

Yeshiva University-The predominant Orthodox university in the United States

Yeshiva University traces its origins to September 1886, when the elementary yeshiva, Etz Chaim, was founded to teach Talmud, Bible, and secular studies according to the “strict Orthodox and Talmudical law” to boys ages 9 to 15 on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. In 1897, the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) was founded to teach Talmud to more advanced students. In 1903, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis declared that RIETS was the only legitimate Yeshiva in the entire country. Most students studied Talmud for their own gratification, but it was possible to proceed on to ordination. A rabbinical candidate would be tested orally by the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, who would then provide him with a *semicha* certificate, indicating that he was now a fully ordained rabbi. In 1915, Etz Chaim and RIETS merged to create the Rabbinical College of America. In 1928, Yeshiva College was established, providing students with a full undergraduate program. In 1937, a graduate school was created.

President Bernard Revel built up the institution over the course of 25 years. He tried to encourage both Jewish studies as well as secular pursuits and showed an openness towards American culture that the more liberal Orthodox elements found refreshing. Samuel Belkin continued Revel’s commitment to the combination of Orthodox learning with secular studies. Norman Lamm will retire in August 2002, after serving as president for more than a quarter century. Lamm took over a university on the verge of bankruptcy, and has turned it into a thriving New York City institution.

Yeshiva University includes a main campus on 185th Street in Washington Heights, which houses the male undergraduate program, as well as the rabbinical school. It also has a Midtown campus housing Stern College for women, and coeducational graduate and professional programs, including the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, the Wurzweiler School of Social Work, The Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology, the Bernard Revel Graduate School, and the Azrieli School of Education and Administration. Total campus enrollment is approximately 6,300, including about 2,000 undergraduates. About 600 students study in Israel every year under YU-sponsored programs. The University is ranked by US News and World Report as one of the top 50 research universities in the United States. YU fulfills a unique function, providing an educational focus for much of the Orthodox community of the United States, while at the same time, offering a large number of high-quality educational programs in secular studies for a pluralistic student body.