December 22, 2014

MEMORANDUM

TO: Bonnie Thornton Dill  
Dean, College of Arts and Humanities

FROM: Elizabeth Beise  
Associate Provost for Academic Planning and Programs

SUBJECT: Proposal to Modify the Minor in Israel Studies (PCC log no. 14012)

The proposal to modify the Minor in Israel Studies has been administratively approved. A copy of the approved proposal is attached.

The change is effective immediately. Please ensure that this change is fully described in the Undergraduate Catalog and in all relevant descriptive materials, and that all advisors are informed.

MDC/
Enclosure

cc: Gregory Miller, Chair, Senate PCC Committee  
Barbara Gill, Office of Student Financial Aid  
Reka Montfort, University Senate  
Erin Taylor, Division of Information Technology  
Pam Phillips, Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment  
Anne Turkos, University Archives  
Linda Yokoi, Office of the Registrar  
Cynthia Stevens, Office of Undergraduate Studies  
Alene Moyer, College of Arts and Humanities  
Charles Manekin, Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Studies
Summary of Proposed Action:

The Israel Studies Minor program (#AR29) currently requires completion of 6 courses (18 credits). We propose to change this to 5 courses (15 credits). In an effort to increase the number of students who complete the minor, we will eliminate 1 of the 3 elective courses. At 15 credits, the Israel Studies minor will be more comparable to similar minor programs within ARHU and other disciplines related to Israel Studies and will therefore make the Israel Studies Minor a more attractive and attainable degree program.

Departmental/Unit Contact Person for Proposal: Samantha Levine, Levines@umd.edu
Proposal: Modification to Israel Studies Minor

I. Overview and Rationale

The Minor in Israel Studies was established in 2009 soon after the establishment of the Gildenhorn Institute for Israel Studies and the consequent expansion of the availability of courses on Israel at UMD. Its purpose is to provide a structure for students to study the essential aspects of Israel in the Middle East and to be familiar with the important historical, political, and cultural markers of the country. Since the program began accepting students in Fall 2009, 23 students have completed the minor, with another 10 students projected to complete it by Spring 2015.

Based on feedback from current students as well as a review of similar minor programs, we feel it is necessary at this time to change the Israel Studies Minor program from 18 to 15 credits. As an interdisciplinary field itself, Israel Studies draws students from a number of majors, such as Government and Politics, Economics, History, Jewish Studies and others; these students frequently hold a double major, another minor, an internship, or a leadership role in a student organization. We have heard statements of regret from many of these motivated students that they cannot pursue the Israel Studies minor because they would fall one class short. Furthermore, minors in disciplines similar to Israel Studies are 15 credits, including: Middle Eastern Studies, Jewish Studies, Persian Studies, International Development/Conflict Management, Global Terrorism Studies, and US Latina/o Studies. It would benefit the future enrollment of the Israel Studies minor if the program were more comparable to similar programs at UMD.

II. Summary of Changes

In order to change the total number of credits for the Israel Studies Minor from 18 to 15 credits, we will eliminate 1 of the 3 required elective courses.

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<td>1 course in Middle East Studies</td>
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This proposed change to cut one elective class from the Israel Studies Minor will keep the minor's original goal of allowing students to study the essential aspects of Israel in the Middle East fully intact. This is why we have not chosen to eliminate the course in Middle East Studies; Israel must be understood in the greater context of this constantly changing region, so it is important for students pursuing the Israel Studies minor to fulfill this requirement. We also wish to maintain the requirement to take one senior-level seminar class (ISRL448 _), to allow students the opportunity to examine one topic in-depth with a smaller group of students. With these considerations in mind, we believe the best way to make the minor more accessible to students yet still maintain the interdisciplinary nature of the program is to remove one of the elective requirements. The program still includes plenty of freedom for students to take two elective courses to explore the aspects of modern Israel that interest them most. Overall, reducing the Israel Studies minor from 18 to 15 credits will allow more students to complete the minor without sacrificing the minor's goal of enhancing their understanding of the important historical, political, and cultural markers of Israel and its place in the Middle East.