

# MIDDLE EASTERN LANGUAGES & CULTURES, PHD: HEBREW AND JUDAIC STUDIES

Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures (MELC). MELC's graduate program in Hebrew and Judaic Studies includes two tracks: (1) Post-Biblical Jewish History and Culture and (2) Modern Hebrew Literature. These tracks offer advanced study of Hebrew literature and language and Jewish culture and thought in their Middle Eastern and/or Western contexts, in modern and pre-modern settings.

Students in the Hebrew and Judaic Studies program are expected to command Hebrew as a primary research language and another (usually Arabic, Greek or Yiddish) as a secondary research language. The specific distribution of courses varies by a student's interests and specialization. Students are expected to work out the broad outlines of their programs in consultation with their faculty advisor when they begin their studies.

View the department's PhD general procedures ([https://www.sas.upenn.edu/nelc/grad\\_programs/phdProcedures.html](https://www.sas.upenn.edu/nelc/grad_programs/phdProcedures.html)).

**For more information:** [https://www.sas.upenn.edu/melc/grad\\_programs/grad\\_programs.html](https://www.sas.upenn.edu/melc/grad_programs/grad_programs.html)

The degree and major requirements displayed are intended as a guide for students entering in the Fall of 2026 and later. Students should consult with their academic program regarding final certifications and requirements for graduation.

## Curriculum

Code	Title	Course Units
Coursework chosen in consultation with advisor. <sup>1</sup>		20
<i>Teaching Requirement</i>		
Four semesters of teaching is required.		
<i>Language Requirement</i>		
Students must demonstrate proficiency in two languages		
<b>Total Course Units</b>		<b>20</b>

## University PhD Benchmarks

In addition to Program requirements, the following milestones must be completed:

Code	Title	Course Units
Qualifying Evaluation		
Candidacy Examination		
Dissertation Defense/Oral Exam		
Dissertation Deposit		

For more information view the University's Academic Rules for PhD Programs (<https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/academic-rules-phd/>).

### Post-Biblical Jewish History and Culture

Penn's PhD Program in Post Biblical Jewish History and Culture is designed to train students to engage in teaching and in original research that pertains to the cultural developments and products of Jewish life from the seventh through the sixteenth centuries, in communities of Mesopotamia, Christian Europe and the Islamicate world. The program of study will be tailored to the needs and interests of each student, and will engage a range of MELC and Penn faculty members. All programs of study will involve the exploration of Jewish historical and cultural phenomena within the diachronic context of the Jewish past, and the synchronic context of the broader regional culture. Students will be expected to acquire proficiency in this historically and geographically broad field, for the purposes of undergraduate instruction, and scholarly expertise in the narrower research field that is chosen.

- Primary Proficiencies
  - Philological competence
  - The Jewish Bookshelf
  - Historical and Contextual Competence
  - Methodological Tool Kit and State of the Field
- Ancillary Proficiencies
  - Familiarity with the foundational corpora of rabbinic Judaism, ability to read with comprehension, and to locate passages in the Hebrew Bible, Babylonian and Palestinian Talmud, Midrashic literature of the classical period, and Jewish Liturgy

### Modern Hebrew Literature

The program of study in Modern Hebrew Literature encompasses texts composed from the end of the 18th century to the present day, from wherever they have been written, e.g. Israel, the broader Middle East, Europe, and North America. It is designed to allow students to pursue study, research, and eventually teaching by means of an approach to the field that is textually and linguistically rigorous, consciously interdisciplinary, and responsive to the individual interests of students. Although grounded in Middle Eastern and Jewish Studies, our program also engages in dialogue with World Literature, Comparative Literature, History, Slavic and Germanic Studies, Religious Studies, and more.

- Linguistic and Textual Mastery
- Method
- Context

### Secondary Field

All students are expected to develop proficiency in one of the following four secondary fields:

- Continuity of Hebrew Literature
- Bible
- Rabbis
- Liturgy and Medieval Literature