



Stern College

Stern College for Women

For more information on Jewish Studies and on Torah and Spiritual Life at Stern College for Women, please contact the following:

Jewish Studies

Dr. Deena Rabinovich
drabinov@yu.edu

Office of Torah and Spiritual Life

Ms. Haviva Tirschwell
haviva.tirschwell@yu.edu

Admissions

yuadmit@yu.edu



Guide to Jewish Studies Stern College for Women

TORAH AND SPIRITUAL LIFE ON THE BEREN CAMPUS



YOUR FUTURE STARTS HERE

A Message from Dean Shoshana Schechter and Dr. Deena Rabinovich

Celebrating its 70th anniversary, Stern College for Women is the premier college for Orthodox women, offering the largest and most diverse undergraduate Jewish studies program in North America, along with a committed community of students, grounded in the richness of Jewish tradition and scholarship.

Our Jewish Studies curriculum, offered through the Rebecca Ivry Department of Jewish Studies, exposes students to the beauty of Torah study by focusing on five different disciplines at five different levels. In addition, a two-year Mechina Pathways program is offered to those students who are new to Hebrew language and textual study.

At Stern College, the spirit of Torah learning reaches far beyond our classrooms and batei midrash. Central to our students' lives, it defines their daily experience, fostering their spiritual and intellectual growth and connecting them to a vibrant Torah-inspired culture that carries through to the rest of their lives.

Throughout the school year, students can engage in spiritually and socially focused programming purposefully integrated into university life, from on-campus Shabbatot and off-campus Shabbatonim to uplifting shiurim and animated chavruta learning, to enriching events organized by community leaders, including Stern's own on-campus rabbinic couples.

At Stern College, we strive to build community and advance our students love and knowledge of Torah. Please read on to learn more about our Jewish Studies program and the Torah-centered community we proudly offer.

Dean Shoshana Schechter
Associate Dean of Torah
and Spiritual Life

Dr. Deena Rabinovich
Chair, Rebecca Ivry Department
of Jewish Studies

JEWISH STUDIES PROGRAM

The Rebecca Ivry Department of Jewish Studies offers a rich curriculum focused on five disciplines: **Tanach (Bible)**, **Judaic Studies (Halacha and Torah Shebe'al Peh)**, **Jewish history**, **Jewish philosophy** and **the Hebrew language**.

Course work in each discipline is offered at five different levels: elementary, lower intermediate, intermediate, advanced and honors. Regardless of focus, students engage with the textual analysis of Jewish works in the Hebrew and Aramaic originals through hachana, chavruta and shiurim. Students are not only exposed to critical research methods but also to rewarding opportunities to pursue independent study.

Our goal is to ensure students advance their level of learning throughout their undergraduate years and emerge with a fundamental understanding of the questions that lie at the core of each discipline.

Accomplished scholars and moral exemplars, our faculty are dedicated to fostering our students' religious, spiritual and intellectual growth. Given their commitment and our unique learning environment, students benefit from rewarding relationships that personalize and deepen their education.

ADMINISTRATION

Dean Shoshana Schechter

Associate Dean of Torah and Spiritual Life

Dr. Deena Rabinovich

Chair, Rebecca Ivry Department of Jewish Studies

Professor Miriam Levy-Haim

Jewish Studies Academic Adviser

Rachel Ciment

Director of Spiritual Guidance

Haviva Tirschwell

Program Coordinator of Office of Torah and Spiritual Life



Tanach (Bible)

The study of Tanach, G-d's Divine Word, shapes our identity as Bnei Yisrael, and our relationship with G-d. Tanach's stories and laws answer key questions about our chosen nation's role and responsibilities.

Courses focus on helping students answer the big questions that should bring them closer to G-d, such as "What does it mean to model ourselves in the Image of G-d and how do we fulfill that mission?" and "What can we learn from the success and failures of the biblical characters, relevant to our lives today?" Additionally, instruction is offered in a variety of methods, including classical exegesis and literary techniques, for analyzing and interpreting critical texts.

The results are twofold: Students become independent learners and are better able to understand "why these texts connect to me as an individual and as a Jewish woman."

TANACH (BIBLE) FACULTY



Dean Shoshana Schechter



Rabbi Zev Goldberg



Professor Rachel Besser



Dr. Deena Rabinovich



Dr. Michelle Levine



Professor Smadar Rosensweig



Rabbi Meir Goldwicht



Dr. Nechama Price

Judaic Studies

The essence of the term “Halacha” lies in its root, meaning “to go,” signifying that its underlying purpose is to bring us somewhere. Therefore, all mitzvot have a purpose, whether we understand the purpose or not.

In *Moreh Nevuchim* (*The Guide for the Perplexed*) the Rambam identifies the following underlying goals of the Torah.

- Becoming better people
- Discerning truth while steering clear of falsehood
- Cultivating virtuous qualities and rejecting degrading traits
- Achieving justice and preventing injustice

Oral Law and Halacha provide the framework for how we conduct our lives and how we connect to our mesorah.

In our Judaic studies classes, students study the sources to understand the development of Halacha and the halachic process and what that means for them as women and as members of Am Yisrael.

JUDAIC STUDIES FACULTY



Rabbi Lawrence
Hajioff



Rabbi Shay
Schachter



Rabbi Azriel Fine



Rabbi Saul Berman



Rabbi Kenneth
Auman



Rabbi David Nachbar



Rabbi Dr. Jacob J.
Schacter



Rabbi Mordechai
Willig



Jewish History

With an emphasis on primary sources, our Jewish history courses explore the multifaceted character of the Jewish experience from ancient eras to modern times. Courses include: Classical Jewish History, Medieval Jewish Movements, the Holocaust, the History of Palestine and Jewish Intellectual History.

Studying Jewish history is a valuable way for students to gain insights into the diverse events that have shaped the Jewish people, both in the Land of Israel and across the Diaspora. In our courses, the focus extends beyond mere events to encompass intellectual history, prominent figures pivotal in the transmission of Torah, and the development of Halacha and customs.

Additionally, the study of Jewish history complements other facets of Jewish studies, particularly parshanut, offering a deeper appreciation of the timeline and influences that shaped key commentators and their works.

JEWISH HISTORY FACULTY



Rabbi Dr. Ephraim
Kanarfogel



Dr. Jill Katz



Rabbi Dr. Richard
Hidary



Jewish Philosophy

Jewish philosophy delves into crucial questions regarding a person's relationship with Hashem, such as the nature of Torah, mitzvot, revelation, reward and punishment, prayer, redemption and the World to Come. It also explores one's understanding of Hashem's world and how Hashem relates to His creation, encompassing topics like creation, nature vs. miracles, prophecy, Divine providence, and suffering and evil. These inquiries are fundamental, addressing why the world exists, our purpose and the significance of mitzvot.

Our Jewish Philosophy courses enhance students' knowledge of and sensitivity to the central issues of Jewish philosophical thought throughout history. Free will, theodicy, messianic expectation, ethical theories and other matters receive careful analysis. Through the study of primary source material, students gain proficiency in philosophical terminology and the tools of philosophical analysis.

Courses include: Jewish Ethics, Theory of Evil, Philosophy of Yehuda Halevi, Philosophy of Maimonides and Philosophy of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik. This exploration aligns with the Torah U'madda perspective, enriching our worldview while discerning where cultural values may diverge from Torah values.

JEWISH PHILOSOPHY/JUDAIC LAW FACULTY



Rabbi Dr. Meir
Soloveichik



Rabbi Dr. Dov Lerner



Rabbi Ilan Schimmel

Hebrew Language

Hebrew language courses equip students with fundamental tools for engaging with primary source materials across various Jewish studies disciplines. Our courses focus on developing reading comprehension, oral conversation and composition skills. They ultimately pave the way for the exploration of modern Hebrew literature, offering invaluable insights into Jewish culture not readily achieved through translations.

Students' Hebrew proficiency levels are determined through a Hebrew placement exam, ensuring they are placed in the appropriate course level.



Mechina Pathways Program

Mechina Pathways is a specialized two-year program tailored for those who are new to Hebrew language and textual study. Over the course of four semesters, students are on an immersive journey into Jewish studies, enriched by thought-provoking classes, dedicated teachers and engaging extracurricular activities. Our objective is to elevate the skills, knowledge and commitment of our students.

A weekly chavruta program pairs participants with more advanced students. Learning takes place within a beautiful beit midrash, fostering a genuine Jewish learning atmosphere. We actively encourage students to ask questions, cultivate independent thinking and chart their personal paths to Jewish knowledge and observance.

The Mechina Pathways curriculum is organized into three key subject areas: Bible, Judaism/Jewish Law and the Hebrew language. Courses are at the introductory level.

NURTURING SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Torah and Spiritual Programming



On the Beren Campus, we integrate Torah learning into a wide range of dynamic activities that extend well beyond the classroom.

What should students expect? Close to 20 optional weekly shiurim and chaburot in Beren's beit midrash; on-campus Shabbatot and off-campus Shabbatonim; informal in-home gatherings with Beren's resident rabbinic couples, teachers and community leaders; uplifting events with notable rebbeim; and a wide range of annual extracurricular activities.

Torah with Roshei Yeshiva: On Monday nights from 8–9 p.m., notable and revered Roshei Yeshiva from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) come to our beit midrash to deliver shiurim that engage, enlighten and enrich our students' Torah learning; discussing its relevance to their lives, and connecting one generation to the next. Past speakers have included such esteemed rebbeim as Rabbis Herschel Schachter, Mordechai Willig, Assaf Bednarsh and Baruch Simon.

Club Hour Shiur: Every Wednesday during Club Hour (2:45–3:30 p.m.), students gather in Koch Auditorium to learn Torah and deepen their spiritual growth. Speakers vary weekly and have included respected figures such as Rabbis Aaron Ciment, YY Jacobson and Moshe Tzvi Weinberg; Dr. Erica Brown (Director, Sacks-Herenstein Center); and Sivan Rahav Meir (renowned Israeli journalist).

Challah Bake: Led by Campus rebbetzins, Beren Campus' monthly Challah Bake is a celebration of heritage, community and the bonds that unite our students.

Camp Shabbaton: Fostering a spirit of unity, our annual Shabbaton is a vibrant blend of inspiration, prayer, camaraderie and celebration: a place to connect to faculty, rebbeim, mechanchot and fellow students outside the classroom. Bringing together the Stern College student body, a diverse group of women hailing from around the world, the Shabbaton offers a unique opportunity to forge friendships in a beautiful and inspiring setting while learning from today's Torah leaders.

Director of Spiritual Guidance



Rachel Ciment, our Director of Spiritual Guidance, is dedicated to providing personalized support to students to help them maximize their religious and spiritual growth while guiding them in this new stage of their lives. In addition, she oversees the madrichot, upper-level students who offer peer support to new students as they transition from high school and seminary to college and campus life.

Meet Our Campus Rabbinic Couples

The Beren Campus is home to two rabbinic couples: **Rabbi Azi and Rebbetzin Ellie Fine** and **Rabbi Avrumi and Rebbetzin Michal Schonbrun**. Both couples play a crucial role in fostering a welcoming Torah-centered atmosphere while building relationships with our students. Each day, they arrange morning and afternoon sessions of optional Torah programming in our thriving beit midrash. This provides students with the chance to explore a diverse range of subjects and texts that might not be part of the standard curriculum, which in turn enriches their learning and personal growth. Additionally, our rabbinic couples invite students to their campus homes, where they build connections and serve as mentors during this crucial phase of our students' lives. Their presence on campus every Shabbat helps create a welcoming and vibrant atmosphere for our entire community.



Rabbi Avrumi and Rebbetzin Michal Schonbrun



Rabbi Azi and Rebbetzin Ellie Fine