Emphasis Path: Hebrew and Linguistics

Thanks to the philological and linguistic expertise of the Hebrew teachers and researchers in FAMES along with the possibility of borrowing papers from the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, the Middle Eastern Studies Hebrew tripos allows for a unique combination of the fields of Hebrew language and modern linguistics. Students begin with courses in Ancient (Biblical) and Modern Hebrew language, early-modern to modern Hebrew literature, contemporary and/or ancient Middle Eastern culture/history, and, should they choose, an Ancient Near Eastern language (Akkadian or Egyptian). Beginning in their second year, they may opt either to specialise in Modern or pre-modern Hebrew or to continue with both, and also enjoy the freedom of choosing from a wide range of Hebrew language-related and linguistics classes (as well as classes on pre-modern and modern Hebrew literature, Middle Eastern culture, Middle Eastern politics, linguistics, religion, and even cinema). During their third year, students spend eight months in Israel, gaining fluency in Hebrew and conducting research for their undergraduate dissertation, which may very well focus on linguistic issues, whether ancient, contemporary, or both. The ‘Hebrew and Linguistics’ combination track offers excellent preparation for studying for more advanced degrees in fields related to Hebrew, specifically, and to language, more generally (including, but by no means limited to, Bible, Religious Studies, Theology, Hebrew literature, Semitics, philology, linguistics, translation, and history). Beyond this, there are myriad transferable skills that employers in all fields value in prospective employees, including assimilating and integrating information from a wide range of intellectual disciplines, some initially unfamiliar; working with, analyzing, interpreting and presenting data; appreciating the subtleties of spoken communication in interpersonal interaction; and planning, designing and executing a piece of independent research. It should also be noted that, relative to the graduates of other universities and of other departments within the University of Cambridge, FAMES graduates consistently rank high in finding suitable employment in a variety of fields and/or being accepted into advanced degree courses after graduation.

Sample Course of Study

Year 1 (IA)

Required

Elementary Hebrew Language A (Classical) (MES.4)
Elementary Hebrew Language B (Modern Hebrew Language and Literature) (MES.5)

and either

Introduction to the History and Culture of Middle East (MES.6)

or

Contemporary Middle East (MES.7)

Additional courses (students must choose one additional paper):

MES.6 or MES.7 (the one not already chosen)

or

Introductory Akkadian (X.1 Archaeology)
or

Introductory Egyptian (X.2 Archaeology)

Year 2 (IB)

Required
Classical (Biblical) Hebrew Language and Literature (MES.13)

and/or

Modern Hebrew Language (MES.13)

Additional courses (students must choose four additional papers), for example
Topics in Hebrew Studies (MES.18)
Structures and Meanings (X.3 Linguistics)
Sounds and Words (X.8 Linguistics)
Language, Brain and Society (X.13 Linguistics)

or any combination of four of the above and/or the following:

Elementary Arabic Language (MES.1); Elementary Persian Language (MES.3); Special Topics in Hebrew Literature (MES.16); Formation of Islam (MES.17); The Formation of the Modern Middle East (MES.19); Life, Thought and Worship of Modern Judaism (X.4 Divinity); Introduction to Islam (X.5 Divinity); Akkadian Language II (X.6 Archaeology); Egyptian Language II (X.7 Archaeology); The Jewish presence in medieval society (X.14); Cinema East (AMES.1).

Year 3: Year Abroad

Minimum 8 months in Israel doing language learning and dissertation research.

Year 4 (II)

Required
Classical Hebrew Language (MES.33)

and/or

Modern Hebrew Language (MES.33)

Additional courses (students must choose three additional papers), for example
Advanced Hebrew Literature/History of Hebrew (MES.36): students choose one of the following:
  Modern Hebrew Literature
  Pre-Modern Hebrew Literature
  History of Hebrew

Special Subject in the Contemporary Middle East
  either MES.40A - Islamist Thought in the 20th-century Arab World
  or MES.40B - The Invention of Israel
Comparative Semitics and/or Hebrew Vocalisation Traditions (MES.41)

or any combination of three of the above and/or the following:

Intermediate Arabic Language (MES.11); Intermediate Persian Language (MES.12); History of the pre-modern Middle East: Iran under the Safavids (MES.37); History of the Modern Middle East: Language, National Identity, and Conflict (MES.38); Special Subject in the Pre-modern Middle East: Image and Text in Islamic Manuscripts (MES.39); Elementary Sanskrit (MES.42); Elementary Hindi Language (MES.43); Judaism II (X.9 Divinity); Islam II (X.10 Divinity); Judaism and Philosophy (X.11 Divinity); The Jewish Presence in Medieval Society (X.14 Divinity)

AND

Undergraduate dissertation