



*The Ginsburg-Ingerman  
Overseas Student Program  
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev*



Take The Road Less Traveled

## Sustainable Development & Environmental Justice

Environmental, Developmental and  
Israel Studies Track in the Negev Desert

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### The Concept

This pioneering track of study enables students interested in environmental studies, development studies, and religious studies to pursue these fields in a unique socio-economic and socio-political context: the Negev desert of Israel. The program presents a holistic and comprehensive perspective on the Negev desert, considering ecological, economic, social, cultural, demographic and political aspects of this desert region. It also offers an exceptional opportunity to experience Israel in light of the challenges it faces in developing the Negev; its largest remaining wilderness. In addition to ulpan and academic courses, students will participate in workshops, discussion groups, field trips, volunteering activities, and environmental fieldwork that will introduce them to the sustainable development challenges of Israel's periphery. The program is the fruit of collaboration between Ben-Gurion University's (BGU) Overseas Study Program, the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies (AIES) at Kibbutz Keturah, and the Atid Bamidbar creative Jewish studies center in the Negev town of Yeroham. These three institutions represent the northern, central and southern Negev, and thus expose the student to the complete social, environmental and geographical range of the Negev region. The program is appropriate for a year of study abroad during undergraduate studies.



## The Program

The first semester is focused on the northern and central Negev. Students will divide their time between the main BGU campus in Beer-Sheva and the central Negev town of Yeroham, located twenty miles south of Beer-Sheva. Students will live in Yeroham, where they will experience life in a multi-cultural development town, connect with host families, and participate in workshops, action-oriented research, and study-tours at the Atid Bamidbar (lit., "future in the desert") study center, as well as engage in volunteering activities related to the environmental issues they will learn about. Three days a week, students will take a Hebrew language course and three other courses at the BGU campus.

The second semester will focus on regional environmental issues as well as environmental aspects of the southern Negev and Arava desert, and will provide a more in-depth focus on the issues presented during the first semester. Students will reside on Kibbutz Ketura (30 minutes north of Eilat) and take courses at the Arava Institute. Students will study the social, religious and environmental dimensions of sustainable development from an international and multi-cultural perspective, as they will be a part of the Arava Institute's Middle Eastern student body (Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians). Interaction between the students and kibbutz members will also be actively encouraged, through host families arranged by the Arava Institute, and participation in kibbutz cultural and social activities.



This program thus offers a unique "hands-on" Israel experience: meaningful social encounters in a distinctive desert environment, all within an academic framework. Students will engage the social, developmental and environmental challenges that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, face the region that David Ben-Gurion called the future of the Jewish State. They will receive the tools, training and experience to effectively analyze the complex interplay of factors promoting or hindering sustainable development in the Negev and in general, and they will gain an in depth understanding of one of Israel's greatest challenges: that of developing the Negev into a socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable element of the State and people of Israel.

This is a full year academic curriculum, however each semester may be taken independently as well.

## The Courses

First Semester (Introduction and Overview):

- Hebrew language
- An Introduction to the History and Development of the Negev
- Environmental and Natural Resources Policy in Israel and the Middle East
- Action Research Workshop in Yeroham: Environmental Development, Sustainability and Social Justice in light of Jewish sources?

Second Semester (In-depth perspectives):

- Religious Perspectives on Nature and the Environment
- Water Management in the Middle East: an interdisciplinary approach
- Human Ecology of the Desert
- Independent research



**Atid Bamidbar** is a unique community oriented study center where a diverse representation of the population of the Negev – women and men, religious and secular, new immigrants and veteran Israelis, residents of development towns and kibbutz members – meet and study Jewish sources, from Bible to contemporary works, in an open, egalitarian, and pluralistic atmosphere, striving to apply these sources to the complex social realities of the 21st century. For more information see [www.bamidbar.org](http://www.bamidbar.org)

**The Arava Institute for Environmental Studies (AIES)** is the premier environmental teaching and research program in the Middle East, preparing future Arab and Jewish leaders to cooperatively solve the region's environmental challenges. The studies are international in scope, with a student body comprised of Jordanians, Palestinians, Israelis and other nationalities. AIES gives Jewish, Arab and other students a unique opportunity to study and live together for an extended period of time; building networks and understanding that will enable future cooperative work and activism in the Middle East and beyond.

For more information see [www.arava.org](http://www.arava.org)