Emphasis Path: Hebrew and Jewish Studies

Thanks to the expertise of FAMES’ Hebrew-division and affiliated teachers and researchers along with the possibility of borrowing papers from the Faculty of Divinity, the Middle Eastern Studies Hebrew tripos allows a student to combine an undergraduate degree in Hebrew with substantial coursework in Jewish Studies. Students begin with courses in Ancient (Biblical) and Modern Hebrew language, early-modern to modern Hebrew literature, and contemporary and/or ancient Middle Eastern culture/history. Starting with 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 courses dealing with pre-modern and modern Hebrew language, pre-modern and modern Hebrew literature, and Judaism (as well as classes on Middle Eastern culture, Middle Eastern politics, linguistics, and even cinema). During their third year, students spend eight months in Israel, gaining fluency in Hebrew, potentially immersing themselves in the variegated forms of Judaism represented there, and conducting research for their undergraduate dissertation. The ‘Hebrew and Jewish Studies’ combination track offers excellent preparation for studying for more advanced degrees in fields related to Hebrew and Jewish Studies (including, but by no means limited to, Bible, Religious Studies, Theology, Hebrew and/or Jewish literature, philology, linguistics, anthropology, and history). Beyond this, there are numerous skills and attributes acquirable in such a combination of study that employers in all fields value in prospective employees, including multi-cultural sensitivity; an international outlook; intellectual flexibility; the ability to assimilate and integrate information from a wide range of intellectual disciplines; the capacity to work with, analyze, critically interpret and present data; and capability in planning, designing and executing a piece of independent research. It is worth noting 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)
Introduction to the History and Culture of Middle East (MES.6)
Contemporary Middle East (MES.7)

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
Special Topics in Hebrew Literature (MES.16)

Topics in Hebrew Studies (MES.18): any two of:
- Pre-modern Hebrew Literature (DSS, Rabbinic, Medieval)
- Modern Hebrew Literature (literary-film-history)
- Aramaic

Life, Thought and Worship of Modern Judaism (X.4 Divinity)

The Jewish presence in medieval society (X.14)

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

Elementary Arabic Language (MES.1); Elementary Persian Language (MES.3); Formation of Islam (MES.17); The Formation of the Modern Middle East (MES.19); Structures and Meanings (X.3 Linguistics); Introduction to Islam (X.5 Divinity); Sounds and Words (X.8 Linguistics); Language, brain and society (X.13 Linguistics); 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
Judaism II (X.9 Divinity)

Judaism and Philosophy (X.11 Divinity)

The Jewish Presence in Medieval Society (X.14 Divinity)

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

Intermediate Arabic Language (MES.11); Intermediate Persian Language (MES.12); Advanced Hebrew Literature/History of Hebrew (MES.36); Special Subject in the Contemporary Middle East (MES.40B - The Invention of Israel); Comparative Semitics and/or Hebrew Vocalisation Traditions (MES.41); 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); Islam II (X.10 Divinity);

AND

Undergraduate dissertation