



## INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH GENEALOGY AND PAUL JACOBI CENTER

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### BA and MA Courses in Jewish Genealogy

Teaching Jewish Genealogy at the university level has long been one of the Institute's central goals but to date that goal has not been achieved. The reasons are several. Jewish Genealogy *per se* is not taught at any major institute of higher learning and universities, tending to be rather conservative, have proved hesitant about a teaching initiative of this kind. Then questions of staffing arise; it is not easy to identify instructors with the qualifications to teach courses in Jewish Genealogy. Moreover, since these courses will, as a general rule, be "electives" (and not mandatory), they require outside funding. Hence the Institute is seeking a donor who would be willing to sponsor a pilot course (or courses) at a major university, which preferably already has a solid Jewish Studies programme (to provide an academic framework and resolve the staffing problem).

By way of background, it should be mentioned that the Institute began to address the issue of teaching Jewish Genealogy at the university level some years ago. Since IJG is not a teaching institution, its Teaching Committee, headed by Prof. (emeritus) Aaron Demsky of Bar Ilan University, began its work by asking what the role of the Institute should be in this context. The Committee came to the conclusion that the Institute would do well to develop "Academic Guidelines" for BA and MA courses in Jewish Genealogy, which would illustrate the shape and content of such courses and which teaching/degree granting institutions could be encouraged to adopt and draw upon in accordance with their students' interests and needs.

With the active participation of an international group of experts, the Committee elaborated detailed Academic Guidelines, which it tailored for 1- or 2-semester BA courses and also 1- or 2- year MA courses (conceivably leading to certification in Jewish Genealogy). These Guidelines, in their various formats, have been posted on the Institute's Website and may be viewed at <http://iijg.org/teaching/> .

A number of leading universities have expressed interest in offering a BA course in Jewish Genealogy but, as noted above, the major stumbling block has been a lack of funds to launch a course. If a donor can be found to underwrite this venture in the amount of \$20-25,000, the Institute is confident that a university of stature can be identified to teach the first pioneering courses in this area. In the expectation that these courses will prove successful and attract considerable student interest, they will serve as a model for other universities to adopt – and thus in time Jewish Genealogy will find a permanent place in Jewish Studies curricula.