



The James Striar School of General Jewish Studies

The James Striar School is a comprehensive program for students seeking to improve and expand their skills and knowledge of Jewish studies on either the beginning or intermediate level. JSS is the only introductory Jewish studies program for college age students in the country designed to be taken simultaneously with a regular college program on the same campus. No matter what background they may have, all JSS students demonstrate an eagerness to grow in their commitment to “Jewish Living, Jewish Learning, and Jewish Leadership.”

The program teaches the fundamentals of Jewish scholarship and heritage through a unique curriculum and exciting out-of-classroom experiences. It offers courses in Hebrew language; Bible; Mishna & Talmud; and Jewish History, Philosophy, Laws, & Customs. Rabbi Moshe Besdin ztl, the founding director, sought to create an atmosphere dedicated to teaching “..It, and not just about It” – i.e. to learn about Judaism in text and context, in thought and practice.

In addition to its small classes, the program will pair students with a member of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) for regular study sessions. These study sessions help students gain textual skills in a relatively short amount of time. Furthermore, the program sponsors regular weekend retreats as well as field trips to enhance the academic and Jewish experiences of its members. In addition to formal classes, the program fosters close relationships between teachers and students through continuing individual guidance.

The James Striar School of General Jewish Studies was established in 1956 as the Jewish Studies Program and renamed in 1965 to honor the generosity of the Striar family in memory of their father, James Striar. Its location at the Wilf Campus affords stimulating interactions with the university’s other undergraduate schools as well as graduate schools and affiliates, and provides easy access to the major resources of the institution. Students who complete the requirements are eligible to receive an Associate in Arts degree.

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Every applicant must be interviewed by the director of the program. This provides an opportunity for the James Striar School to feel that the key to a successful Torah learning is creating a warm relationship between a teacher and his student. To help create this bond, each student is guided toward an individualized course of study.



To register, students meet with the director, who evaluates the skills and interests of the student and then pairs the student with the teachers who might be the best fit for that student. Class sizes are kept small and intimate. Each student is required to meet with the JSS director prior to each registration. Teachers make themselves available to serve as advisers on an ongoing basis. Most teachers share their home phone numbers and cell phone numbers with their students. Teachers treat their students with respect, concern, and regard. Many teachers live on campus and open their homes on a regular basis to host the students in the program. The regular off- campus weekend retreats also



be present promptly at the beginning of the class, unless prevented from doing so by illness or other compelling cause. A record of each student's class attendance is kept by the instructor. In courses that meet twice a week, a student's grade may be reduced by the instructor if the student has more than four unexcused absences over the course of the semester. For courses that meet four times a week, the final grade may be reduced after eight unexcused absences.

The James Striar School expends significant effort and resources on out-of-classroom educational experiences. Students are expected to attend the periodic field trips and at least one off-campus Shabbaton each semester.

A student's attendance record may be taken into account when determining his continuing status in the program. Continued unexcused absences of more than 50% of the scheduled sessions will result in the student receiving a grade of a G for the course, which may lead to probation or academic dismissal from the school.

Permission to register late in a course does not in itself excuse the student's absence from classes already held. Students who register late for a course are responsible to for any material they missed.

Ⓜ : To remain in the university, students must maintain a satisfactory academic level in JSS or in another Torah studies program. Failure in any course in the James Striar School results in a student being placed on Torah studies probation for the next semester. A student who is on probation in the James Striar School must pass all his Torah studies courses. He may not accept employment outside the university, and he may not participate in extracurricular activities that might distract him from his studies. If the student does not fulfill these terms, he may be dismissed from the James Striar School and the university.

Students that do not maintain a GPA above 2.0 will be placed on probation for the next academic semester. Students on full academic probation are limited to 13.5 credits in Yeshiva College or Sy Syms. Other restrictions follow those of the undergraduate schools as noted in the catalog.

Students with two consecutive semesters or three semesters overall of work below a 2.0 are subject to dismissal from the school. Students must show positive progression through the program and cannot graduate if in their last semester they receive less than a 2.0 GPA.

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