

Guidelines for Graduate Research Seminar and Master's Paper for MAJS Degree Candidates

During the last semester of residency, students matriculated in the Master of Arts in Jewish Studies program enroll in the Graduate Research Seminar course. The course guides students through the process of conducting the research and writing of their final Master's paper, a final requirement for the degree.

During the later semesters of an MA student's program, students begin to consider topics and areas of interest for their final paper. By the time they reach the final semester, many students have already begun to do independent preliminary reading and in some cases, research on their chosen topic. The subject of this reading and research will become the focus of their Master's paper.

The Graduate Research Seminar course meets weekly during the spring semester (in person for those students who are local, and via telephone conference call for non-local students). The course typically meets on Wednesdays from 2:15 – 4:15 pm, Boston time. Students find an advisor—typically a member of the Hebrew College faculty—to work with them and advise them on their project. The course utilizes an online environment (Blackboard website) as an additional communication channel among students, their advisors, and the instructor. In addition to questions of approaches, methodologies of research, the course also focuses on publication strategies and general approaches to research in the field of Jewish studies. The course goes on hiatus after the initial 6 or 7 meetings, as students begin to work independently on their research. They post draft sections of their papers on the website for others to read, comment, and react to. After the Passover break the class reconvenes, to focus on the final publication of the paper and on the public presentation, which takes place at the semester's end. The Graduate Research Seminar generates 3 graduate credits and is offered on a pass/fail basis only.

The Master's paper is typically 35-50 pages in length, must represent substantial scholarship and research on the topic, and should follow standard accepted formats for bibliography and footnotes. Its major focus is independent research that responds to an issue or question raised by the student. It may contain a creative component (e.g. art, music, poetry, etc.) but must have a research component. The subjects of MAJS Master's papers have been very diverse; sample subjects from the recent past include the following: *Architectural Symbols of Solomon's Temple: What do They Reveal?*; *Why Quote God? Three Modern Israeli Poets Allude to Sacred Texts*; *The Rape of Dinah—A Story About Boundaries*; *The Emergence of the Inclusive Minyan*; *Post-War Peace of Mind: The Influence of Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman in Boston's Jewish Community*; *The Evolving Role of the Internet as a Support for Conversion to Judaism*; *Jewish Law—The Challenges of Codification*; *U'fros Aleinu Sukkat Shelomecha—A Historical, Spiritual and Musical Investigation of the Hashkiveinu*.

A public presentation based on the final paper takes place at the conclusion of the semester, before graduation. The Hebrew College community (i.e. faculty, staff and students) is invited. The presentation is not meant to be a summary of the paper; rather it is a 20-minute oral presentation which focuses on one or more issues raised in the paper. For non-local students who are unable to travel to Boston for their presentation, options such as video-conferencing can be considered. The paper in its final form must be submitted prior to graduation.