

**Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies
in conjunction with the Taube Department of Jewish Studies,
University of Wrocław**

**12th Annual
Oxford Summer Institute on Modern and Contemporary Judaism (OSI)**

30 June-4 July 2025

**Theme: Jewish Citizenship and Belonging –
Between Identity, Responsibility and Sacrifice**

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

The Oxford Summer Institute on Modern and Contemporary Judaism (OSI) is an interdisciplinary workshop where scholars of Jewish religion and culture from around the globe join a large contingent of European Jewish Studies specialists, along with select faculty from the University of Oxford, for a week of intensive study and intellectual exchange. Designed to facilitate rigorous academic engagement on key themes in the Jewish religion, it provides a framework for raising original and challenging perspectives from a broad range of disciplines, with the potential to provide novel insights into contemporary Judaism. The program includes scholars from around the world, but in this call, we are particularly seeking applicants who work at institutions on the European continent.

Entering its tenth year of in-person gatherings (not including two years of virtual meetings due to the Covid-19 pandemic) and twelfth year overall, the OSI has facilitated unique informal interfaces between veteran and early career researchers from diverse geographic and disciplinary backgrounds. It has a particular interest in contributing to the ongoing expansion of Jewish Studies throughout Europe. OSI 'alumni' are today a worldwide network of researchers, who continue to learn and collaborate with each other. These scholars attest to the profound experience that the OSI offers for rigorous interaction with colleagues in a relaxed but focused framework that spurs creativity and critical but non-judgmental discussion. The conveners of this gathering are Miri Freud-Kandel (Oxford University), Adam Ferziger (Bar-Ilan University) and Wojciech Tworek (Wrocław University).

The theme for OSI 2025 is 'Jewish Citizenship and Belonging: Between Identity, Responsibility and Sacrifice'. The last few years have witnessed the frightening intensification of antisemitism in many corners of the world and the academy has frequently helped to fan some of the flames of anti-Jewish rhetoric. Rather than facilitating bigotry and ugly stereotypes, there is a crucial need to strengthen balanced, critical scholarship that can enrich understanding of Jews

and Judaism in insightful ways. In this light, the theme of OSI 2025 responds to the acute challenges for Jews and Judaism worldwide that arose in the aftermath of the October 7th 2023 Hamas terror attack on Israel and the ongoing human tragedy that has evolved since then in the region.

The Miriam-Webster Dictionary offers the following as one of its definitions of the term 'citizenship': 'the quality of an individual's response to membership in a community'. With this in mind, the goal of OSI 2025 is to explore the concepts of belonging, responsibility, commitment and sacrifice, and the degree to which they are central to the range of contemporary Jewish identities that includes a wide variety of political, religious, philosophical, cultural and intellectual manifestations.

On a certain level, this theme builds upon Mordecai Kaplan's idea of 'Judaism as a Civilization' which encompasses a far broader spectrum of activities and associations than more narrowly parochial ones. At the same time, the emphasis of OSI 2025 on 'belonging, responsibility, commitment and sacrifice' is grounded in an assumption that Jewish citizenship is rooted in active involvement that moves beyond passive expressions of Jewishness often associated with limited cultural or social affinities.

We aim to bring together scholars with diverse methodological, geographical, theoretical and temporal approaches to this theme. Although our focus is modern and contemporary, we also value scholarship on pre-modern and early modern matters that can facilitate comparative analysis of the topic.

The following 'macro' questions will frame this seminar:

-What are some of the key pre-modern historical precedents for a formulation of Jewish citizenship/belonging?

-In what ways have the concepts of 'belonging, responsibility, commitment and sacrifice' evolved in modern and contemporary Judaism, and particularly in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, to include and also overtly exclude nationalist framings?

-What are the varieties of ways that these concepts are manifested in modern and contemporary Judaism and Jewishness?

-How has Israel impacted the roles of these concepts?

-To what degree do Israel-based Jews and those in other parts of the world differ in their assessments of Jewish citizenship and belonging as reflected through 'responsibility, commitment and sacrifice', and in what ways do they share common or overlapping perceptions?

-Are there historical precedents for a correlation between levels of Jewish engagement and rising antisemitism?

Potential research areas to be addressed include the following:

-Theological, philosophical and halakhic articulations of core Jewish belonging, responsibility, commitment and sacrifice, approached from a range of perspectives

-Religious Affiliation and/vs broader understandings of Jewish Citizenship

-Hierarchies of Jewish belonging, responsibility, commitment and sacrifice

-Jewish martyrdom

-The relationship between ideas and practice

-Religious and secular Jewish forms of belonging, responsibility, commitment and sacrifice

-Charity, Philanthropy and Welfare

-The Economics of Contemporary Jewish Citizenship

-Leadership

-Jewish Professions: the rabbinate, education, public service

-Jewish Activism

-Novel forms of Jewish engagement and belonging

-Synagogue and Denominational Membership

-Creative Art as a form of Citizenship

Applicants who are accepted will be offered funding to cover reasonable travel costs and will be provided with food and accommodation. They will be asked to prepare an original paper (15-20 pages) that will be distributed to the participants one month prior to the event. This maximises constructive exchange and feedback during the workshop itself. Please note that we prioritise applications from the European continent.

Application Procedure

Application Deadline: 28 February 2025

Please note that we prioritise applications from the European continent.

In your application to participate, please include the following:

- A completed application form
- A resume and list of publications
- A detailed cover letter describing your current position, academic background, current research projects, what you plan to present at the Institute and how you would benefit from participating
- An abstract (250-500 words) of your proposed paper
- The names of two academic references

All documents should be sent as a *single PDF* and submitted by email. Please submit documents in one email.

We will only consider complete applications. We will inform you regarding the results of your application as soon as possible after the deadline.

To apply, please email all required materials in a *single PDF* to the OCHJS Academic Registrar, Ms Madeleine Trivasse, at registrar@ochjs.ac.uk before the deadline.