May 21, 2024

Dear UC Irvine community,

We write to you as deeply concerned students regarding the status of the class History 18A (Jewish Texts) taught by Professor Daniel Levine. It has recently been revealed that ***this class will not be renewed yearly and will only be offered every other year.*** In addition, the History Department has chosen to **remove Professor Levine as a lecturer**, meaning he will no longer be able to teach this course, which was developed and refined to what it is today by him over the past 3 years. This change concerns us on many fronts, as we feel that it not only harms a professor who is an invaluable addition to our scholarly environment but that **the decision to remove him and restrict the class as a whole presents a serious threat to the academic experience of students within the Jewish Studies minor**.

We want to start this letter by sharing our collective experiences in Professor Levine's class to highlight its value within the Center for Jewish Studies. Jewish Texts is one of the most intellectually stimulating courses we have taken at UCI, particularly for Jewish Studies minors. While we will later speak to the value of the course itself, we want to emphasize that though the course content is excellent, it would undoubtedly not have been as impactful without Professor Levine as its instructor. *His passion is evident in his lectures; he engages students effectively and delivers content in an intellectually rigorous manner.* He is an empathetic professor who is always available to address students' needs or questions.

Most importantly, *Professor Levine brings extensive expertise to the class, combining his historical knowledge with a deep understanding of Jewish philosophies.* His insights and mastery of the material have significantly enhanced the class content. Frankly, **we see no valid reason why he should not continue in his position**, and **we suspect that this decision was not based on a fair evaluation of his performance, as *everyone* we know who has taken his course has praised his instructional capabilities.**

Furthermore, Jewish Texts is a fundamental introductory course for the Jewish Studies minor.

Offering this course only every other year ***poses a significant concern for the minor's viability***, as **students looking to add the minor will struggle to access essential background knowledge on Jewish philosophies.** This not only poses a practical issue for fulfilling a core requirement but also likely diminishes the overall student experience in the minor. *The study of Jewish history cannot be a fully enriching experience without an understanding of Jewish thought to provide cultural context for major events, processes, and struggles that continue to impact Jews and Jewish identity to this day.* **We assert that to jeopardize students' ability to access this core scholarly material is to jeopardize the future of Jewish Studies at UCI as a whole.**

In terms of the broader campus community, *this course plays a crucial role in exposing students to the cultural richness of Jewish thought and identity*. This exposure is invaluable, especially in these politically sensitive times when Jewish identity is often scrutinized. Additionally, antisemitism remains a pressing concern while fundamental academic activities of the **Center for Jewish Studies and its affiliates are under fire**. This course, taken by students from various backgrounds, is central to the *mission of Jewish Studies to educate others about Jewish identity and thought, fostering dialogue and discussion*.

Some of us have not yet had the opportunity to take Professor Levine's course. **We are deeply disappointed and frustrated by the Department's decision to restrict this educational opportunity.** Given that *the class has consistently been fully registered and received positive reviews, we see no reason why it and Professor Levine should be prevented from continuing their impactful work.*

There is no excuse for such a detrimental disruption to the activities of Jewish Studies during this critical time, and we cannot remain silent on this issue, which threatens our academic pursuits and jeopardizes the position of a valuable faculty member. *We urge the Department of History, the Center for Jewish Studies, and the UCI administration to* ***investigate*** *the reasons behind this change and to* ***take appropriate corrective actions****.* If the issue is funding, we strongly recommend that the department *reconsider* the decision to defund a core academic course and program. *Additionally, if this decision was influenced by discrimination against Professor Levine for his Jewish identity, assumed political views, or recent calls to disrupt Jewish*

Studies academic programming, we demand immediate corrective actions to condemn the incident and safeguard the academic freedom of our Jewish Studies faculty and students.

Above all, we demand that Daniel Levine be reinstated as a lecturer and that History 18A be restored to a yearly class.

Thank you for your consideration,

Aaron A.
Aaron B.
Aaron O.
Adam W.
Alex F.
Ari A.
A.L.
Celia L.
Claire B.
Daniel A.
Daniel B.
Daniel M.
David C.
Donna H.
Dylan C.
Ella A.
Emily C.
Emily O.
Fae C.
Hayley D.
Jacob S.
James G.
James M.
Jonathan R.
Jonathan S.
Jonpaul C.
Katherine W.
Madalaine B.
Makayla G.
Matan S.
Matthew C.
Maya B.
Menachem M.S
Mika S.
Miles A.
Mimi H.
Naomi S.S
Natalia T.
N.P.
Nathaniel H.
Neema G.
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Reyhaneh M.
Riley B.
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Ryan Z.
Samantha I.
Sarah H.
Sarah S.
Sasha Y.
Sean G.
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Shir D.
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Stefan A.
Summer B.
Sydnie H.
Talia B.
Talia W.
Taryn W.
Yoav F.