The Hebrew language has had a unique spiritual hold on both the Jewish and Christian imagination. Transmitted unbroken across more than three millennia, this is the oldest literary heritage in use today. You will first sample Israelite poetry and narrative -- in translation but with a taste of the original -- and then the Midrash and Talmud of the ancient Rabbis, the astonishing creativity of the Jewish Diaspora, and the flowering of a new Israeli culture. Alongside, we trace the origins of the Hebrew alphabet; the 'death' of spoken Hebrew and the often stormy relationship between written Hebrew and Yiddish or other Jewish languages, climaxing in the attempted linguacide of Hebrew by the Soviets; the quest for spiritual significance in the letters and language, and the emergence in the Renaissance of a Christian Hebraism that left a profound mark on Colonial America and its Ivy League colleges. The course also explores a modern mystery: Modern Israeli Hebrew, the only known case of a language reborn.

No knowledge of Hebrew is assumed.

To purchase

1. Coursepack
4. Chomsky, W. Hebrew: The Eternal Language (photocopy)

To listen to
(on the Dartmouth Jewish Sound Archive, www.dartmouth.edu/~djsa)

Glinert, Tongue of Tongues
Cantillation of the Torah
To view

The Wordmaker (video about Ben Yehuda)

Reserve list

Barnavi, E. *A historical atlas of the Jewish people*, Knopf 1992


De Lange, N. *The Illustrated History of the Jewish People*


Recommended URLs:
Jewish history: http://www.us-israel.org/jsourse/History/timeline.html

**Course requirement**

There will be three final essays (50% of the grade), and several assignments and quizzes (50% of the grade).

**Late Work**

Unless permission is granted by the instructor well in advance of the deadline, late essays or papers will be penalized a minimum of one letter grade rank (i.e. a “B” will automatically be reduced to a “B-”).
**Academic Honor Principle**
Review the pertinent section in the Student Handbook and carefully read *Sources: Their Use and Acknowledgement*. In terms of this course, students should make every effort to acknowledge any ideas or information they obtained from outside sources.

**Disabilities Statement**
I encourage students with disabilities, including "invisible" disabilities like chronic diseases, learning disabilities, and psychiatric disabilities to discuss with me after class or during my office hours appropriate accommodations that might be helpful to them. Also, they should stop by the Academic Skills Center in 301 Collis Center to register for support services. Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me by the end of the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential.

**The Composition Center Web Site**
The Composition Center Web site is a textbook-quality site that provides students with advice on all stages of the writing and researching processes. Please visit www.dartmouth.edu/~compose
Syllabus

Week 1  3000 years of Hebrew

Chomsky  1-13
Barnavi 18-19
Glinert (radio documentary) Tongue of Tongues

Week 2  The Hebrew Bible

Alter 'Introduction to the Old Testament' in Alter & Kermode, 1-35

Selections from the Bible:
Fox edition (coursepack):. Genesis ch. 1, Exodus ch. 20, Numbers ch. 24
Ruth ch 1
Isaiah ch 1
Psalms ch. 1-3, 104
Proverbs ch. 31

Holtz 31-127

Week 3  The dawn of Hebrew

Chomsky  17-69
Halpern (BAR article)

Chomsky 73-92
Cross p 77-90 (coursepack)

Week 4  Hebrew's near-death experience

Chomsky  139-183
Spolsky, 95-109 (coursepack)
Week 5  Hebrew literature down the centuries

The Soul of the Text. pp 10-11, 24-28, 48-55, 67-95
Leviant  137-141, 415-447, 458-476, 521-526 (coursepack)
Scheindlin 53-57 (coursepack)
Carmi 353-5, 386-7, 505-6 (coursepack)
De Lange 116-121

Week 6  Hebrew, Jewish learning and spirituality

Idel "Language and Kabbalah", 42-72 (coursepack)
Kaplan [hand out]
Hoffman. 'The Hebrew alphabet
Dan 'The language of creation and its grammar' 42-63  (coursepack)

Cantillation (recording)

Stampfer 'What did "knowing Hebrew" mean in E. Europe?' 129-137 (coursepack)
Loewenthal 'Hebrew and the Habad communication ethos' 167-187 (coursepack)

Week 7

Jewish learning and spirituality (continued)

Strassfeld, pp 183-209  [hand out]
Glinert 'Hebrew as quasilect' 249-264 (coursepack)

Hebrew and Christendom

Chomsky 245-250
Lapide 1-6 (coursepack)
Goldman 3-13, 70-85, 201-227 (coursepack)
Hay, 58-67 (coursepack)

Week 8  The rebirth of a Modern mother-tongue
Week 9  A thoroughly modern culture

The Soul of the Text. pp 190-252

Miron, Dan, p.49-69 (coursepack)
Mendele Mocher Sforim 'Shem and Japheth on the Train' 15-38 (coursepack)

Oz 'Before his time' 329-350 (coursepack)
Liebrecht 'A room on the roof' 231-258 (coursepack)

Week 10

Wrap-up. Did Hebrew ever die?

Final essays
Each essay to be 1200-1400 words.

1. Did Hebrew ever die?
2. How and why was Hebrew modernized?
3. Compare how the relationship between the Jewish and the outside world is portrayed in the Hebrew stories you've read