in Jewish Studies, strengthening Princeton’s long tradition of interdisciplinary studies and broad commitment to Jewish culture. The gift from Mr. Perelman, chairman and chief executive officer of MacAndrews and Forbes Inc., also supports a senior faculty position—the Ronald O. Perelman Professor of Jewish Studies—and a wide variety of academic and scholarly activities that bring together leading scholars to examine Jewish history, religion, literature, thought, society, politics and cultures.

Faculty

Executive Committee
Leora Batnitzky, Religion
Gabriel Citron, Religion
Yaacob Dweck, History
Jonathan Gribetz, Near Eastern Studies
Martha Himmelfarb, Religion
William C. Jordan, History

Eve Krakowski, Near Eastern Studies
Lital Levy, Comparative Literature
Marina Rustow, Near Eastern Studies
Esther Schor, English
Moulie Vidas, Religion
David Bellos, French and Italian

Associated Faculty
Jill S. Dolan, English, Dean of the College
Anthony Grafton, History
Wendy Heller, Music
Daniel Heller-Roazen, Comparative Literature
Stanley N. Katz, Woodrow Wilson School
Daniel Kurtzer, Woodrow Wilson School
AnneMarie Luijendijk, Religion

Deborah Nord, English
Anson G. Rabinbach, History
Stacy E. Wolf, Lewis Center for the Arts

Research Associates
Ra’anana Boustan, Judaic Studies
Madadh Richey, Religion

Emeritus Faculty
Mark R. Cohen, Khedouri A. Zilkha Professor of Jewish Civilization in the Near East, Near Eastern Studies
Peter Schäfer, Ronald O. Perelman Professor of Jewish Studies, Religion

Froma Zeitlin, Ewing Professor of Greek Language and Literature, Classics and Comparative Literature, Women and Gender, and Judaic Studies
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# Director’s Message

2020 has been a year of transition in the Program in Judaic Studies. Although I’ve served twice as acting director of JDS, this is my first report as director of the Program. It is a pleasure and privilege to be working with the Program faculty and students and with our wonderful manager, Baru Saul. We are all enormously grateful to Martha Himmelfarb for her dedicated and excellent leadership of the program over the last seven years.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the establishment of Princeton’s Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies. In 1995 Mr. Perelman made a major gift to Princeton University to create the institute, a multidisciplinary program aiming to bring together leading scholars to examine Jewish history, religion, literature, thought, society, politics and cultures. We are proud that this has become one of the most important interdisciplinary programs at Princeton and one of the most prestigious of such academic entities in the country. Included in this report is a collection of reflections from former directors, including Mark Cohen, Froma Zeitlin, Peter Schaefer and Martha Himmelfarb, as well as faculty, research, graduate students and alumni, which the Program sent to the Perelman family to mark this special anniversary.

Needless to say, 2020 has also been both a strange and difficult year. Despite all of our challenges, the students and faculty in the Program in Judaic Studies continue to thrive. Many of our lectures since last March have been postponed, but the program will be hosting several speakers this spring on Zoom, including a works-in-progress faculty lecture series. This fall the program sponsored a virtual graduate student reading group as well a virtual undergraduate group, both of which will continue into the spring. Graduate students from a variety of departments, including Religion, Comparative Literature, and History, have been sharing and commenting on each other’s dissertation chapters, while the undergraduate group, including students from the sophomore, junior and senior classes, have been sharing their respective research plans in Judaic Studies with one another.

We are delighted to welcome Madadh Richey to Princeton’s Program in Judaic Studies and Department of Religion, where she has been appointed as a Postdoctoral Research Associate in Hebrew Bible. Dr. Richey studies discourses of mythology, magic, and monstrosity in ancient Middle Eastern religions. Her current book project, “Visions of Gods and Monsters,” explores religious and social functions of divine-combat images in visual art of the Levant and Mesopotamia during the Iron Age. She is also at work on queer- and horror-theoretical aspects of ancient Middle Eastern demons and the semantics of decapitation in the biblical Deuteronomistic History and beyond. Her work also includes publications of new inscriptions from Zincirli (ancient Sam’al) and of forgotten sources for Aramaic-language magical praxis.

Leora Batnitzky

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PROGRAM IN JUDAIC STUDIES  SPRING 2021
COURSES

**Fall 2020**

Jews and Muslims: History and Culture, Lital Levy  
Israel and Palestinian Conflict: Culture and Ethics, Lital Levy  
Marriage and Monotheism: Men, Women and God in Near Eastern Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Eve Krakowski  
Advanced Biblical Hebrew: Violence and the State in the Hebrew Bible, Madadh Richey

**Spring 2021**

New Israeli Cinema: Contemporary Visions, Lital Levy  
Holocaust Testimony, Thomas Trevisse  
Great Books of the Jewish Tradition, Martha Himmelfarb  
Jerusalem Contested: A City’s History from Jewish, Christian and Muslim Perspectives, Jonathan Gribetz  
Zionism: Jewish Nationalism Before and Since Statehood, Jonathan Gribetz  
Problems in Near Eastern Jewish History: Karaism, Eve Krakowski  
Who Wrote the Bible, Madadh Richey  
Apocalypse: The End of the World and the Secrets of Heaven in Ancient Judaism and Christianity, Martha Himmelfarb

**Events**

December 6  
Conversation with filmmaker Nurith Aviv, Professor Esther Schor and Dani Issler  
Zoom conversation about Aviv’s latest film “Yiddish,” in which seven young people share their love for Yiddish avant-garde poetry written during the interwar period.

February 14  
Undergrad Judaic Studies Conference  
Founded at Princeton, the sixth annual conference returns—via Zoom—to its home, with the generous support of the Program in Judaic Studies. The conference gathers together accomplished undergraduate students to present and discuss papers on topics in Judaic Studies. It aims to foster intercollegiate conversations among undergraduates pursuing research in Judaic Studies, as well as to provide them with the opportunity to present their research and receive feedback from peers. The capstone event is a keynote lecture by an established Judaic Studies scholar, whose name is announced in January. Further details are at https://undergradjudaicsconference.com.

**2020 Drucker Prizes**

First: TALIA ANISFELD (Anthropology) for "Disidentification among Jewish Ethiopian Israelis”  
Co-second: RAFI LEHMANN (History) for “Urban Engravings Space, Place, and Catastrophe in Twentieth-Century Jewish Vilna”  
Co-second: TALI PELTS (Religion) for “Ornament of All Sepphoris? Images and Meaning-Making at the House of Dionysus”

**Congratulations**

to our 2020 Certificate Students:  
Tali Pelt (Religion)  
Rafael Tafur (History)
25th ANNIVERSARY

Collection of Reflections

Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies
DIRECTORS

MARK R. COHEN
Khedouri A. Zilkha Professor of Jewish Civilization in the Near East, Emeritus
Professor of Near Eastern Studies, Emeritus

The establishment of the Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies 25 years ago crowned an effort of many years to expand a handful of Jewish studies courses at Princeton into a full-fledged, independent, certificate-granting Program. When I arrived at the University in 1973, the small number of instructors in the Jewish studies field were located in the Departments of Religion and Near Eastern Studies. Then, in 1982, in response to growing student and faculty interest, the University Faculty created a Committee for Jewish Studies under the aegis of the Humanities Council, with an annual budget of $1,000 per year.

Among its activities, the Committee encouraged the teaching of Jewish studies courses in various departments, sponsored Jewish studies lectures in cooperation with different departments and programs, awarded a prize for the best senior thesis on a Jewish studies theme, and sponsored an annual lecture in memory of Carolyn L. Drucker, whose untimely death occurred when she was studying in the Department of Near Eastern Studies.

By the mid-1990s the Committee had all the trappings of a Program, but without budget to support its own courses and faculty and award a certificate. Then, in the “Bar-Mitzvah” year of the Committee, the generous gift by Ronald O. Perelman enabled the Committee to reach its long sought goal. After a year as Acting Director, I stepped down and passed leadership of the Institute to Professor of Comparative Literature, Froma Zeitlin, under whose auspices the Program took off. Today, thanks to Mr. Perelman’s vision and generosity, the Institute is one of the most important interdisciplinary Programs in the University and one of the most prestigious of such academic entities in the country.
I was privileged to be the first director of the Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies, a position I held from 1996-2005. Its aim was to create a certificate program at Princeton that included the fields of Jewish history, religion, literature, thought, society, politics, and cultures. To this end, with the encouragement of then President Harold Shapiro, we were able to secure several full-time faculty positions (Religion, History, Near Eastern Studies) and to draw upon colleagues in other departments to augment our rich menu of course offerings. Additionally, with the invaluable assistance of our program manager, Marcie Citron, we pioneered in building a distinguished roster of endowed lectures, seminars, workshops, and conferences that drew broad support from the university community and beyond. We were also able to offer summer funding for both undergraduates and graduates alike, whose wide-ranging projects were detailed in our annual newsletter. So an auspicious beginning of a now well-established enterprise and I count my experience as director as one of the major highlights of my academic career.
I was honored with becoming the first incumbent of the Ronald O. Perelman Chair in Jewish Studies, a position that I held from 1998 until 2013. In 2005, I was appointed Director of the Program in Judaic Studies and of the Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies, holding this position until my retirement in the summer of 2013. During my tenure I had the pleasure of working with most inspiring students, an increasing faculty in Judaic Studies and in a variety of related areas, as well as with an efficient Advisory Board. Thanks to the full support of Presidents Shapiro and Tilghman and the Mellon Foundation, we were able not only to secure but also to fill full-time faculty positions in Religion, History and Near Eastern Studies. Baru Saul, our Program Manager, helped us with her balanced and positive attitude to consolidate the Program and to steer it into calmer waters. Princeton has now established itself as one of the leading universities in the country and beyond in the field of Jewish Studies. I am deeply grateful to the University for having had the opportunity to serve my students and colleagues as Professor and Director of its Program in Judaic Studies. During my professional life I had the privilege of holding diverse and challenging positions not only in academia, but my tenure at Princeton no doubt was the highlight of my career.
MARTHA HIMMELFARB

William H. Danforth Professor of Religion

I had the honor of serving as director of the Program in Judaic Studies at the Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies from 2013 through the spring term of 2020. I feel a great debt of gratitude to my predecessors, Mark Cohen, Froma Zeitlin, and Peter Schäfer, for building a thriving program that makes an important contribution to the intellectual life of the university through its courses, the funding it provides for undergraduate and graduate research and activities, and the wide variety of lectures and programs it offers to the entire community. Although JDS is smaller than the Jewish Studies programs of many of our peer institutions, my colleagues constitute one of the most distinguished faculties of Jewish Studies anywhere. The quality of the education we offer can be seen in the achievements of the students we have been privileged to teach, undergraduate and graduate alike.
Since joining Princeton’s faculty in 1997, I have participated in many of the events sponsored by Princeton’s Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies. These events, which include conferences, lectures, and seminars, have been among the highlights of my academic career. I’ve especially benefited from learning about the work of my colleagues who have organized many of these events. One event stands out for me. In October 2012 the Perelman Institute sponsored a conference on “The Book of Job: Aesthetics, Ethics and Hermeneutics,” which I co-organized with colleagues from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the University of Antwerp. The conference focused on the reception history of the book of Job in art, music, literature and philosophy. Many of the Perelman Institute’s faculty participated in the conference, including then director Peter Schäfer and future director Martha Himmelfarb, along with colleagues from the Departments of English, History, and Religion. We were also joined by such luminaries as Robert Alter, who gave the keynote lecture and Cornel West, who responded to the study groups that opened the conference. Among the topics discussed were Gustav Mahler and Arnold Schoenberg’s respective interpretations of Job, Kafka’s Job, and the Israeli dramatist Hanoch Levin’s post-Holocaust play, “The Passion of Job.” The papers from this conference were published two years later in a book, “The Book of Job: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Hermeneutics” (De Gruyter, 2014). This conference (along with other events sponsored by the Perelman Institute) displayed the academic study of Jews and Judaism at its best—diverse, dynamic and fundamentally interdisciplinary—while also speaking to one of the most fundamental questions of human existence, which is how to understand the suffering of the innocent. I remain enormously grateful to the Perelman family for all they have done for Princeton’s Program in Judaic Studies.
FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS

ESTHER SCHOR
Leonard L. Milberg ’53 Professor of American Jewish Studies
Professor of English

The Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies has been at the center of Judaic Studies at Princeton for a quarter of a century, and it’s hard to pinpoint a specific event that epitomizes this era. There has been such a wealth of conferences, talks, readings, and workshops, including stimulating collaborations with History, Comparative Literature, the Lewis Center, PIIRS, Near Eastern Studies, The Humanities Council, Anthropology, and Music, among many other programs and departments. The Institute has fostered not only superb courses in a range of periods and disciplines, but also scholarship across the university. I suppose for me the most enjoyable program of the Institute is our weekly Works-in-Progress series. There I get a glimpse of the new work that colleagues, post-docs and advanced graduate students are engaged in, and watch as questions spark discussion that reveal new dimensions in the topic at hand. At its best, the series provides a wonderful hour and a half of collaborative thinking. I’m grateful to the Perelmans for their enduring support of our program, and I am very fortunate to have such stellar colleagues in Judaic Studies, from whom I go on learning all the time.

BARU SAUL
Program Manager, Program in Judaic Studies

I have served as program manager for Judaic Studies at the Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies since 2010. During this time, I’ve had the honor to work with three amazing scholars: Peter Schäfer, Martha Himmelfarb and, most recently, Leora Batnitzky, helping to bring their visions for the Program to fruition. It has been both satisfying and pleasurable to work with so many undergraduate and graduate students as they further their academic careers, as well as faculty members, researchers and scholars that have participated in our Program.
RESEARCH SCHOLARS, RECENT POST DOCS, GRADUATE STUDENTS & CERTIFICATE STUDENTS (2020)

Ra’anan Boustan *04 S00
Senior Research Scholar, Program in Judaic Studies

In May 2013, Princeton University celebrated the retirement of Professor Peter Schäfer with a daylong conference that brought together Peter’s doctoral students, both within the field of Jewish Studies and beyond. The conference, “Ancient Judaism and Christianity in Formation and Transformation,” was co-sponsored by the Program for Judaic Studies at the Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies. The event was a testament not only to Peter’s profound impact as a graduate advisor, but also to the increasing importance that the Perelman Institute had come to play in shaping the intellectual life of the university. By the time of the conference, I had held faculty positions at two other research universities and had seen how difficult it can be to integrate Jewish Studies with other fields of inquiry. I was, therefore, in a very good position to appreciate just how special the work of the Perelman Institute was in helping to create a vibrant intellectual climate at Princeton of which Jewish Studies is such a vibrant and central component. I feel incredibly fortunate that I have had the opportunity to return to Princeton as a Research Scholar in the Program for Judaic Studies and once again to pursue my research and teaching within the blessed orbit of the Ronald O. Perelman Institute.

Elena Dugan GS
Graduate Student, Religion

When I first arrived at Princeton, I realized just how exciting Judaic Studies at Princeton could be, as I took a course with Hebrew Bible scholar Naphtali Meshel in which we compared systems of purity and impurity between ancient Jewish and ancient Hindu ritual texts. As a class, we traveled to Heidelberg to work closely with a renowned scholar of these ritual texts, Anand Sharma, and explore interconnections between two worlds that I never would have put together on my own, but which revealed themselves to be brilliant conversation partners and comparanda. The opportunity to engage with this kind of groundbreaking and cross-disciplinary work is something I find to be unique to the Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies at Princeton.
BRENDAN GOLDMAN

Postdoctoral Fellow at the Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies, 2018-2020

The most remarkable thing I witnessed during my time at Princeton was the commitment of undergraduate and graduate students in Judaic Studies to collaborative research—specifically, to enriching our knowledge of Jewish history by making Cairo Geniza documents more accessible to the general public. I saw undergraduates commit hours of their own time to sorting documents according to language (Arabic or Hebrew); genre (letters, legal deeds, responses etc.); and state of preservation. I witnessed graduate students working to produce Arabic/Hebrew editions and English translations of many of these texts. I saw other students contributing to the development of OCR software that one day may make it possible for computers to read Arabic and Hebrew documents and create accurate transcriptions. Students did not receive public recognition or extra credit for these tasks. Rather, they recognized that they had a unique opportunity to contribute to expanding our knowledge of the Jewish past and the premodern world. I am grateful to the Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies and the Perelman family for allowing me to take part in this remarkable project with a community of exceptional students and scholars.

ELIAV GROSSMAN GS

Graduate Student, Religion

I am deeply grateful for the support of Princeton’s Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies. The Institute has provided me with opportunities to travel for research, meet other scholars, and study in intensive language programs. Judaic Studies also supports graduate student initiatives here at Princeton, such as our Judaic Studies Book Club. I, and many others, are fortunate to have an academic home in the Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies.

ISAAC (YITZ) LANDES *19

Ph.D. Candidate, Religion (Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity)

It is hard for me to summarize all that the Perelman family has done for me in my time at Princeton, as the Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies, under the leadership of Professor Himmelfarb, has been an integral part of my education and research. The generous financial support of the Perelman family has allowed me to focus on my work undisturbed. It has also allowed me to travel the world to visit libraries and archives that contain important documents and manuscripts pertaining to Jewish history. Most importantly, however, the Perelman family’s support has led to the creation of an unparalleled community of Jewish Studies scholars, one that I feel privileged to be a part of and one that I benefit from on a daily basis.
TALI PELTS ’20

Certificate Student 2020

My interest in Judaic Studies guided much of my trajectory as a Princeton undergraduate, so the Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies was naturally an academic home for me. As a JDS certificate student, I spent the last summer on a research trip to Israel, where I met with scholars and explored an ancient mosaic that would become the subject of my senior thesis. The JDS program generously supported my research, and I ended up writing the thesis under the supervision of Martha Himmelfarb, director of the program. The subject was primarily a single mosaic pavement dated to roughly 200 CE; though I developed an interest in this mosaic years ago, through my travel to the site and the yearlong research, I discovered that the issue is more complex than I imagined. I am so grateful to the Institute for enabling my exploration of a topic that has opened my eyes to interdisciplinary questions and has improved my research and critical thinking skills.

JOSHUA PICARD GS

Graduate Student, Near Eastern Studies

A highly memorable experience with the Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies was two years ago when Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin visited to give a lecture on Zionism and Jewish modernity. I was fortunate to be invited to lunch the next day to discuss in greater detail some of the ideas that he presented. This opened me to a conception of modernity in Jewish thought that I had not previously considered. His lecture and the following discussion prompted me to explore more critically the encounters between kabbalistic Judaism and Zionism, as well as their influences on scholarship in modern Jewish studies. This has been extremely helpful in my own research, much of which involves questions of what modernity implies in Jewish history and when it begins.

DAVID SCLAR

Postdoctoral Research Associate and Lecturer at the Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies (2015-2018)

It is a pleasure to extend my gratitude to the Perelman family. From 2015-2018, I was a Postdoctoral Research Associate and Lecturer at the Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies. I felt at home at the Institute, working in an idyllic setting with thoughtful, knowledgeable, and caring colleagues, to advance research projects, cultivate pedagogic skills, and expand my academic network. An undergraduate seminar I taught in 2017 encapsulates the special nature of the Perelman Institute. Just two students enrolled in History and Ideas of Kabbalah—a physics major from India and a computer science major from west Texas. The three of us explored Jewish history and mysticism in a fascinating and enlightening way, and I personally gained new cultural, intellectual, and pedagogical insights.
Summer Seminar on Jewish Legal and Political Thought

For several years Princeton’s Program in Judaic Studies has participated in a consortium with Yeshiva University’s Center for Jewish Law and Contemporary Civilization. Other members of the consortium include Columbia University, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York University and Yale University. This summer the consortium sponsored the inaugural Summer Seminar on Jewish Legal and Political Thought, held over Zoom for two weeks in August. The seminar was led by Leora Batnitzky (Princeton), Yonatan Brafman (JTS) and Suzanne Last Stone (Yeshiva, Cardozo). Fourteen doctoral students from the US, Israel and Germany participated. Here we highlight three of the participants.

Itamar Ben Ami (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

My dissertation, in the department of political science, deals with the incorporation of the institution of the modern State into the Jewish Orthodox imagination. The summer seminar was essential for my project. It addressed topics in Jewish studies that are normally studied from exclusively inner-disciplinary perspectives and situated them within broader methodological and philosophical contexts. It was especially helpful when it comes to understanding Jewish law. By offering insights, methodological tools and sets of questions taken from contemporary forms of philosophy of law, it facilitated more nuanced and philosophically-informed accounts regarding basic concepts regularly used in Jewish study – such as legitimacy, authority, and modernity.

Judah Isseroff (Princeton University)

This summer’s seminar was a wonderful reprieve from the isolation of academic life under Covid. One of the seminar’s many achievements was to show that discussions of Jewish legal and political thought are indispensable for understanding legal and political thought more generally. One can only hope that the future for Judaic studies pursues a path in the spirit of this summer’s seminar. Finally, the brilliance of the other participants and faculty was surpassed only by the warmth of the community that was forged however temporarily. For myself, and I am sure for my new colleagues, the seminar nurtured ideas for new questions and projects. I am excited to read all that comes of it.

Christoph Kasten (University of Frankfurt)

I am currently writing my dissertation thesis on the political thought of Hermann Cohen and Franz Rosenzweig. I applied for the seminar to learn more about the current discussions about the relationship between legal theory, Jewish law and political intellectual history and thereby have the chance to bring new approaches to my own work that enable me to raise new questions and develop new perspectives. The seminar offered a unique opportunity to discuss these topics with students and scholars from different backgrounds and academic fields. Although – due to the Covid-19 pandemic – the seminar could only take place digitally, it was none the less an intellectual intriguing, wonderful experience thanks to the excellence of both, the academic teachers and staff and the other participants. ♥
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

AVIGAIL GILAD ’22, ARCHITECTURE

Over the summer, thanks to the Center of Judaic Studies, I was able to carry out an internship at Studio MA, one of the largest and most well respected landscape architecture firms in in Israel. As a junior in the architecture department, I found this opportunity offered me immense value in both personal and professional ways. I was constantly tasked with thinking about how people around the city use public space and interact with the urban environment, often hearing the stories of individuals and their experiences in the city. I assisted with projects in the heart of Tel Aviv, Ramat Gan and Herzliya, while also encountering projects in the more peripheral cities of Israel, aimed at promoting social equality. This allowed me to see the connection between culture and architecture, people and space – notions that were at the forefront of my work at the firm and questions raised there on a daily basis.

This experience will served a vital role in my future, not only in the short term with my junior paper and thesis research, but also giving me a unique opportunity to experience the architectural profession in Israel, where I see my future. The internship proved to me how much I love the discipline and strengthened my wish to continue this work.

ZEV MISHELL ’22, NEAR EASTERN STUDIES

This summer I participated in an introductory Arabic course on Zoom through the Qasid Arabic Institute. Though I wasn’t able to live in Jordan, the course felt immersive, with daily meetings five times a week. The class was designed for those with no exposure to Arabic, so we began with the alphabet and basic pronunciation. Through consistent study and daily classes, we quickly progressed to being able to write complex sentences and speak to one another in formal Arabic. Having the chance to take Arabic opens up many new worlds for research and learning for me. Thanks to the funding from the Judaic Studies program, I’ll be able to continue studying Arabic at Princeton, and I hope I wil use this skill for the rest of my life!

MICAH NEWBERGER ’22, COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

I took a full year’s worth of Greek over this summer through the University of Chicago, and in the final weeks we were able to actually read Plato. Though I was hoping to take Greek at CUNY this past summer, which would have been less expensive, I was still able to secure contributions from a variety of sources, including Judaic Studies, that allowed me to pursue Greek. I am excited to discover what new areas of study this language will lead me to – not only ancient Judaism, but also early Christianity, the Graeco-Arabic translation movement and others. I am continuing my Greek studies with a graduate student at Princeton and have bought myself a Greek edition of the New Testament. I certainly expect that Greek will be a central part of whatever independent work I do for Comp Lit and Judaic Studies. I am grateful to be part of the Judaic Studies program, and excited to continue working with its faculty and staff in the upcoming years.
Avi Siegal ’22, Philosophy

I had hoped to study German this past summer before the pandemic hit, and with the crucial support of the Department of Judaic Studies, I was able to follow through on those plans by remote learning. During July and August, I completed two intensive online beginners’ German courses through the Goethe Institute. Working through each course, I was confronted with scores of vocabulary words, recordings of conversations in German and reinforcing exercises. There were also regular pronunciation exercises. My work was checked by a tutor, with whom I had several Livesitzungen (live sessions). With the Goethe Institute’s courses, I made significant progress in German language study, notwithstanding the difficult circumstances of this summer. I’m now studying German at Princeton in an advanced course. I am so grateful for the assistance of the Department of Judaic Studies.

Graduate Students

Rebekah Haigh, Religion

For the Religion Department and specifically my subfield in Ancient Mediterranean Antiquity, French was the last of my departmental language requirements for doctoral candidacy. With funding from Judaic Studies, I took part in the six-week Princeton Summer Language Program. Not only did I pass the course, I also gained enough reading proficiency to begin scholarly research, such as reading early French excavation reports on Qumran. As my dissertation will broadly concern Judaism in the Second Temple Period – particularly warfare and the Dead Sea Scrolls – it has been invaluable to be able to access relevant French scholarship related to my topic.
Ra’anan Boustan recently published a number of articles, including: “Afterward: Rabbinization and the Persistence of Diversity in Jewish Culture in Late Antiquity,” in an edited volume called Diversity and Rabbinization: Jewish Texts and Societies between 400 and 1000 CE. He and co-author Karen Britt have an article forthcoming in Journal of Late Antiquity, titled “Historical Scenes in Mosaics from Late Roman Syria and Palestine: Building on the Seleucid Past in Late Antiquity.” In addition to continuing his co-editorship of the Princeton-based journal Jewish Studies Quarterly, in January 2021 Boustan will assume the role of editor-in-chief for the UC Press journal Studies in Late Antiquity.


CONTACT US

Program in Judaic Studies
Ronald O. Perelman Institute for Judaic Studies
Princeton University
201 Scheide Caldwell House
Princeton, NJ 08544
609-258-0394
judaic@princeton.edu
www.princeton.edu/judaic

Leora Batnitzky, director
609-258-4487
batnitzky@princeton.edu

Baru Saul, program manager
609-258-0394
baru@princeton.edu