

# Course Development and Learning Technologies

The development of academic courses for distance learning, under the direction of the Dean of Development and Educational Technology, Prof. Sarah Guri-Rosenblit, lies at the heart of the Open University's academic endeavor. The development process is complex and challenging, involving OUI personnel from many departments, including academic faculty, editors, and assistants with expertise and experience in the preparation of independent learning materials, and researchers from other academic institutions.

The OUI's classic textbooks are developed for OUI students and also form the foundation for courses studied at most of Israel's institutions of higher education. Textbooks combine study content with didactic tools, such as questions, summaries, comments, and references. In addition, a wide range of course models have been developed in recent years, each unique in the way it presents academic content alongside pedagogical aids. Most courses are based on print books and study material, however, the scope of material produced in digital format increases annually and includes video courses, anthologies, and e-books. Books, learning resources, and the various digital and learning technologies all benefit from the expertise of publishing professionals.

## Courses Approved for Development

### History, Philosophy, and Judaic Studies

Anti-Semitism, the European Nation-State and the Jews (MA)  
Between Ashkenaz and S'pharad: Cultural History of Provençal Jewry in the Middle Ages (MA)  
Multicultural Approaches in the History of Modern Jewish Thought (MA)  
History, Society, and the Social Sciences I (MA)  
History, Society, and the Social Sciences II (MA)  
Early Christianity (MA)  
The Palestinians in the Twentieth Century: Political, Social and Cultural Change (MA)  
Muslim Societies on the Shores of the Red Sea: The Challenge of Globalization (MA)  
Apostates and Converts: Religious Conversion in Monotheistic Faiths (MA)  
Saints and Believers in Islam and Judaism (MA)

### Management and Economics

Macro-Organizational Behavior  
Networked Life and Markets: The Managerial Aspect (MA)  
Creative Thinking in Business (MA)  
European Virtual Seminar on Sustainable Development I  
Honors Seminar in Management: Gaining Practical Experience in Organizations (MA)

### Literature, Language, and the Arts

Fringe Literature in Israel  
Ear Training II  
The Theatrical Event

### Sociology, Political Science, and Communication

From Search Engines to Social Media: Search, Monitoring, and Online Influence Metrics  
Participatory Media Workshop  
Journalism, Participatory Journalism, and the Public Sphere  
Politics and Economy in a Globalization Era  
Seminar course: Regulation: From Theory to Practice  
Communication, and Social and Political Discourse in Democratic Societies

### Education and Psychology

Qualitative Research in Education (MA)  
Language and Aging (MA)

### Mathematics and Computer Science

Algorithms for Big Data (MA)  
Research seminar: Topics at the Frontier of Computer Science (MA)  
Basic Mathematics  
Workshop on Penetration Testing  
Guided Reading: Advanced Topics in Mathematics

### Natural Sciences

Developmental Biology  
The Ecology and Behavior of the Arabian Babbler  
New Reproductive Technologies: Social and Bioethical aspects (MA)  
Field Lab: Biology of the Arabian Babbler  
Hands-on Molecular Modeling  
Topics in Physical Chemistry

## New Titles Produced by the Open University

Type	Titles
Textbooks, final edition	41
Textbooks, provisional edition	52
Readers and study guides	94
Books converted to digital format	201

## Development of Learning Technologies

### The learning environment and course websites

Extensive enhancement of course websites was undertaken in 2016-2017. The sites were accessed 5,088,127 times, an increase of 6% from the previous year. The following areas were especially singled out for development and improvement:

**Video archive:** To cut costs and avoid overloading students with information, a newly-developed system will transfer old recordings from course sites to an archive.

**Automation:** Online groups are opened each semester for students in various courses. Some of the groups are available via the *Ofeq* system and some via Zoom. Shoham (The Center for Technology in Distance Education) has improved its Oracle recognition of different online groups. Links are automatically created each semester to live and recorded online sessions.

**Filmed courses:** A number of new tools introduced during the year enhance viewing of recorded online sessions. The tools include the ability to pinpoint specific parts of a clip, a list of contents; and supplementary information, including computer files. Videos may be viewed at different speeds.

### Online tutoring

In Semesters I and II of 2017, over 320 courses were available with online study tutorial sessions, some 70% of them on the Zoom system, and the others on *Ofeq*. A total of 11,730 hits were registered for those groups.

## Pedagogical planning in course development and teaching

Shoham supports senior faculty and the teaching staff in the pedagogical-technological planning of course development and teaching, including an online MA program in history to be offered to students in Semester I of 2018. The faculty will also have support from Shoham for the New Media and Political Activism track, and for an initiative by the Dean of Academic Studies to enhance the initial courses most often chosen by new students.

### Filmed courses

The concept of filmed lectures has developed greatly in recent years, evolving from short clips designed for explanation of specific issues, to lectures used as the primary source of instruction. Lecturers are top experts from the OUI and from other educational institutions. Course content is presented in a visual, dynamic manner, and the presence of a lecturer creates the sense of a personal meeting. Over the past year, Shoham was involved in 36 courses that included lectures and other visual means. New ways of thinking about filmed-lecture development supports the incorporation of three main components into production:

- **Broad pedagogical thinking** on the way in which courses are taught is addressed as early as the planning and draft proposal stage. Help is offered to faculty in integrating filmed lectures into the learning process, planning course structure, evaluation methods, enrichment materials, and exercises.
- **Integrating stage direction and scriptwriting** into the filming process. Faculty members benefit from professional advice on adapting a lecture to a visual medium.
- **Advanced video editing and animation** will be available for courses whose content allows for the use of rich cinematic language. Graphic animation is designed to supplement the lecture and to add visual illustration. An option of making the film interactive has also been added.

## Online courses

The Open University submitted successful proposals for a cooperative venture between the Council for Higher Education (CHE) and the Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC), together with the Digital Israel national initiative for the production of the following online courses:

**Prof. Ora Limor**, Dept. of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies (in collaboration with Ben-Gurion University of the Negev): Reading Conversion.

**Prof. Sarah Guri-Rosenblit**, Dept. of Education and Psychology (in collaboration with the Kibbutzim College of Education, Technology and the Arts): Planning, Teaching, and Evaluation.

**Prof. Tzahi Weiss**, Dept. of Literature, Language, and the Arts: The Legend of the Golem in Late Ancient Times up to the Twentieth Century.

## Trials and innovations

A technological-pedagogical study was conducted on 15 courses using Annoto, a video tool that allows users to offer personal comments and collaborative responses during actual video playing time, with the comments displayed according to user request. Responses are displayed in text in a small designated window during the film. This makes it possible to hold discussions on videoed lectures and recorded study sessions and to make note of personal comments similar to annotations in a textbook, with the option of returning to them for later reference.

## Academic courseware

A collection of online experiments has been developed for the Visual Cognition course, dealing with visual work memory, visual load, visual search, and tracking of motion stimuli.

## Digital Accessibility

In recent years, legislation in Israel addressing accessibility for populations with special needs has advanced significantly. Digital accessibility is the shared responsibility of Shoham, the Dean of Students, and the university's computer center and publishing house. Over the past year, all of these bodies undertook extensive work to assimilate tools and work processes designed for the production of accessible digital products.

