

Judaic Pathways at CESJDS

To Develop Each Student's Critical, Independent
and Personal Jewish Journey




CESJDS
CHARLES E SMITH JEWISH DAY SCHOOL
בית מדרש צוריאל



“Over my time at CESJDS I have had the opportunity to take many Judaic classes with many different teachers. In each class, I have been able to discover different parts of my Jewish identity. Whether it be my family history or my individual identity, I have been able to discover what it means to be Jewish to me.”

• JUDAH | CLASS OF 2021

“The Judaic Pathways offer a unique opportunity for our students to self-direct their learning as they craft their own identities as young Jewish adults, and engage in rigorous academic Judaic learning. Whether they have a vision already for what it is that they want to study or are just eager to explore, there is a path to encourage them.”

• AILEEN GOLDSTEIN '96
ACADEMIC DEAN



As high school students grow into confident, compassionate thinkers who engage the world through Jewish values, an important piece of the puzzle is gaining mastery over core Judaic content, concepts and skills, while having the flexibility to individually pursue the topics that most inspire them.

The core classes in Judaic Studies support the development of shared values within a learning community that encourages students to be inspired by one another's different perspectives. The variety of distribution (choice) course options reflects the different backgrounds and beliefs our students bring to school each day.

Judaic Pathways offer students diverse core (required) and distribution courses to develop each student's critical, independent, and personal Jewish identity and intellect. Students can elect to follow a pathway throughout high school or take samplings from each pathway to forge their own journey in Jewish studies. Pathways are offered in the following specialty areas: Tanakh (Hebrew Bible), Toshba (Rabbinic Literature), Modern Jewish History, and Jewish Thought & Philosophy. CESJDS also offers the Bridges to Jewish Studies pathway for those students who have not previously studied in a Jewish day school.



Talmud

The Talmud pathway offers students the opportunity to become proficient in the classical Jewish skill of Talmud study. Geared toward conceptual thinkers who have a working knowledge of Hebrew, these courses teach students the skills to access and study Talmud and Talmudic commentaries using both traditional and contemporary methodologies. Students will learn to parse Talmudic arguments, engage in debate and discussion regarding the text, and closely study various tractates of Talmud throughout their high school years.

“I remember the first time my Talmud class realized that knowing all the words did NOT mean we understood the meaning of those words put together. The simultaneous looks of panic and curiosity slowly faded as the class persisted and worked as a whole to finally figure out what we were reading. Once we finally understood it, everyone felt a sense of accomplishment – we couldn’t wait to learn more!”

• ROCHELLE | CLASS OF 2022

“In the Talmud curriculum, we are not only teaching the conceptual frameworks and the arguments of the rabbis of the Mishna and Gemara (including Rashi, Tosafot and others), but also rhetorical devices, technical terms, and vocabulary within a document that is the backbone of Jewish life.”

• RABBI MARCI JACOBS ARONCHICK
JEWISH TEXT TEACHER

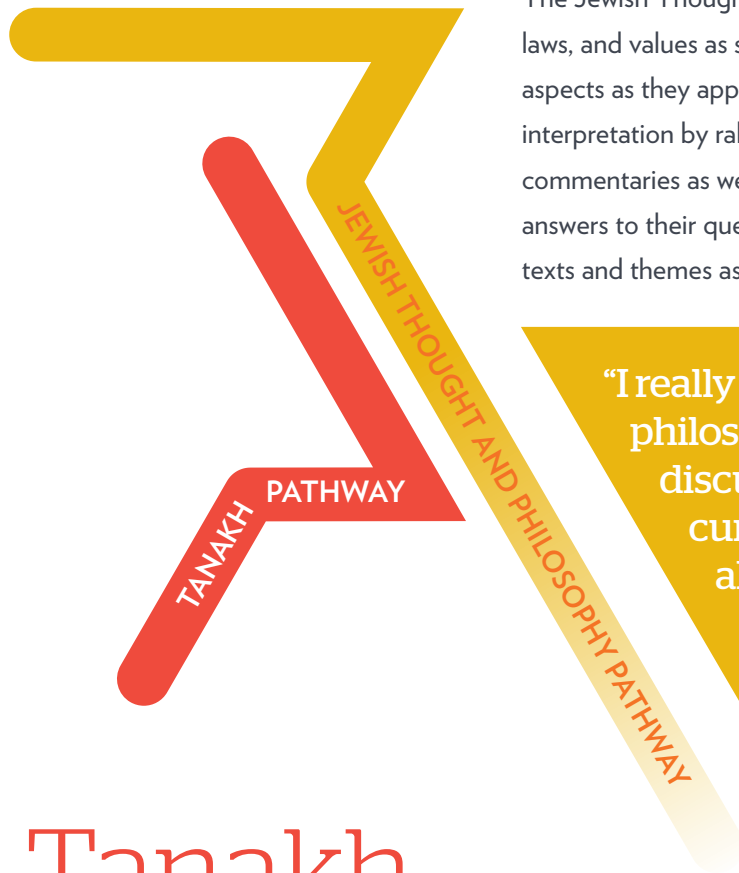


“Whether you want to be intellectually challenged, desire to know Jewish laws and practices, feel a need to enhance your spirituality, or simply want to further refine decoding, analysis, and logic skills, the Talmud program at CESJDS can help you achieve all of this and more.”

• PAUL BLANK, JEWISH TEXT TEACHER



Jewish Thought & Philosophy



The Jewish Thought & Philosophy pathway highlights the study of traditions, laws, and values as seen through rabbinic texts. Students “unpack” these aspects as they appear in the Tanakh (Bible) and the Talmud, and reflect on interpretation by rabbis including Maimonides and Rashi, while analyzing modern commentaries as well. Students are provided the intellectual challenge to seek answers to their questions about Jewish tradition and law, while exploring the texts and themes as they apply to one’s evolving identity and true self.

Tanakh

CESJDS students learn to appreciate the Tanakh as both historical work and a critical piece of the Jewish religion. Through this pathway, students have the opportunity to delve more deeply into the study of Tanakh, exploring critical themes, expanding their skills in interpreting text, and engaging with classical Biblical commentaries and contemporary interpretations ranging from modern commentaries to art and music. Text is approached in the original Hebrew, as well as in translation.

“I really enjoy my Jewish thought and philosophy classes because I am able to have discussions with my peers about both current issues that affect our lives. I am also able to use my previous knowledge and expand on it, not only to help my learning, but also my peer’s knowledge about a certain topic. I also love that while these discussions are from a Jewish perspective, we are also able to talk about things from other perspectives, like being an American or from a particular gender.”

• ARAVA | CLASS OF 2021



“I enjoy the structure of Tanakh seminars because they allow for both individual study and group conversation. It is so interesting to compare and contrast thoughts and ideas among those of my classmates. My teachers help take our discussions to the next level with thought-provoking questions, and encouragement to search for key details and synergies in the text.”

• SOPHIE | CLASS OF 2021



“When I first took a Jewish History course my freshman year, I immediately fell in love with the connection I felt to my people on a historical level. As a Jew, I tend to do things based on tradition and historical culture. CESJDS Jewish History classes put reason behind my cultural traditions and strengthen my pre-existing identity as a Jew.”

• ELLA | CLASS OF 2021

Jewish History

The Jewish History program engages students in the study of Jewish history from ancient times through today, exploring the development of the Jewish community over time. Through the use of textual study and analysis, simulations, and project-based learning, all courses challenge students to envision themselves as a part of Jewish history as they deepen their understanding of significant events and major ideas of Jewish history, and develop critical-analysis skills.

“In each class I teach, there are numerous overarching ‘essential questions’ discussed over the course of a semester. Questions in Arab-Israeli Conflict, for example, include: ‘How do we use dual narratives for setting a framework to understand the historical significance of the Conflict? What impact do narratives have on future generations?’ These questions challenge our students to think critically and creatively.”

• AARON BREGMAN, CHAIR,
SARA AND SAMUEL J. LESSANS JEWISH
HISTORY DEPARTMENT

JEWISH HISTORY PATHWAY

“The study of Jewish History at personal and community journey. CESJDS is both a Students and teachers are committed to the academic study of Jewish History, as well as to the development of individual Jewish identity informed by Jewish experiences across time and space.”

• DR. SARA COXE, JEWISH HISTORY TEACHER,
SARA AND SAMUEL J. LESSANS JEWISH HISTORY DEPARTMENT



Bridges

Bridges to Jewish Studies is a unique path specifically designed for students new to Jewish day school. Through this pathway, students learn the foundations of Jewish study, including introductions to the corpus of Jewish text, themes of Jewish history, and highlights of Jewish literacy. Additionally, an introductory Hebrew class (Ulpan) is offered for students at varying grade levels.

BRIDGES PATHWAY



“JDS is a unique experience. Coming in as a new student in 11th grade, both my teachers and peers dedicated their time to help me adapt my style of learning. CESJDS has made me think about what I am being taught in a whole new way!”

• MIKEY | CLASS OF 2020

“I am having a great experience in Judaic Studies at CESJDS. I have not only gained an incredible amount of knowledge, especially returning to the School for 10th grade after attending for Kindergarten and 1st, but have also refined writing skills, and enhanced my ability to debate and analyze information. We are encouraged to ask questions and are able to lead respectful conversations with our peers.”

• BRIAN | CLASS OF 2021

Choose Your Own Adventure

Students are encouraged to follow their passions in choosing their Judaic distribution courses. They may choose from among all of the offerings to design a course of study that is of intellectual interest to them as they explore Jewish tradition and work to define their Jewish identities.



“Our Judaics teachers are very creative and we get to do a lot of interactive projects that allow us to understand the relevance of older texts and how they can apply to our daily lives.

In a Jewish Text class we learned about capital punishment and were able to understand what the rabbis in the Talmud thought about it. We also had a trial simulation in which our teacher created a fake capital punishment case and we split up into sides to debate the case. We were able to apply what we learned from the text into our own case, which allowed us to learn and have fun. In my Ethical Dilemmas class, speakers came in to discuss their work and experience with these issues. We had a doctor come in and talk about his experience when treating conjoined twins, and we skyped with a woman who had a family member murdered who shared her views on capital punishment. One of our assignments in a Talmud class was a group project where we created a song or a rap to illustrate what we were learning, and performed it for the rest of the class.

• SALLY | CLASS OF 2021

Sample Pathways

The CESJDS Judaic Pathways program allows students to concentrate in a particular track. The sample Judaic course loads below illustrate a typical route through each pathway. Students may follow these routes with deviations along the way. A full list of course offerings can be found at: cesjds.org/hscoursecatalog

Pathways	9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade
Talmud	Talmud I*	Talmud II*	Talmud III*	Talmud IV*
	Ancient and Medieval Jewish History	Modern Jewish History	History of Modern Israel*	Hebrew
	Politics in the Age of Kings	Hebrew*	Hebrew*	Online Jewish Text Course
	Hebrew*		World Jewry After the Holocaust Jewish Theology	
Tanakh	Politics in the Age of Kings	Classical Biblical Commentary	Tanakh Seminar: Latter Prophets	Tanakh Seminar: Wisdom Literature
	Ancient and Medieval Jewish History	Biblical Themes in World Literature	History of Modern Israel	Hebrew
	Hebrew*	Hebrew*	Hebrew*	Contemporary Issues in Israel
	Ethical Dilemmas Jewish Lifecycle and Ritual	Modern Jewish History	Talmud	
Jewish Thought & Philosophy	Ethical Dilemmas	Jewish Norms and Practices	Great Jewish Thinkers	Identities in Transformation
	Jewish Lifecycle and Ritual	Modern Jewish History*	Rendering Legal Decisions	Jewish Moral Literature and Human Nature
	Politics in the Age of Kings	Hebrew*	History of Modern Israel	Hebrew
	Ancient and Medieval Jewish History	Classical Biblical Commentary	Hebrew*	
	Hebrew*		Arab-Israeli Conflict	
Jewish History	Ancient and Medieval Jewish History	Modern Jewish History*	History of Modern Israel	Contemporary Issues in Israel
	Ethical Dilemmas	Hebrew*	Contemporary American Jewish Society	World Jewry After the Holocaust
	Jewish Lifecycle and Ritual	Biblical Themes in World Literature	American Jewish History Through Film and Literature	Hebrew
	Politics in the Age of Kings	Comparative Religion	Arab-Israeli Conflict	Online Jewish Text Course
	Hebrew*		Identities in Transformation	
Bridges to Jewish Studies	Intro to Judaic Studies	Modern Jewish History*	History of Modern Israel	Hebrew
	Politics in the Age of Kings	Hebrew*	Hebrew*	Great Jewish Thinkers
	Ancient and Medieval Jewish History	Jewish Norms and Practices	Identities in Transformation	World Jewry After the Holocaust
	Hebrew*	Comparative Religion	American Jewish History Through Film and Literature	
	Ethical Dilemmas			

*Denotes full year course.

Bolded courses denote core Judaics requirements for all students.

Students in Grades 10-12 may take up to one Jewish Text course online towards their JT Distribution requirement.