



PROGRAM GUIDE

2023-2024 / 5784



BE A PART OF IT!



A PROGRAM OF
JEWISH FEDERATION
OF GREATER FAIRFIELD COUNTY

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Jewish Federation of Greater Fairfield County

Merkaz Community High School for Judaic Studies

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Bridgeport, CT 06604

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Website: merkazct.org

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



@merkaz

A Note from our Head of School

Dear Merkaz Students and Families,

The faculty and I welcome all of our new and returning students to Merkaz as we begin our 45th year of serving the Jewish community. Time and again, Merkaz has been referred to as the jewel of our community. It is the clear reflection of everyone who has joined together and contributed to its growth and development - our synagogues, families, faculty, students, and our professional and lay leadership. As one community, we have committed our time and efforts to create a program that meets the needs and diverse interests of Jewish teens throughout our region. The success of Merkaz may best be measured by the students who look forward to coming each Tuesday evening and are totally engaged in renewing old friendships, meeting new people, and learning in an atmosphere that is truly rewarding and fun! This year, 5784, we are excited to offer not just the Tuesday night Classic Track but also a Flexible Track for those students whose lives and commitments make a Tuesday night challenging yet want to be a part of the Merkaz community. We have a vast and robust calendar of programmatic learning for those joining Merkaz on the Flex Track and many exciting classes to choose from for those joining us on the Tuesday night Classic Track. So, if you are new to Merkaz, join the many students in this unique opportunity to meet teens from different schools, cities and towns, synagogues, and our visiting Israeli Shaliach - Ofek.

Merkaz is the Hebrew word for “center.” Get involved and it will quickly become your center for socializing and growing as you explore your interests, beliefs, and ties to Judaism. Opportunities abound with a variety of programs and many course offerings to choose from this year. Participate in social action, community service, text study, Holocaust education, music, and more. Engage in learning about Israel, contemporary issues, leadership, and ethical dilemmas. Prepare for and strengthen your college admissions process, engage in real life experiences, and get ready as you enter a new phase of life. Through films, activities, lively discussions, debates, projects, cooking, meditation, guest speakers, community interaction, field trips, and more, your experience at Merkaz, no matter which Track you choose, will be both meaningful and relevant!

Merkaz truly offers such diverse programs and choices that there is always something for everyone! Be sure to check out all the incredible opportunities available to you in this Course Catalog that will meet your individual interests and scheduling needs.

Merkaz is an extraordinary experience that you will not want to miss!

Toda and a wonderful Shana Tova to all,



Lisa Becker
Merkaz Head of School

About Merkaz

Merkaz Community High School for Judaic Studies provides a meaningful and relevant Jewish education that fosters a strong Jewish identity, builds character, leadership and positive values, and creates a sense of unity with the Jewish people. Merkaz has been the center (מרכז) of Jewish educational life for teens throughout Greater Fairfield County for more than 45 years.

At Merkaz:

- We explore our Jewish values and connect them to our daily lives.
- We create a bridge between the history of our people and the world today.
- We use the arts, STEM, and Judaic texts as a springboard to understanding our Judaism.
- We partner with the community to do *Tikkun Olam* (repair the world.)
- We grow to become confident Jewish adults that our *bubbes/savtas* would be proud to know.
- We encourage, cultivate, and set forth future Jewish leaders.

Introducing

TWO WAYS TO MERKAZ

CLASSIC

Tuesdays 7-9 PM

Our semester-based program—now referred to as the Classic Track—will continue to provide community, vibrancy, and high-caliber Jewish education as it has for the past 45 years.

Fall 2023	Spring 2024
Congregation B'nai Israel 2710 Park Ave Bridgeport, CT 06604	Congregation Or Hadash 1200 Fairfield Woods Road Fairfield, CT 06825

Tuesday night on the Classic Track:

7:00 PM	First Period
7:50 PM	Nosh & Shmooze
8:10 PM	Second Period
9:00 PM	Dismissal

FLEX

Locations throughout Greater Fairfield County Various Dates and Times

Merkaz Flex Track uses a flexible programmatic model to provide enriching Jewish learning that works for any and all of our busy, geographically diverse community of Jewish teens. We know how important Merkaz is to you. We hear how happy you are to have a community of Jewish teens just like you. We have also heard how hard it is to make weekly classes work!

That's why we've strategically placed our programs across Greater Fairfield County.
To create accessibility for students across our catchment area to engage in the enriching Jewish learning we provide.

Course Requirements

Every student—regardless of the track they choose—must accrue **48 course credits** over the course of the 2023-2024 school year.

1 hour at Merkaz = 1 course credit

Classic Track requirements:

- Two (12 credit) courses per semester.
- Any additional required orientation and special programming.

Flex Track requirements:

- 48 credits total over the course of the 2023-2024 school year.
- All required orientations and event.
- Credits vary per program. See the Flex Track schedule for more information.

Transcripts, Certificates, and Diplomas

Upon Graduation:

- Merkaz students who successfully meet all requirements will receive a Merkaz Diploma. Students who are unable to accrue 48 credits per year will receive a Certificate of Completion.

For College Applications:

- All students may request a transcript to submit to colleges. Students are also encouraged to ask faculty members for Letters of Recommendation.

Advanced Standing:

- Go above and beyond at Merkaz? Students who obtain more than 48 credits in a given school year will be recognized on their transcript, diploma at graduation as a **Graduate in Advanced Standing**.



Classic Track

2023-2024 / 5784

COURSE CATALOGUE

Classic Track Calendar

Tuesdays 7-9 PM

Fall 2023

SEPTEMBER

12 Welcome Back!
19 No Class
26 First Day of Fall Classes

OCTOBER

3 Class
10 Class
17 Class
24 Class
31 No Class

NOVEMBER

7 Class
14 Class
21 Class
28 Class

DECEMBER

5 Class
12 Special Program (Hanukkah)
19 Last Day of Fall Classes

WINTER BREAK (Dec 20-Jan 8)

Spring 2024

JANUARY

16 Spring Orientation
23 Class
30 Class

FEBRUARY

6 Class
13 Class
20 Class
27 Class

MARCH

5 Class
12 Class
19 Class
26 Special Program (Purim)

APRIL

2 Class
9 Last Day of Spring Classes

SPRING BREAK (Apr 10-May 6)

MAY

7 Special Program (Yom HaShoah)
14 Special Program (Yom HaAtzmaut)

GRADUATION

JUNE 2, 2023

Inclement Weather Make-Up Date
January 9

Inclement Weather Make-Up Date
May 21

Fall Semester: *At a Glance...*

7:00 PM	8:00 PM
<p style="text-align: center;">Required</p> <p><u>Kulam 8th Grade Seminar</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Allie Burger <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Required for all 8th graders <p><u>Confirmation Class</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Rabbi Evan Schultz <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Required for B'nai Israel 10th graders only <p style="text-align: center;">Electives</p> <p><u>Better Together</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Ricka Breiner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9-10th grade <p><u>Cooking</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Amy Gershberg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Double-period course 12th grade only <p><u>Develop your Guiding Light</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Baba Lou Haber <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9-12th grade <p><u>Hollywood and the Holocaust</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Rabbi Chagie Rubin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-12th grade <p><u>Mahjong</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Susan Roth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-12th grade <p><u>A Past & Present History of Jews in Comics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Arlen Schumer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-12th grade <p><u>Shakshuka, the Shuk, and a Start-up Nation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Ofek Moscovich <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9-12th grade 	<p style="text-align: center;">Required</p> <p><u>College Bound</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Noah Nemitoff-Bresler <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Required for all 11th graders <p style="text-align: center;">Electives</p> <p><u>Cooking</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Amy Gershberg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Double-period course 12th grade only <p><u>Discover your Roots: Jewish Genealogy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Josh Gruber <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-12th grade <p><u>Embodied Judaism: Yoga and Meditation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Lou Haber <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10-12th grade <p><u>Headlines</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Ricka Breiner <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8-9th grade <p><u>Jewish Jam Band</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Rabbi Evan Schultz <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8-12th grade <p><u>Mahjong</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Susan Roth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8-9th grade <p><u>Photography: The Jewish Lens</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Allie Burger <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grades: 8-12th <p><u>Sex and Violence in the Bible</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Rabbi Chagie Rubin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grades: 10-12th <p><u>Shakshuka, the Shuk, and a Start-up Nation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty: Ofek Moscovich <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8-9th grade

Fall Semester 7:00 PM Courses

Required Courses

8th Grade

Kulam

Faculty: Allie Burger

Credits: 12 Credits

Kulam is a Hebrew High School curriculum that promotes *shleimut* (individual wellbeing), *hesed* (connection), and *tzedek* (just action). Kulam equips Jewish teens to engage in dynamic and authentic relationships in order to think reflectively, act courageously, and develop healthy and caring communities. In this program, you will ask big questions about where, why and how you belong while exploring issues of identity, equity, and justice with Jewish wisdom as a guide.

10th Grade (B'nai Israel members ONLY)

Confirmation Class

Faculty: Rabbi Evan Schultz

Credits: 12 Credits

Required for and open to Congregation B'nai Israel 10th grade students only. Confirmation Class meets both semesters. During the Confirmation year, students spend part of each night at Merkaz learning with one another. They spend their time with Rabbi Schultz exploring a variety of issues — many of their own choosing. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Fall Semester 7:00PM Courses

Electives

**** Please pay careful attention to the grades available for each class. ****
Some courses are delineated into sections by grade.

Better Together

Faculty: Ricka Breiner

Grades: 9-10th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel once wrote, "A test of a people is how it behaves toward the old. It is easy to love children. Even tyrants and dictators make a point of being fond of children. But the affection and care for the old, the incurable, the helpless are the true gold mines of a culture." In this award-winning, intergenerational program, students will visit Mozaic Senior Life in Bridgeport and develop awareness of and sensitivity towards the aging through hands on learning with the residents, as well as learn important lessons about the Jewish pillar of *I'dor v'dor*, from generation to generation.

Cooking

Faculty: Amy Gershberg

Grades: 12th grade only

Credits: 12 Credits

The way to any heart is through the stomach! Get to the heart of Jewish culture, traditions, and customs through cooking delicious, inventive Jewish foods. This is a double period course.

Develop your Guiding Light

Faculty: Lou Haber

Grades: 9-12th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

This class focuses on students' personal growth and the development of character traits that promote a purposeful, satisfying life. Together we will explore and discuss Jewish writings from the Jewish tradition of *Mussar*, which is the Hebrew term for "ethics" or ethical teachings. As part of class, students will develop their own internal *Ner Tamid*, or "guiding light," to help illuminate a pathway to growth. Students also will identify and work on their own particular challenges to help themselves and the world.

Hollywood and the Holocaust

Faculty: Rabbi Chagie Rubin

Grades: 10-12th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

Some of the most acclaimed movies were generated out of one of the greatest horrors of the 20th century. Learn about the Holocaust including the rise of anti-Semitism, Jewish ghettos, the Kinder-transport, resistance, the death camps, rescue, the aftermath, and remembrance. Students in this course will have an opportunity to view numerous film clips on each of these topics, engage in dynamic conversations, and discuss the relevance of this part of our history in our lives today. May include screenings of some of the following films: *Valkyrie*, *Downfall*, *Midway*, *Defiance*, and *Passport to Life*.

Mahjong

Faculty: Susan Roth

Grades: 10-12th grade *Capped at 8 students*

Credits: 12 Credits

Through hands-on gameplay, this class offers students a unique opportunity to learn and engage in the ancient Chinese tile game while exploring its cultural significance within the Jewish community. This class fosters camaraderie, critical thinking, and cultural appreciation among students.

A Past & Present History of Jews in Comics

Faculty: Arlen Schumer

Grades: 10-12th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

Join comic book and pop culture historian Arlen Schumer (author/designer, *The Silver Age of Comic Book Art*) as he explores the major Jewish role in the creation of the American comic book, and the superhero (and its antecedents in older, ancient myths—from the Golem to Ben Grimm), and how they sparked a 20th Century pop culture explosion, via the works of its most influential Jewish creators (artists, writers, letterers and colorists), editors and publishers. Each one-hour class will begin with a verbal/visual presentation about 15-30 minutes long, followed by discussion. The class will include a visit to Fairfield University for a lecture by Art Spiegelman on his oft-banned book, *Maus*.

Shakshuka, the Shuk, and a Start-up Nation

Faculty: Ofek Moscovich

Grades: 9-12th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

Yalla! Get to know about all that Israel has to offer in this expansive, immersive course led by our enthusiastic Israeli Emissary, Ofek. From food to film to flora and fauna, this class will paint a clearer picture of a country that is simultaneously home to one of the oldest place in the world and the biggest start-up nation in the Middle East. Includes interactive cooking classes, opportunities to ask meaningful and exploratory questions about Israel, and lots of fun. Sababa!

Fall Semester 8:00 PM Courses

Required Courses

11th Grade

College Bound

Faculty: Noah Nemitoff-Bresler

Credits: 12 Credits

Join your friends from Merkaz to explore, discuss, and challenge your preconceived notions about college before embarking on the application process. The next steps after high school can be stressful and daunting to figure out. Whether you've been planning for years, this is the first time you've thought about college, or even if you're not sure that going straight to college out of high school is right for you, this course will provide information and resources to ensure you'll be making an informed decision. We'll cover topics including the college search, application essays, extracurricular activities, internships, gap years, and more. And of course we'll explore the connection to Judaism, including how to determine what you want out of a Jewish community in college.

Fall Semester 8:00PM Courses

Electives

**** Please pay careful attention to the grades available for each class. ****
Some courses are delineated into sections by grade.

Cooking

Faculty: Amy Gershberg

Grades: 12th grade only

Credits: 12 Credits

The way to any heart is through the stomach! Get to the heart of Jewish culture, traditions, and customs through cooking delicious, inventive Jewish foods. This is a double period course.

Discover your Roots: Jewish Genealogy

Faculty: Josh Gruber

Grades: 10-12th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

Where do we come from? Explore your Jewish roots and discover your ancestral heritage in our engaging genealogy course. Uncover the fascinating stories and connections that have shaped your family history. Gain a deeper understanding of your identity and strengthen your sense of belonging through this enriching exploration of your Jewish lineage. In an effort to understand where we've come from, we'll be using online resources and family stories, to trace our own genealogy.

Embodied Judaism: Yoga and Meditation

Faculty: Lou Haber

Grades: 10-12th grade

Credit: 12 Credits

Yoga means union. It helps us to unite body, mind, and soul as well as to recognize the divinity in one another and connect to God. In this class, students will explore various aspects of Yoga, including poses, breathing practices, meditation, behaviors such as nonviolence, and mindsets such as gratitude. Along the way we will gain an understanding of how the practice of Yoga enables us to embody Judaism and enrich our lives.

Baba Lou Haber is a certified Yoga teacher who teaches at Kaia Yoga.

Headlines

Faculty: Ricka Breiner

Grades: 8-9th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

Daily events influence and shape our lives as Jews. Magazine and newspaper articles help us focus on and discuss the current events that affect us here, in Israel, and in the world. Many issues are controversial, even among Jews, and are worth considering from all sides. Raise your awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the people and events impacting our society and your daily lives while you share your views and editorial comments.

Jewish Jam Band

Faculty: Rabbi Evan Schultz

Grades: 8 - 12th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

Using Joey Weisenberg's book *The Torah of Music* as a guide, join Rabbi Evan for an hour of learning about Judaism through music. Play an instrument? Bring it to Merkaz and join Rabbi Evan in creating a rockin' Jewish Jam Band! Open to anyone regardless of skill. Some instruments may be available to borrow.

Mahjong

Faculty: Susan Roth

Grades: 8-9th grade *Capped at 8 students*

Credits: 12 Credits

Through hands-on gameplay, this class offers students a unique opportunity to learn and engage in the ancient Chinese tile game while exploring its cultural significance within the Jewish community. This class fosters camaraderie, critical thinking, and cultural appreciation among students.

Photography: The Jewish Lens

Faculty: Allie Burger

Grades: 8-12th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

Look at Jewish ritual objects, Jewish communal life and education, and Jewish food like never before. Using a camera, get up close and personal with your culture. We'll be using the art of photography as a tool to explore the Jewish world as we know it, and to imagine the one we hope to see in our future.

Sex and Violence in the Bible

Faculty: Rabbi Chagie Rubin

Grades: 10-12th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

The bible contains a remarkable amount of violence and sex which makes scriptures a highly entertaining and sometimes horrifying read. You will find that the holiest of books is filled with more sex and violence than today's movies and T.V. Instead of condemning these episodes in the bible, this course will examine, analyze, and discuss the deeper meaning of these narratives hidden below the surface.

Shakshuka, the Shuk, and a Start-up Nation

Faculty: Ofek Moscovich

Grades: 8-9th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

Yalla! Get to know about all that Israel has to offer in this expansive, immersive course led by our enthusiastic Israeli Emissary, Ofek. From food to film to flora and fauna, this class will paint a clearer picture of a country that is simultaneously home to one of the oldest place in the world and the biggest start-up nation in the Middle East. Includes interactive cooking classes, opportunities to ask meaningful and exploratory questions about Israel, and lots of fun. Sababa!

Spring Semester: *At a Glance...*

7:00 PM

Required

Kulam 8th Grade Seminar

- Faculty: Allie Burger
 - Required for all 8th graders

Jews and the Civil Rights Movement

- Faculty: Cantor Sarah Metzger and Rabbi Josh Ratner
 - Required for 10-12th graders attending the Civil Rights Mission in Spring of 2024

Electives

Headlines

- Faculty: Ricka Breiner
 - 10-12th grade

Israel Dream Team

- Faculty: Ofek Moscovich
 - 10-12th grade

Jewish Jam Band

- Faculty: Rabbi Evan Schultz
 - 9-12th grade

Jewish Spirituality

- Faculty: Justin Beck
 - 11-12th grade

Mahjong

- Faculty: Susan Roth
 - 9 - 12th grade

The Twilight Zone

- Faculty: Rabbi Chagie Rubin
 - 9-12th grade

Unlocking the Secrets of the Hebrew Bible

- Faculty: Baba Lou Haber
 - 9-12th grade

8:00 PM

Required

Confirmation Class

- Faculty: Rabbi Evan Schultz
 - Required for B'nai Israel 10th graders only

Electives

Choices on a College Campus

- Faculty: Noah Nemitoff-Bresler
 - 12th grade only

Embodied Judaism: Yoga and Meditation

- Faculty: Lou Haber
 - 8-9th grade

Israel Dream Team

- Faculty: Ofek Moscovich
 - 8-9th grade

Jews in Finance: a Closer Look

- Faculty: Josh Gruber
 - 8-12th grade

Life on the Line

- Faculty: Rabbi Shlame Landa
 - 9-12th grade

Mahjong

- Faculty: Susan Roth
 - 8-9th grade

Photography: The Jewish Lens

- Faculty: Allie Burger
 - 8-12th grade

Real Talk with Rabbi Sarah Marion: Q & A on Abortion

- Faculty: Rabbi Sarah Marion
 - Grades: 10-12th grade

Superheroes and the Jewish Connection

- Faculty: Rabbi Chagie Rubin
 - 8-12th grade

Spring Semester 7:00 PM Courses

Required Courses

8th Grade

Kulam

Faculty: Allie Burger

Credits: 12 Credits

Kulam is a Hebrew High School curriculum that promotes *shleimut* (individual wellbeing), *hesed* (connection), and *tzedek* (just action). Kulam equips Jewish teens to engage in dynamic and authentic relationships in order to think reflectively, act courageously, and develop healthy and caring communities. In this program, you will ask big questions about where, why and how you belong while exploring issues of identity, equity, and justice with Jewish wisdom as a guide.

10-12th Grade (Required for Civil Rights Trip Attendees ONLY)

Jews and the Civil Rights Movement

Faculty: Cantor Sarah Metzger and Rabbi Josh Ratner

Credits: 12 Credits

This course is a prerequisite for the Teen Civil Rights Mission that will take place May 9-12. Students will explore how social justice is at the foundation of the Jewish experience and the role that the Jewish people took in the Civil Rights Movement. This course will culminate in a trip to Atlanta, Montgomery, Selma, and Birmingham.

Spring Semester 7:00PM Courses

Electives

**** Please pay careful attention to the grades available for each class. ****
Some courses are delineated into sections by grade.

Headlines

Faculty: Ricka Breiner
Grades: 10-12th Grade
Credits: 12 Credits

Daily events influence and shape our lives as Jews. Magazine and newspaper articles help us focus on and discuss the current events that affect us here, in Israel, and in the world. Many issues are controversial, even among Jews, and are worth considering from all sides. Raise your awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the people and events impacting our society and your daily lives while you share your views and editorial comments.

Israel Dream Team

Faculty: Ofek Moscovich
Grades: 10-12th grade
Credits: 12 Credits

Get hands on experience in planning Israel-centered programming! Work closely with our *shaliach* (Israeli emissary) to learn about what it takes to run his successful Israel Desk programs. Participants will help plan and execute Israel Desk events and activities, including our Yom Ha'Atzmaut and Yom HaZikaron programs. *Additional evenings and weekends may be required for extra credit.*

Jewish Jam Band

Faculty: Rabbi Evan Schultz
Grades: 9-12th grade
Credits: 12 Credits

Using Joey Weisenberg's book *The Torah of Music* as a guide, join Rabbi Evan for an hour of learning about Judaism through music. Play an instrument? Bring it to Merkaz and join Rabbi Evan in creating a rockin' Jewish Jam Band! Open to anyone regardless of skill. Some instruments may be available to borrow.

Jewish Spirituality: Revealing the Hidden Secrets of a Meaningful Life

Faculty: Justin Beck

Grades: 11-12th grade

Jewish mysticism, aka Kabbalah, integrates worldly common knowledge with deeper spiritual wisdom. Get a preview into the exploration of spirituality, Kabbalah, and mysticism considering lifelong questions including: What am I doing here? What is the meaning of life? How do I overcome circumstances? What does it mean to be Jewish? How can I make my life more meaningful and fulfilled? What happens after death? This course will provide a Jewish perspective on spirituality, and will guide how you perceive and experience the world with greater meaning, happiness, and well-being.

Mahjong

Faculty: Susan Roth

Grades: 9-12th grade *Capped at 8 students*

Credits: 12 Credits

Through hands-on gameplay, this class offers students a unique opportunity to learn and engage in the ancient Chinese tile game while exploring its cultural significance within the Jewish community. This class fosters camaraderie, critical thinking, and cultural appreciation among students.

The Twilight Zone

Faculty: Rabbi Chagie Rubin

Grades: 9-12th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

In this class, students will delve into The Twilight Zone's unique blend of science fiction, fantasy, and moral dilemma, all while exploring the Jewish values and ethics that underlie many of its episodes. By exploring episodes including "To Serve Man," "Time Enough at Last," "Changing of the Guard," "In the Nick of Time," and "Eyes of the Beholder," students will tackle themes of identity, justice, and ethical decision-making, offering valuable opportunities for reflection and discussion within a Jewish context.

Unlocking the Secrets of the Hebrew Bible

Faculty: Baba Lou Haber

Grades: 9-12th grade

Credit: 12 Credits

Did you ever read something in the Hebrew Bible that seems completely irrelevant to your life today? Or it makes you wonder why it was important enough to be included in the Bible in first place? As modern Jews, we can get stuck on the direct, apparent meaning of Biblical text and miss deeper, more secret, and more mystical interpretations. In this class we will probe deeper meanings of Biblical stories in order to understand them more fully and find greater relevance to our lives.

Spring Semester 8:00 PM Courses

Required Courses

10th Grade (B'nai Israel members ONLY)

Confirmation Class

Faculty: Rabbi Evan Schultz

Credits: 12 Credits

Required for and open to Congregation B'nai Israel 10th grade students only. Confirmation Class meets both semesters. During the Confirmation year, students spend part of each night at Merkaz learning with one another. They spend their time with Rabbi Schultz exploring a variety of issues — many of their own choosing. Click to learn more.

Spring Semester 8:00 PM Courses

Electives

**** Please pay careful attention to the grades available for each class. ****
Some courses are delineated into sections by grade.

Choices on the College Campus

Faculty: Noah Nemitoff-Bresler

Grades: 12th grade only

Credits: 12 Credits

With the college application process in the rear view mirror, it's time to start thinking about what life will be like when you actually step foot on that college campus or wherever life takes you as a newly independent(ish) adult. This is a time of transformation, and you'll be faced with many choices, from how to observe Judaism in a meaningful way to what major and career path to pursue. We'll hear from guest speakers who are experts in their fields, including about how to respond to antisemitism on college campuses, and we'll discuss the important topics that aren't usually talked about openly, all with a Jewish twist. Join your friends from Merkaz in making your transition into the next chapter of your life more meaningful and impactful.

Embodied Judaism: Yoga and Meditation

Faculty: Lou Haber

Grades: 8-9th grade

Credit: 12 Credits

Yoga means union. It helps us to unite body, mind, and soul as well as to recognize the divinity in one another and connect to God. In this class, students will explore various aspects of Yoga, including poses, breathing practices, meditation, behaviors such as nonviolence, and mindsets such as gratitude. Along the way we will gain an understanding of how the practice of Yoga enables us to embody Judaism and enrich our lives.

Baba Lou Haber is a certified Yoga teacher who teaches at Kaia Yoga.

Israel Dream Team

Faculty: Ofek Moscovich

Grades: 8-9th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

Get hands on experience in planning Israel-centered programming! Work closely with our *shaliach* (Israeli emissary) to learn about what it takes to run his successful Israel Desk programs. Participants will help plan and execute Israel Desk events and activities, including our Yom Ha'Atzmaut and Yom HaZikaron programs. *Additional evenings and weekends may be required for extra credit.*

Jews and Finance: A History and Practical Guide

Faculty: Josh Gruber

Grades: 8-12th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

Throughout history, Jews have had an outsized and prominent role in the financial industry, from the Rothschilds to Goldman Sachs. This course will look at the history of how Jews came to be so connected to this particular field, and the impact it has had on the community. As we review, we will also look at key concepts that make up the financial world, both from a macroeconomic view, as well as your own personal financial knowledge.

Life on the Line

Faculty: Rabbi Shlame Landa

Grades: 9-12th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

You make the call! Debate real-life news stories such as rescuing strangers, euthanasia, and attempted suicide. The course invites each student to share their views and opinions on each case, "render judgement" on these life-and-death scenarios and then consider what ancient Jewish wisdom says about these modern-day dilemmas. Students will discover a new approach to navigating life's tough decisions.

Mahjong

Faculty: Susan Roth

Grades: 8-9th grade *Capped at 8 students*

Credits: 12 Credits

Through hands-on gameplay, this class offers students a unique opportunity to learn and engage in the ancient Chinese tile game while exploring its cultural significance within the Jewish community. This class fosters camaraderie, critical thinking, and cultural appreciation among students.

Photography: The Jewish Lens

Faculty: Allie Burger

Grades: 8-12th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

Look at Jewish ritual objects, Jewish communal life and education, and Jewish food like never before. Using a camera, get up close and personal with your culture. We'll be using the art of photography as a tool to explore the Jewish world as we know it, and to imagine the one we hope to see in our future.

Real Talk with Rabbi Sarah Marion: Questions and Answers on Abortion

Faculty: Rabbi Sarah Marion

Grades: 10-12th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

In June of 2022, the Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to an abortion. Since then, abortion has emerged as one of the biggest issues of our time. But what is an “abortion,” exactly? What does it mean to be “pro-choice” or “anti-abortion?” When, and why, might an abortion be necessary, and how does the procedure actually work? What guidance does Jewish tradition provide on this issue, compared with other faiths? Who is harmed the most, when access to abortion becomes limited or banned? How does reproductive justice support racial justice, LGBTQI rights, and other important Jewish values? In this class, we will examine the many layers and complexities around access to abortion and reproductive healthcare. In addition to learning from the course instructor and fellow classmates, we will explore this issue from a medical and legal perspective through films, articles, and visits from experts and guest speakers. This course offers an opportunity to explore, discuss and debate the many layers and complexities around abortion and reproductive healthcare in a safe, open, and respectful environment. Students of all identities and backgrounds are welcome and encouraged to join. In addition to class sessions, students will also have the option to engage in local and national advocacy work around reproductive justice, led by Rabbi Marion. This course is as an initiative of the Reproductive Justice Team at Congregation B’nai Israel.

Superheroes and the Jewish Connection

Faculty: Rabbi Chagie Rubin

Grades: 8-12th grade

Credits: 12 Credits

Superhero movies continue to dominate Hollywood. Join Rabbi Rubin to explore the Jewish influence in Superhero movies as we watch, analyze, and debate these films. Students will choose films from your favorite Marvel and DC Comics superheroes.



Flex Track

2023-2024 / 5784

CALENDAR OF PROGRAMS

Flex Track: At a Glance...

Below you will find a preliminary calendar of programs and events available to the Flex Track program. **These events are subject to change, and new programs will be announced and updated below throughout the school year.**

- If you are interested in suggesting a Flex Track program for this year, please email merkaz@shalomct.org.

In order to remain on track to graduate, **students are expected to earn 48 Merkaz credits per school year.** Credits for each Flex Track program are listed in their description.

- If you have any questions about earning credits on the Flex Track, please email merkaz@shalomct.org.

Important things to note about the Flex Track:

- Some programs may necessitate participation fees.
- Placement is contingent on available space. Students will know their Flex Track program placements by the start of the school year.
- New programs will be added throughout the school year. Once registered, you will get ongoing updates about new programs!
- Extenuating circumstances may cause other programs to be cancelled. In the event of a cancellation, we will aim to give as much advanced notice as possible.

September 2023

Merkaz Orientation and Registration Party

Date: Tues 9/12 @ 7 – 8 PM

Location: Federation Offices

Credits: 2 Credits

Welcome to Merkaz! Whether Classic or Flex Track, you are all part of our Merkaz family and we'd like to welcome you—as well as your parents and any prospective students and parents—to our offices to see what Merkaz is all about. Snacks will be provided, and our Israeli *shaliach* (emissary) Ofek Moscovich will lead some activities. If you haven't yet registered, consider this our Open House! Lisa Becker, Head of School, and Sophie Greenspan, Programs Manager, will be there to answer any questions you may have.

This is a required ALL-SCHOOL program for all registered students.



October 2023

Flex Track Kickoff in the Sukkah

Date: Mon 10/2 @ 6:30 – 8 PM

Location: TCS in Westport

Credits: 2 Credits

Join us under the *sukkah* to meet your fellow Flex Track students and get oriented to our new program. Snacks will be provided.

Lecture on Maus and Art Spiegelman, Creator of *Maus*

Date: Tues 10/10 @ 7 – 8 PM

Location: Congregation B'nai Israel

Credits: 1 Credit

Attend a class about Art Spiegelman and his oft-banned book, *Maus*, taught by Arlen Schumer in preparation for an evening with the author at the Quick Center at Fairfield University. *This is a prerequisite before attending the Quick Center event on October 17th.*

Federation 101 & Super Sunday

Date: Sun 10/15 @ 10 – 2 PM

Location: Federation Offices

Credits: 4 Credits

Learn what it takes to make our Jewish non-profit run with experiential learning. Through this campaign phone-a-thon, students will get valuable work experience in the fields of development at marketing and walk away with a rich understanding of what our Federation does and how a Jewish non-profit works. Educational info session taught by Federation CEO, Carin Savel, to precede phone-a-thon.

Art Spiegelman, Author of *Maus*, at the Quick Center

Date: Tues 10/17 @ 7:30 PM

Location: Quick Center for the Arts at Fairfield U

Credits: 3 Credits

Lecture title: “Surviving Maus: Visualizing the Unimaginable.” Presented in conjunction with the Fairfield University Art Museum’s exhibition, In Real Times: Arthur Szyk: Artist and Soldier for Human Rights, Spiegelman will discuss his own work while offering reflections on Szyk’s anti-Nazi political cartooning. *Students are required to attend a pre-lecture class on at our Classic Track campus on October 10th to attend this lecture.*

Kosher Today: Traditional, Modern and Evolved

Date: Thurs 10/26 @ 6 – 9 PM

Location: TCS in Westport

Credits: 3 Credits

Using Chanie Apfelbaum's newly released cookbook, *Totally Kosher; Tradition with a Twist*, we'll prepare a few modern dishes and learn about how keeping kosher is a cornerstone of all Jewish foods. How have vegan products affected kosher keepers' kitchens? What about Instagram and TikTok? What are some updates and trends evident in highly creative re-worked recipes like these?

This session will be taught by Liz Rueven. Liz has been producing her food blog, [Kosher Like Me](#) since 2011. She is passionate about encouraging readers to eat within the seasons, explore Jewish foodways and support local farmers and food creatives. Her instagram account inspires with easy recipes, travel adventures and personal discoveries [@kosherlikeme](#).

This program is a pre-requisite for the Chanie Apfelbaum author talk on November 2nd @ 7pm at Chabad of Westport.

November 2023

Author Talk with Chanie Apfelbaum

Totally Kosher: Tradition with a Twist

Date: Thurs 11/2 @ 7 – 9 PM

Location: Chabad of Westport

Credits: 2 Credits

Known for bringing a trendy edge to kosher meals, Chanie’s recipes are approachable, playful, and tasty, and introduce exciting global flavors to the kosher canon of Jewish-inspired dishes—such as Miso Matzo Ball Soup, Instant Pot Paprikash, and Brownie Bar Hamantaschen that marries brownies with the Purim cookie favorite.

Chanie keeps cooking for family fun, fresh, and practical, too. She shares her secrets here, from kitchen hacks to favorite pantry ingredients that will transform your kosher cooking.

JTConnect’s Teen Conference on Anti-Semitism

Date: Sun 11/5 @ 10 AM – 5:00 PM

Location: West Hartford, CT

Credits: 7 Credits

JTConnect is hosting a Teen Conference on Antisemitism, which will feature a Keynote Speaker, four breakout sessions, and a parent track. Students and the community will learn about strategies to combat antisemitism happening on campus, online, and in Israel. To learn more, click [here](#).

Kristallnacht: Screening of *Four Winters*

Date: Tues 11/7 @ 7 PM

Location: SHU Community Theater

Credits: 3 Credits

Over 25,000 Jewish partisans fought back against the Nazis and their collaborators from deep within the forests of WWII’s Eastern Europe, Ukraine and Belarus. Against extraordinary odds, they escaped Nazi slaughter, transforming from young innocents to courageous resistance fighters. Shattering the myth of Jewish passivity, these last surviving partisans tell their stories of resistance in *Four Winters*, revealing a stunning narrative of heroism and resilience.

The Daffodil Project at Mozaic Senior Life

Date: Sun 11/12 @ 10PM – 2PM

Location: Mozaic Senior Life

Credits: 3 Credits

Come plant daffodils with seniors at Mozaic Senior Life through the Holocaust Resource Center. The Daffodil Project aspires to build a worldwide Living Holocaust Memorial by planting 1.5 million Daffodils in memory of the children who perished in the Holocaust and in support for children suffering in humanitarian crises in the world today.

Susannah Heschel at the Quick Center

Date: Tues 11/14 @ 7:30PM

Location: Quick Center for the Arts at Fairfield U

Credits: 3 Credits

Lecture title: “Turning Inter-Religious Dialogue into Prayer: Transformations of Abraham Joshua Heschel.” Ms. Heschel, the Eli M. Black Distinguished Professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth College, pays tribute to her father Abraham Joshua Heschel, one of the most eminent rabbinical scholars and humanists of our time. *This lecture is required for all students attending the Civil Rights Mission in April 2024.*

Author Talk: Rabbi Diana Fersko

We Need to Talk about Antisemitism

Date: Thurs 11/30 @ 7 – 9 PM

Location: TCS in Westport

Credits: 2 Credits

A millennial rabbi explores why we’re reluctant to discuss antisemitism—and empowers us to fight against it. Exploring topics like vile myths about Jewish people and the intersection of antisemitism with other forms of discrimination, *We Need to Talk About Antisemitism* gives readers the tools they need to understand the state of antisemitism today. Fersko shows Jews and non-Jews alike how to speak up and come together, spreading a message of solidarity and hope. This is a timely read for anyone passionate about fighting for social justice. Discussion to follow.

December 2023

Volunteer at St. John's Church

Date: Tues 12/5 @ 3:30 – 6 PM

Location: St. John's Church in Bridgeport

Credits: 3 Credits

Join Merkaz faculty, Susan Roth, to prepare a meal for those in need at St. John's Church. Limited to 6 students.

8th Grade ADL Combatting Anti-Semitism Workshop

Date: Tues 12/5 @ 7 - 9 PM

Location: B'nai Israel

Credits: 3 Credits

Event description coming soon.

In Real Times - Arthur Szyk: Artist and Soldier for Human Rights Exhibit Tour

Date: Mon 12/11 @ 6:30 PM

Location: Bellarmine Hall and Walsh Gallery, Fairfield University

Credits: 2 Credits

Docent led private tour of the Szyk exhibit specifically designed for teens. This special exhibition, organized around the theme of human rights features more than 50 works by acclaimed Polish Jewish miniaturist and political cartoonist Arthur Szyk (1894-1951), including political cartoons, and images that honor the power and importance of democratic ideals. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Hanukkah Celebration

Date: Tues 12/12 @ 7 – 9 PM

Location: B'nai Israel

Credits: 2 Credits

Join Merkaz for a classic Hanukkah celebration! We'll light candles, play dreidel, eat latkes and jelly donuts, and learn about the Festival of Lights.

This is a required ALL-SCHOOL program for all registered students.

January 2024

MLK Day – Jews and the Civil Rights Movement

Date: Tues 1/16 @ 7 – 9 PM

Location: B'nai Israel

Credits: 2 Credits

Event description coming soon.

This is a required ALL-SCHOOL program for all registered students.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day

Date: TBA

Location: TBA

Event description coming soon.



February 2024

Night at Night at the Planetarium

Date: Sat 2/3 @ 8 PM

Location: SHU Discovery Science Center and Planetarium

Credits: 3 Credits

Meet us at the Sacred Heart University Discovery Science Center and Planetarium for Havdalah and a night under the stars. We'll read Elie Wiesel's *Night* out loud from start to finish. Commentary and discussion from Holocaust Resource Center Founding Educator Shelley Kreiger and Planetarium staff to follow.

Exploring Rome's Unique Ancient Cuisine

Date: Thurs 2/15 @ 6 – 9 PM

Location: TBA

Credits: 3 Credits

The cuisine of the Italian Roman Jews correlates directly to the ghetto established there by papal decree in 1555. Their foods were severely restricted by geography, economics, poverty, seasonality and isolation. We'll learn how these severe conditions, lasting three centuries, inspired distinctive dishes that are still common (and celebrated) in Roman Jewish homes and restaurants today. We'll prepare some delicacies from the Cucina Ebraica as we marvel at the ingenuity and creativity of the Roman Jews. Liz will even coach you through some beginner Italian.

This session will be taught by Liz Rueven. Liz has been producing her food blog, [Kosher Like Me](#) since 2011. She is passionate about encouraging readers to eat within the seasons, explore Jewish foodways and support local farmers and food creatives. Her instagram account inspires with easy recipes, travel adventures and personal discoveries [@kosherlikeme](#).

March 2024

ADL Combatting Anti-Semitism Workshop

Date: Sun 3/3 @ 1 – 3 PM

Location: Temple B’nai Chaim

Credits: 2 Credits

Event description coming soon.

Volunteer at Homes for the Brave

Date: Mon 3/11 @ 3:30 - 5:30 PM

Location: Homes for the Brave in Bridgeport, CT

Credits: 2 Credits

Join Merkaz faculty, Susan Roth, to prepare a meal for those in need at Homes for the Brave. Homes for the Brave provides housing and services to individuals experiencing homelessness, especially Veterans. Capped at 6 students.

Traditions and Flavors of a Persian Purim Feast

Date: Sun 3/17 @ 2 – 5 PM

Location: TBA

Credits: 3 Credits

Purim is a huge holiday for Iranian Jews as the story took place in Iran. Expat communities in NY, LA and Israel continue to celebrate Purim with great excitement and traditional foods unique to this culture. We'll explore distinctly Persian foodways that highlight Sabzi (greens and herbs), Gondi (chicken dumplings), fruits and nuts and Purim sweet treats. Sorry, no hamantaschen in this deep cultural dive.

This session will be taught by Liz Rueven. Liz has been producing her food blog, [Kosher Like Me](#) since 2011. She is passionate about encouraging readers to eat within the seasons, explore Jewish foodways and support local farmers and food creatives. Her instagram account inspires with easy recipes, travel adventures and personal discoveries [@kosherlikeme](#).

Merkaz Purim Party

Dates: Tues, 3/26 @ 7-9PM

Location: TBA

Credits: 2 Credits

Celebrate Purim with Merkaz! Event details coming soon.

This is a required ALL-SCHOOL program for all registered students.

April 2024

Here There Are Blueberries

Date: Sun TBD

Location: New York Theater Workshop, 79 E 4th St, New York, NY

Credits: 3 Credits

Based on real events, Tectonic Theater Project's *Here There Are Blueberries* tells the story of an album of historical Nazi-era photographs—what they reveal about the perpetrators of the Holocaust, and our own humanity. Learn more about the play [here](#).

Spring of Service

Dates: Throughout April

Location: TBA

Credits: Vary by event

Use your Spring Break to give back to the community! More information on dates and events coming soon.



May 2024

Food Field Trip to NYC

Date: Sun 5/5 @ 10 AM - 3 PM

Location: NYC

Credits: 5 Credits

Surprise! We'll leave town and head into NYC to explore cultures and cuisines we have not discussed in class yet. We hope to meet with the chef and owner of one of our favorite restaurants in NYC as they present dishes unique to their birth places and far away from NYC. We will discuss their food traditions, ingredients and cultures all while enjoying multiple courses unique to their homeland.

This session will be taught by Liz Rueven. Liz has been producing her food blog, [Kosher Like Me](#) since 2011. She is passionate about encouraging readers to eat within the seasons, explore Jewish foodways and support local farmers and food creatives. Her instagram account inspires with easy recipes, travel adventures and personal discoveries [@kosherlikeme](#).

Author Talk with B.A. Van Sise

Date: Tues 5/7 @ 7 – 9 PM

Location: TBA

Credits: 2 Credits

Invited to Life is a series of portraits and short stories created in four years traveling across the United States to document the inspirational but complex lives of more than 150 American Holocaust survivors. Highlighting the diversity of these subjects and their unique experiences, the work examines the many ways large and small the world has been remapped by the hopeful roads survivors have made in overcoming their trauma to create a new and better future in their pivot to American life. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Discussion with HRC Founding Educator Shelley Kreiger to follow.

This is a required ALL-SCHOOL program for all registered students.

Yom HaZikaron Program

Date: Mon 5/13 @ 7 – 9 PM

Location: TBA

Credits: 2 Credits

Commemorate Israel's Memorial Day with Merkaz. Event details coming soon.

This is a required ALL-SCHOOL program for all registered students.

Yom Ha'Atzmaut Celebration

Date: Tues 5/14 @ 7 – 9 PM

Location: TBA

Credits: 2 Credits

Celebrate Israel's Independence with Merkaz! Event details coming soon.

This is a required ALL-SCHOOL program for all registered students.

End of School Party: Lag B'Omer Field Day

Date: Sun 5/26 @ 11 AM – 2PM

Location: TBa

Credits: 3 Credits

Event description coming soon.



Recurring Flex Programs

- **Dignity Grows**

- Dignity Grows provides monthly comprehensive hygiene products, including menstrual hygiene necessities to women, girls and individuals assigned female at birth, who cannot afford them. At Dignity Grows packs, volunteers pack totes for people experiencing period poverty. A Dignity Grows Tote contains a month's supply of sanitary pads and panty-liners, toothpaste and a toothbrush, a bar of soap, deodorant, shampoo, and handy-wipes, all packed in discreet, reusable zipper-top bags.
- Students can also have the opportunity to be on a Dignity Grows fundraising committee.

- **Reproductive Justice Committee**

- Learn about reproductive justice in Jewish culture. This committee, helmed by Rabbi Sarah Marion of B'nai Israel, will meet on an as-needed basis to discuss current events and venture out into the community in pursuit of reproductive justice!

- **PJ Library Teen Fellowship**

- Are you interested in early childhood education? PJ Library events for young children and their families occur one Sunday a month throughout the year. Consider being a PJ Teen Partner. You will work with the Federation's PJ Professional, Sara Beitman, to help facilitate PJ events. Events are one Sunday a month, with dates to be announced on a rolling basis.

- **Israel Film Series**

- Our Israeli Emissary (*shaliach*,) Ofek Moscovich, is creating an array of enriching, entertaining, and educational events surrounding Israel. Dates and programs TBA.

- **College Prep Programming**

- Figuring out the next steps after high school can be stressful and daunting. Whether you've been planning for years, this is the first time you've thought about college, or even if you're not sure that going straight to college out of high school is right for you, these sessions will provide information and resources to ensure you'll be making an informed decision. Grade specific programming will be available. Dates to be announced. Taught by Noah Nemitoff-Bresler, an educational consultant with over two decades of experience in education as a tutor, outdoor educator, classroom teacher, college consultant, and executive function coach.

Merkaz Trips

Merkaz is delighted to reintroduce trips to our community!

Trips are open to ALL Merkaz students. Registration for trips will open in October.

8 – 9th Grade Shabbaton

Trip details coming soon.

10-12th Grade Civil Rights Journey

Location: Atlanta, Montgomery, Selma, Birmingham

Dates: May 9 – 12, 2023

Trip details coming soon.

12th Grade Leadership Retreat

Trip details coming soon.

Sign-ups for Merkaz Trips will begin in October 2023.

Students will be requested to submit a deposit to reserve their spot at that time.

Tuition & Fees

Tuition Information

First student per family: \$900

Additional students per family: \$815 per student

If you are registering a graduating senior (12th Grade), there is an additional **Senior Fee:** \$100

Subsidy Information

Participating synagogues contribute a tuition subsidy for each of their students.

Synagogue Subsidy: \$100 per student | | Enter discount code **SYN100**

***B'nai Israel 8th Graders:** Please use code **BI5784**

Participating synagogues include:

- Chabad of Fairfield
- Congregation Beth El – Norwalk
- Congregation B'nai Israel
- Congregation Or Hadash
- Congregation Rodeph Sholom
- Temple Shalom
- TCS

Merkaz Faculty: 25% discount per student.

Jewish Agency Employees: Employees of local Jewish Agencies working 15 hours or more per week will receive a \$100 discount per student.

Please email merkaz@shalomct.org for a custom discount code if you qualify for more than one discount.

Payment Options:

1. Pay Tuition in full.
2. Set up a Payment Plan:
 - a. Merkaz offers two payment plan options to be billed monthly:
 - i. \$150 Deposit with 2 Installments
 - ii. \$150 Deposit with 4 Installments
3. Pay by check.
 - a. Please email merkaz@shalomct.org to pay by check.

Tuition Assistance

Please do not let cost be a barrier to participation. Tuition assistance is available.

Contact merkaz@shalomct.org with questions or to request a tuition assistance application.



My child is registering for the Classic Track, but would love to attend some of the programs on the Flex Track calendar. Can they attend a Flex Track program?

- YES! Classic Track students are **welcome and encouraged** to attend Merkaz Flex Track programs and will be eligible to receive extra credit, excused absences, or even special honors for doing so.

My child has an extra-curricular that goes until 7:30pm on Tuesday nights, but would like to take an 8pm course. Can they?

- Yes! In this case, the student would register for the Classic Track, and would be expected to make up the 12 course credits per semester they would miss by attending Flex Track programs amounting to 12 credits a semester, or 24 credits for the year.

My child wants to attend the Classic Track, but we live far away with loads of traffic in between. Help!

- On our registration form, there will be a place to indicate if you would like to be connected with other families looking to carpool. Please fill this out and we will connect families from similar locations to help facilitate carpooling. Alternatively, you can email merkaz@shalomct.org directly to be put on the list.

My child is registering for the Flex Track, but is interested in some of the classes on the Classic Track. Can they drop-in?

- Many of the classes on the Classic Track are cumulative, but some are not! Students on the Flex Track who are interested in dropping-in are welcome to audit a class pending faculty and Head of School approval.

How can attending Merkaz benefit my child's college application process?

- In addition to the college prep courses we offer on either track, students who graduate from both the Classic Track and the Flex Track will be eligible to receive a transcript with grades from all their classes, as well as a Merkaz diploma. Graduating high school with two diplomas is a guaranteed way to make your child's college application stand out!

What happens if my child isn't able to accrue enough credits due to extenuating circumstances?

- If students are not able to accrue 48 credits — either by failing to attend all of their Classic Track classes, enough of their Flex Track programs, or a combination of the two — students will be offered an independent study make-up assignment. If a student is unable to complete the assignment, they will receive partial credit for that school year.

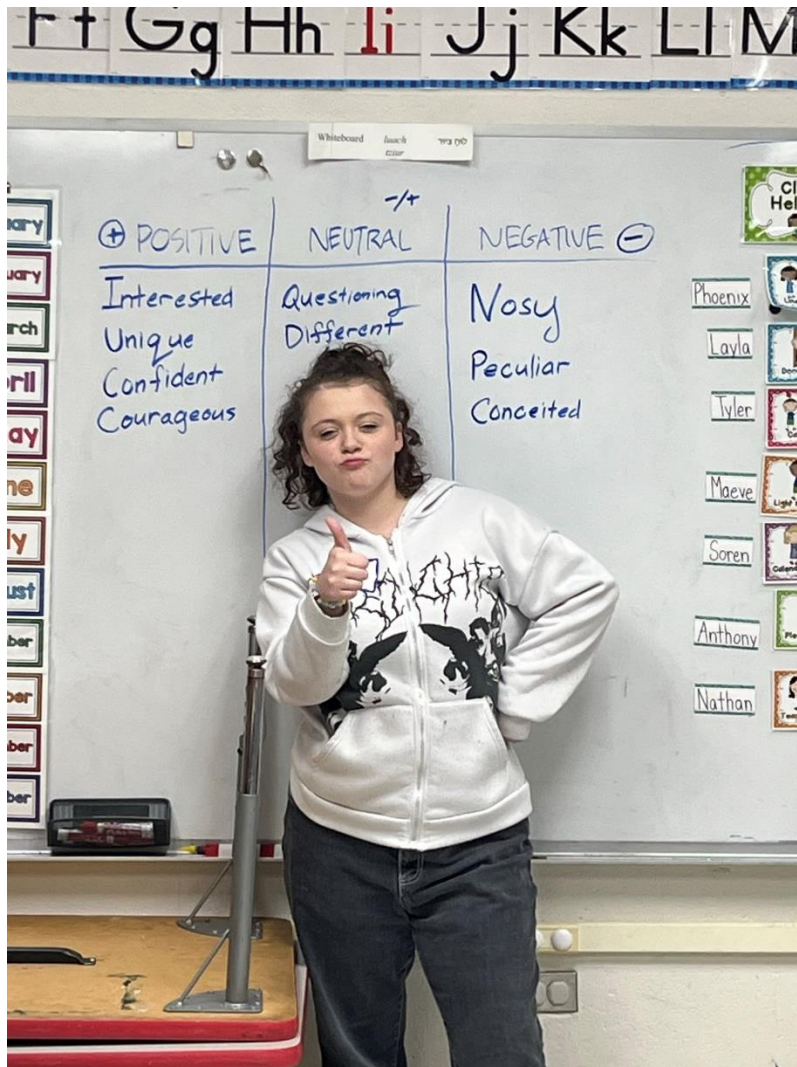
Do you offer à la carte options for the Flex Track programs?

- No. Merkaz prides itself on being a program that fosters community. All students—Classic and Flex Track—will be required to attend all school events, including orientations and holiday celebrations in order to foster school-wide relationships and comraderies.

Can I suggest a class or program?

- Absolutely! Our Classic Track Classes are all set for this year, but we are open to adding and rearranging Flex Track programs as the year progresses. This is a pilot year, after all!

Have more questions? Email merkaz@shalomct.org.



School Policies and Procedures

Student Conduct and Expectations

At Merkaz, we strive to create a learning community that encourages mutual respect and collective safety. Students are expected to behave appropriately, in a manner that is respectful of administrators, teachers, guests, other students, and property. In addition, students participating in any Flex programming or Merkaz Trips will abide by the rules/policies particular to the premises.

The following behaviors are prohibited at Merkaz:

- Food or drinks in the classroom without prior permission from the Head of School. (All food brought to Merkaz must be Kosher and nut-free.)
- Vandalism. (Students and/or parents will be held financially liable for the cost of repair or replacement of any property damaged or defaced.)
- Use of drugs or alcohol by any student on school property.
- Smoking or vaping on school premises.
- Use of cell phones and all electronic devices, unless approved by the course instructor. All must be turned off while in class. Unapproved use of electronic equipment will result in the removal of the equipment for the evening.
- Inappropriate attire, including dress and grooming that are offensive, distracting, or disruptive to the educational process.
- Leaving the building without permission.

Violation of the above policies will be addressed by the Head of School, and parents will be notified when necessary.

Serious violations may constitute grounds for dismissal at the discretion of the Head of School.

Attendance

Regular and punctual attendance is essential for a successful experience at Merkaz. A student must accrue 48 credits over the course 2023-2024 school year to receive credit. If a student is unable to attain those credits due to unforeseen circumstances, students will be offered an Independent Study make-up assignment. If a student is unable to complete the assignment, they will not receive credit for that school year.

Students or parents MUST email merkaz@shalomct.org if they are going to be unable to attend a session with as much advanced notice. In that email, it is best practice if the student or parent indicates which make-up Flex Track program the student will attend to earn missed credits. This applies to both Classic and Flex Track students.

Lateness

Lateness disturbs your fellow students and faculty and should be avoided at all cost. That being said, we understand that sometimes it is unavoidable. Whenever possible, please email merkaz@shalomct.org if you know you will be arriving late. Any students arriving more than 15 minutes late to a class or program may be required to attend a make-up program.

Habitual lateness will be addressed at the discretion Head of School.

Early Dismissal

For the safety and security of our students, students may not leave the premises while Merkaz is in session.

Students leaving early must have permission from a parent or guardian. If a student must leave early, parents must email merkaz@shalomct.org with the time of dismissal and the name of the person picking them up, if applicable. Students will not be dismissed unless we receive explicit permission from a guardian.

Occasionally, students may be dismissed early. If parents are unable to pick-up their child, a Merkaz staff member will stay with them until retrieved.

Student Driving and Traffic Guidelines

Students must operate vehicles in a safe and appropriate manner, and must abide by the established parking lot traffic flow.

The Head of School has the authority to prohibit a student who violates safe driving practices from using the school parking facility.

Student drivers and parents must observe designated Entrances and Exits to and from the parking lot.

Security

Security will be present at each of our Classic Track campuses.

Where possible, we will have security present at Flex Track programs and events.

To inquire about the security of a specific program or event, please email merkaz@shalomct.org.