

TO: Elaine M. Klein, Assistant Dean of Academic Planning
Program Review and Assessment

FROM: Daniel Pekarsky, Chair, Jewish Studies Assessment Committee
Incoming Director

DATE: May 1, 2006

Attached is a copy of the Jewish Studies Assessment Plan that we have prepared in response to your request. Our belief is that this plan will advance the education we offer our students, and we hope it's responsive to the letter and spirit of what you were hoping for. Please let me know if you need additional information. Thank you very much.

THE ASSESSMENT PLAN FOR THE *MAJOR IN JEWISH STUDIES*
May 2006

Introduction

The Major in Jewish Studies that exists under the auspices of the Mosse-Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies has been in existence since 2000. In addition to the standard Major in Jewish Studies track, there is a second track for students interested in the intersection between Jewish Studies and education. Though they differ in certain emphases, both tracks are designed to offer students the opportunity to develop breadth and a measure of depth in Jewish Studies in a way that honors the spirit of a liberal education. Since the inception of the Jewish Studies major, 29 students have completed Majors in the program, and there are currently 8 students in the program.

Because our Major is relatively new, the Center for Jewish Studies does not have a current student-assessment plan on which to report or which can be revised. Rather, the challenge is to develop a plan that will effectively guide us and help us to enhance program-quality in upcoming years. The plan that is developed below is organized as follows. In the first section, you will find a summary of the Center's understanding of "Jewish Studies", the principle goals of the undergraduate program in Jewish Studies, a brief account of its two tracks, and a summary of the program's major-requirements. In the following section, we articulate assessment strategies that seem appropriate in light of the University's expectations and our desire to strengthen the overall educational effectiveness of our program. The paper concludes with the identification of a projected timeline for the further development and implementation of the assessment plan.

The nature of Jewish Studies, goals for students, program design

Jewish Studies. The "Jewish" in "Jewish Studies" encompasses the totality of Jewish civilization, past and present, in its various expressions. This includes, but is not limited to, the religious, secular, social, cultural, material, political, educational, philosophical, legal, literary, artistic, and linguistic dimensions of this civilization, as it has developed in the United States, in Israel, and around the world. The complex, multi-dimensional character of this civilization requires, for its examination, a multitude of disciplines, subject-matters, theoretical and methodological orientations, and analytic/interpretative tools. Not surprisingly, then, the Center's faculty includes individuals from across the campus: individuals in the humanities, in the social sciences, and in fields with strong applied dimensions (like education, music, theatre, dance, art, and law). The Center's faculty bring to their studies of Jewish civilization the

perspectives, questions, and tools of their respective disciplines and fields. The mix of disciplines and areas currently includes: History, Sociology, Anthropology, Hebrew and Semitic Studies, Religious Studies, Philosophy, English, Russian Studies, German Studies, Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Policy Studies, Political Science, Law, Music, Theatre, Dance, and Art.

The range of courses in Jewish Studies parallels this variety. Typical courses are listed under at least two numbers: that of the faculty member's parent-discipline and Jewish Studies. Most of these faculty members have their primary, budgeted, appointments in a parent-field and department, complemented by a second appointment in Jewish Studies. In a few cases, Jewish Studies faculty have a part of their budgeted appointment in Jewish Studies.

Goals of the Major in Jewish Studies. Broadly expressed, the Major in Jewish Studies is designed to contribute to the liberal education of UW students. We have developed it with an eye towards enabling UW students develop an understanding of Jewish civilization that is both broad and has a measure of depth. More concretely, the following goals are central to our educational mission:

- The capacity for critical thinking that is central to liberal education.
- The capacity to read texts (classical, historical, or literary) carefully and thoughtfully.
- Breadth with respect to Jewish civilization: a measure of understanding of the course of Jewish history and of the various dimensions of Jewish civilization; also some understanding of historical and other relationships between Jewish and other civilizations.
- Depth in at least one area of Jewish Studies. This might be a disciplinary area, a genre of cultural productivity, or a particular era.
- Mastery of the Hebrew language, sufficient to facilitate serious academic work in Jewish Studies.

The design of the program in Jewish Studies. The distribution of course-requirement for the Major in Jewish Studies is designed to achieve the program-goals identified above. Most generally, students are required to complete a minimum of 30 credits in Jewish Studies, with a level of fourth semester proficiency in Hebrew necessary for the required courses in Hebrew texts. Hebrew 101-202 do not count toward the 30 credits required in the Major. More specifically, the 30 credit minimum includes the following distribution requirements:

- Introduction to Judaism (3 credits)
- Hebrew Texts (6 credits)
- Literature [Diaspora and Hebrew] (6 credits)
- History (6 credits)
- Disciplinary Perspectives (6 credits)
- Capstone Course (3 credits)

As already noted, in addition to the standard track, there is an “Education and Jewish Studies” track within the Major in Jewish Studies. Though the two tracks are informed by the same general goals articulated above and substantially overlap in their requirements, the “Education and Jewish Studies” track emphasizes points of intersection between the two domains – the way the educational impulse has been expressed in the course of Jewish history, the role that education has played in the past and today plays in maintaining and contributing to Jewish civilization, Jewish ideas about teaching and learning, the place of teachers in Jewish civilization, and the relationship between teacher and learner in its pedagogical and ethical dimensions. These requirements include a total of 33 credits – 18 in Jewish Studies, 9 in Education and 6 in Education and Jewish Studies, and reaching the level of fourth semester proficiency in Hebrew. Specifically:

- Jewish Studies Requirements include: Introduction to Judaism (3 credits), Jewish Literature (3 credits), Jewish history (6 credits), and Hebrew Texts, including both modern and Classical texts (6 credits).
- Education-related requirements include: Developing a philosophical stance (3 credits), Ed Pol 540, Modern Philosophies of Education, **or** Ed Pol 545, Philosophical Conceptions of Teaching and Learning, **or** Ed Pol 550, Philosophy of Moral Education
- Education in Jewish Studies in a democratic, pluralistic society (3 credits), include: Ed Pol 460, Cultural Pluralism and Education, **or** Curric/Ed Pol/ Relig St, 516 Religion and Public Education
- Pedagogical/Curricular issues pertinent to Education in Jewish Studies (3 credits) include: Curric 359, Teaching of History and the Other Social Studies, **or** Curric 431, Young Adult Literature, **or** Curric/Jewish 515, The Holocaust: History, Memory, and Education
- Education and Jewish Studies requirements (6 credits) include: Seminar in Education and Jewish Studies (Ed Pol/Curric) **and** Ed Pol/Jewish Studies 475, Education and Jewish Civilization

Assessment

No single assessment-strategy will prove appropriate to the effort to judge how effectively the Center for Jewish Studies is achieving its educational purposes. We propose using the following strategies, all of them overseen by a new Learning Assessment Committee. The Learning Assessment Committee will be composed of three members of the Jewish Studies faculty at the UW-Madison, individuals who are known to be interested in and thoughtful about teaching and learning and the aims of education.

- **Embedded assessments.** Within many, if not all, Jewish Studies courses, there will be structured opportunities for students to identify learning that support the Major program’s major purposes. These written responses will be carefully by the program’s Learning Assessment Committee.

- **Capstone-paper.** The written paper associated with the program's capstone course requirement provides an excellent opportunity to examine the program's overall effectiveness. It is designed to give students majoring in Jewish Studies an opportunity to articulate what they have achieved in the way of depth and/or breadth in Jewish Studies. In addition to an assessment of these papers by the students' advisors, papers connected to this course will be examined by the Learning Assessment Committee. Its job will be to determine whether the paper exhibits skills and understandings that are at the core of the program's learning-agenda, including those qualities (identified above) that are at the core of a strong liberal education.
- **Course-based evaluations.** As part of their evaluations of some of their courses in Jewish Studies, an additional question will be included for those completing the Major in Jewish Studies. This question will be designed to elicit their sense of whether and how the course in question has contributed to their progress in the Major.
- **An exit-interview.** Coordinated by the Learning Assessment Committee, this is a structured opportunity for students to reflect on what they have – and have not – acquired through the Major in Jewish Studies, what they view as the program's strengths and weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement. This information will be documented, examined, and used for purposes of program-improvement. It is conceivable that we will experiment with a written assignment that precedes the exit-interview in which students are asked to write out some ideas about the questions that will be investigated in the exit-interview.

The Learning Assessment Committee will carefully examine the data accumulated through these inquiries and will at regular intervals communicate its findings to the Center's Curriculum Committee and to the Center as a whole. These findings will inform the further development of the Major in Jewish Studies.

Timeline

If this plan requires revisions, we will embark on this challenge at the beginning of the 2006-2007 academic year. If, as we hope, the general plan is deemed (with possibly minor changes) appropriate, the Center will further develop it in the fall of 2006. The first step will be the appointment of the Learning Assessment Committee. Its initial job will be to refine the different assessment instruments associated with the plan, as well as to educate the Center's faculty and students concerning the need for and character of the assessment-effort. Unless there are unanticipated difficulties, we hope to begin implement