

PROGRAM IN JEWISH CULTURE & SOCIETY

Cyrus freeing the Jews from the Babylonian Captivity.



Director's Message

מה נשתנה השנה הזאת

This has undoubtedly been a year like no other in recent memory. Indeed, as we reflect on the previous year, it can sometimes be difficult to reach back into “the before” and genuinely remember what we did before March and why. On the one hand, we may feel that such efforts are futile and even misguided; that is, the lens of the current pandemic may be inevitable and perhaps an important tool for any annual retrospective. On the other, however, we do not want to reduce more than half a year of programming to mere precursors and only attend to their significance as related to our present circumstances. Hence, I will do my best to offer a reasonable summary of the program's efforts, both as related to and as independent from our new abnormal.

Our year began with the third annual welcome bagel brunch at Illini Hillel, which was a wonderful opportunity to spend some time with returning students and meet some new ones. Several faculty members, instructors, and visiting faculty joined us along with some of our award-winning Jewish Studies minors and Hebrew students. This event is part of an ongoing effort to promote the program, our courses, and the Jewish Studies major and minor. As many of you know, the University of Illinois campus can offer an embarrassment of riches. When I have attended Quad Day and other similar events, I often find that many students don't know that there is a Jewish Studies program, what we offer, how many of our courses can be used to satisfy the general education requirements - not to mention the scholarship and extracurricular programming that we support. In fact, when Israel Institute visiting scholar Liat Maggid Alon and I made the rounds during Quad Day this year, we handed out flyers advertising the Israeli Cinema and Television class that Liat was about to offer. In one case, a student nonchalantly took the flyer from us, as one begrudgingly does in the face of a barrage of unsolicited material being foisted upon you, muttered a cursory word of gratitude, and kept walking. About 90 seconds later, he reappeared. Once he glanced down and saw what the flyer was, he turned and chased after us, wanting to know more about the course—which he ended up taking. I offer this anecdote as a concrete example of an experience that many of us have had: while a handful of students will seek out information about Jewish Studies or learn about the program through their campus networks,

most know little about what we do (if they even know we exist); of course, many of those are genuinely interested once the information is put in front of them. Indeed, we have seen significant growth in enrollment in several of our courses, and we have several initiatives that we are rolling out in order to increase our curricular footprint across the campus and in the online learning community. We have not seen similar increases in the numbers of majors or minors—indeed, those numbers have decreased since I took over the directorship last year—but we have several ideas about how to better promote our degree programs and that is one of the priorities for the coming year. Along these lines, we have created a new program in Yiddish Cultural studies that will allow students to graduate with a certificate if they combine one year of Yiddish with related coursework.

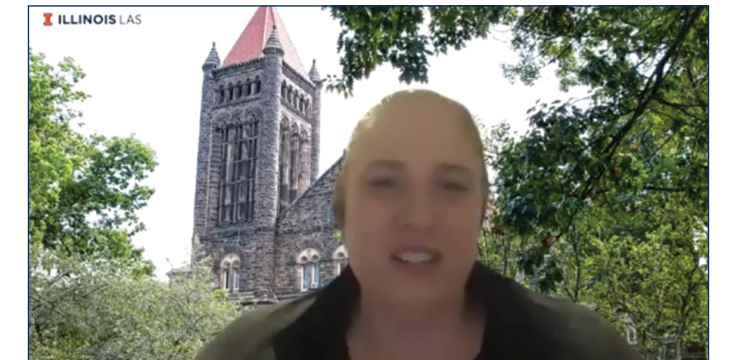
Throughout the year, we organized a robust array of programming on campus, in the community, and in Chicago. We had several events that focused on antisemitism and broadening our understanding of the contours of hatred, persecution, and violence across cultural and historical contexts. These included a panel discussion by Mark Roseman (Indiana University) and our own Peter Fritzsche—moderated by Harriet Murav—that we co-organized with the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities. We also hosted a viewing and discussion of *Liberation Heroes* with advisory council member Scott Gendell, a film that highlights the experiences of the members of the U.S. Armed Forces who helped liberate the concentration camps at the conclusion of the WWII. Throughout the year, we also organized several events that engaged with the complexities of Israel and the Middle East, including hosting Omri Drumlevich (through the Israel Studies Project) during the fall semester—which included several dance performances, a film screening, and a couple of receptions with the accomplished dancer, choreographer, and filmmaker—several presentations by Israel Institute Visiting Scholar Liat Maggid Alon, and a lecture by Israeli correspondent Etgar Lefkovits. We also delved into the deep history of rabbinical scholarship and archival research with Leora Batnitzky (Princeton) and Jennifer Grayson (Hebrew Union College/Xavier University). Their presentations cogently examined how the writings of the pre-modern period and early Christianity can inform our understanding of Judaism, Jewish culture, and—in some cases—the continuities of Jewish communities and debates. We were

delighted to host several events in Chicago, including presentations by professor Grayson (on her way to Urbana from Cincinnati) and professor Maggid Alon. In both cases, we partnered with area synagogues to engage in lively discussions of their respective research findings.

In addition to our programs on campus and in Chicago, we organized or co-sponsored some amazing activities in Champaign-Urbana. Over the years, the program has consistently benefited and drawn strength from our partnerships with local communities and leaders. This year, we were honored to have the opportunity to once again engage in such collaborations. Most notably, these efforts included partnering with CUJF on the local Jewish film festival. This film festival has been a valuable part of our community, and our faculty and students have enjoyed and learned from many of the films showcased. This year, the plans hit a major snag when the Art Theater (the venue for the festival) unexpectedly closed in the fall. Fortunately, the program was able to work with CUJF to facilitate access to the Spurlock Museum. Not only were we, therefore, able to enjoy the selected films—along with all of the attendees—but we were delighted to take part in post-film discussions about two of the selections and host a pre-film reception in conjunction with one of the showings. Several members of the advisory council traveled down from Chicago for the reception, including Doug Hoffman (Advisory Council chair), Gary Porton (co-founder), and Michael Shapiro (co-founder and inaugural director). The reception afforded many of us an excellent opportunity to renew old connections and make new ones before heading into the auditorium for that evening's film. Indeed, Professor Rabin and I were also honored to participate in the adult education program at Sinai Temple during Rabbi Alan Cook's sabbatical this year and have the chance to discuss some of our research with an amazingly knowledgeable and enthusiastic intellectual community. This type of synergy with the community is part of the foundation on which the program rests and a key example of how we continue to fulfill our core mission. Now, as we navigate our way through these challenging times, we are more grateful than ever for these collaborations, and we look forward to continuing to cultivate and expand this relationship.

Hopefully, many of you had a chance to take part in one of these events. By the time of publication of this newsletter, we usually have a pretty full slate of events to advertise for the new academic year. But, again, this year is not like any other. We have rescheduled several of the postponed events, but many of our plans remain semi-tentative given the

relative uncertainty about when we can reasonably expect to gather and learn together in person again. We look forward to the hosting of Rena Potok, who was supposed to share her reflections about the collection of plays by her father, Chaim Potok. As soon as we are able, we hope to reschedule her presentation at Anshe Emet Synagogue (Chicago) and in Urbana, the latter of which is slated to include excerpts from the plays performed by Illinois students and/or local theater groups. Professor Rabin and I were so excited to host



a symposium about Jews of the Atlantic World, featuring both our own research and some of the leading scholars who have done groundbreaking work on these communities, their history, and the literary and cultural materials that they have produced over the last several centuries. We dubbed the symposium, “Next Year in the Caribbean”; it is now on track to living up to the first part of that title, taking place next April. Perhaps the most painful change to the spring schedule was the delay of the highly anticipated visit by Yossi Klein Halevi and Mohammad Darawshe. The two were scheduled to spend three days on our campus, including numerous meetings with students, faculty, campus leaders, and community members. The visit was the result of months of planning and numerous meetings and discussions and was going to launch a multi-year campus initiative intended to promote thoughtful critical conversations about the challenges of shared community. We were also very excited to welcome Yossi back to our campus, since he was the inaugural visitor when we launched the Israel Studies Project more than 10 years ago. You can learn more about the speakers and the proposed visit in the short piece by Joshua Kravitz, who was awarded the Filler Scholarship in Jewish Studies this spring and graduated in May with a minor in Jewish Studies and a major in political science. We are committed to re-envisioning the Klein Halevi/Darawshe visit at a later time. Nonetheless, in order for the proposed

(continued on page 4)

programming to achieve its intended aims, we feel that it needs to meaningfully engage a broad audience (not to mention bringing the two speakers from Israel), so we are working with campus administration to determine when we might be able to organize an appropriate series of events with the greatest potential for the desired impact. We know that many of you will want to take part in the visit when it happens, so we will let everyone know as soon as we have a clear sense of target dates.

While many of our cherished and carefully crafted plans were derailed by the stay at home order and the adjustments to the exigencies of the pandemic, we also found new ways to connect and learn together during our forced separation. During the last several months of the spring semester, we began sharing select material from the program archives—recordings of some of the many extraordinary visitors that we have had the luxury of hosting over the years and articles written by program faculty about and/or inspired by sponsored lectures and events. I was quite moved and humbled by the experience of, not only sharing some of the extraordinary examples through the weekly email, but by the embarrassment of riches that I had to choose from as I perused our archive of material. Our library of materials includes a veritable “who’s who” of Jewish Studies, from our own faculty to a panoply of amazing visitors who afforded brilliant, entertaining, and provocative insights on a diverse array of topics and issues. I hope to continue this tradition

in the fall, so feel free to pass along any requests for a specific speaker/topic that you enjoyed (or even one that you were sorry to have missed). We do not have recordings of every lecture, but we do have a nice set of notable videos and write-ups about our distinguished visitors. Towards the end of the spring semester, we began building on these efforts and organized several virtual discussions and panels about highlighted material. You can read more about these efforts in the Virtual Kallah piece included here. For the moment, we fully anticipate offering more virtual programming during the fall semester. We hope to build on the lessons learned from some of the early efforts and take advantage of the flexibility that virtual platforms afford, including being able to bring together people in disparate locations. Whether you are here in town or several airplane rides away from Champaign (a.k.a. Champaign-Urbana), you can join us for lectures and workshops. Please visit the [Jewish Studies calendar](#) and our [Facebook page](#) for the latest information about upcoming events.

For now, I want to thank everyone who helped make an admittedly difficult year so rewarding and productive. I hope that you are all safe and well. I look forward to continued opportunities to connect and collaborate, whatever form such opportunities may take, and to work with my amazing colleagues and partners to further the mission of the program.

FROM THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

This past spring more than 100 colleges and universities across the country scrambled to move classes online. The suspension of in-person classes brought mixed reactions from parents, students, and educators. Some questioned the quality of remote learning. Others pointed out that the makeshift online courses – due to COVID-19 pandemic – are not representative of high-quality education. The public health crisis has presented universities a challenge, as well as a unique opportunity to reevaluate online learning and communication. In many respects, the Program in Jewish Culture & Society is ahead of the curve in producing high quality online education.

We now have three high quality online general education courses.

I taught online “Zionism: A Global History” to more than 100 students from diverse backgrounds. Richard Herman, the former chancellor at the U of I, audited the course. He remarked that the “course offers both a sense of excitement of being let in on that which undergrads, at a philosophical and practical level, the creation of the state of Israel. One learns, in a critical way, the history and development of Zionism beginning in the latter half of the 19th century. At the same time, what emerges is the depth of thought and passion of the individuals who, step by step, brought the nation of Israel into being. Heady stuff.”

The course engages those with a passion for history at one level, but also provides essential knowledge for those who regularly encounter anti-Zionism and antisemitism.

Next fall, Rachel Harris plans to teach a new online course, “Holocaust on Screen.” In partnership with LAS Online – an initiative at the U of I to create a diverse set of online offerings that meet or exceed the expectations of face-to-face courses – we conducted an educational market research study to explore the feasibility and generate insights about a potential online Jewish Studies Program. Drawing on the findings and recommendations of the market research analysis, our goal in the near future is to expand our offerings in history, religion, and comparative literature. One thing that the coronavirus pandemic has confirmed is that enough students benefit from high quality, online education. Students have taken advantage of the opportunity to study at their own pace and to balance life and work. At both the national and regional levels, online course offerings in Jewish Studies are not common. The Program in Jewish Culture & Society at the U of I hopes to create a truly unique, interdisciplinary program that speaks to a broad audience.

– Eugene M. Avrutin



Performance by Michael Barenboim and the West-Eastern Divan Ensemble at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, February 2020

THE PROGRAM IN JEWISH CULTURE & SOCIETY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

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FACULTY NEWS

Eugene M. Avrutin



Eugene M. Avrutin is Professor of Modern Jewish history and the Tobor family scholar in the Program of Jewish Culture and Society at the University of Illinois.

With the support of a LAS Online grant, Eugene Avrutin spent the bulk of the summer writing and recording lectures for a new course, “Zionism: A Global History.” He presented a paper on Jews, empire, and race at a conference on rethinking violence in Jewish history at Stanford University. Together with Elissa Bemporad (professor of Jewish history at CUNY), he organized a workshop on the history of anti-Jewish violence in Eastern Europe at the Center for Jewish History in New York, with plans to publish the presentations in a book provisionally entitled “Pogroms: A Documentary History” with Oxford University Press. His book, “The Velizh Affair”, will soon appear in a Russian edition.

Eric Calderwood



Eric Calderwood is associate professor of comparative and world literature and a current Conrad Humanities Scholar. His specializations are North African literature and film, modern Spanish literature and film, al-Andalusian cultural memory (medieval Muslim Iberia), modern Arabic literature, Mediterranean studies, postcolonial studies, and travel writing. Professor Calderwood has recently published, “Colonial al-Andalus: Spain and the Making of Modern Moroccan Culture” (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), which was translated into Spanish as “Al Ándalus en Marruecosand” published by Almuzara Press, 2019. He is currently working on a book entitled “The Invention of al-Andalus: Uses of the Past in Contemporary Mediterranean Culture.”

Virginia Rosa Dominguez



Virginia Rosa Dominguez is the Edward William & Jane Marr Gutgsell Professor of Anthropology, past president of the American Anthropological Association, and co-founder and consulting director of the International Forum for U.S. Studies, past chair of Task Force on Advocacy and Outreach Activities, and a member of organizing committee of the World Council of Anthropological Association. She is currently a president of Anthropologists without Borders, associate editor of World Anthropologies

Section in “American Anthropologist” and a member of the steering committee in the World Anthropological Union. Professor Dominguez is a political and legal anthropologist whose most recent books are, “America Observed: On an International Anthropology of the United States”, co-edited with Jasmin Habib (Berghahn Books, 2017) and “Global Perspectives on the US”, co-edited with Jane Desmond (University of Illinois Press, 2017).

Dara E. Goldman



Dara E. Goldman, director of the Program in Jewish Culture & Society, is associate professor of Spanish, specializing in contemporary Caribbean and Latin American literatures and cultures, gender and sexualities studies and cultural studies. She is the author of “Out of Bounds: Islands and the Demarcation of Identity in the Hispanic Caribbean” (Bucknell University Press, 2008) and numerous journal articles on Cuban, Dominican, and Puerto Rican literatures and forms of cultural expression such as film, websites, music, and art. She is currently completing a book manuscript that examines how Cuban writers and artists represent and respond to recent changes in Cuban culture, politics, national identity, and worldviews. Among other materials, the book analyzes two novels with central Jewish characters and themes, Leonardo Padura Fuentes’s “Herejes” [Heretics: A Novel] and Ena Lucía Portela’s “Cien botellas en una pared” [100 Bottles]. Professor Goldman delivered a paper at the Association for Jewish Studies and presented her research on Cuban Jews at several symposia and local synagogues. She was expected to deliver a paper at the Latin American Jewish Studies Association in Curaçao and to co-host (with professor Dana Rabin) a symposium on Jews of the Caribbean at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; both of these events have been postponed until 2021 due to COVID-19 pandemic. After the university moved to remote operations in March 2020, professor Goldman organized and participated in several virtual events, including a discussion of Etgar Keret’s work and two online discussions dedicated to the Netflix series Unorthodox and the Deborah Feldman memoir on which it was based. This year, Dr. Goldman was also elected to the executive council of the Latin American Studies Association and to the delegate assembly of the Modern Language Association.

Rachel Harris



Rachel Harris is associate professor in comparative and world literature, focusing on Israeli literature and culture. She is author of “Warriors, Witches, Whores: Women in Israeli Cinema” (Wayne State Press 2017), “An Ideological Death: Suicide in Israeli Literature” (Northwestern University Press 2014), co-editor of “Narratives of Dissent: War in Israeli Arts and Culture” (Wayne State Press 2012), and editor of “Teaching the Arab-Israeli Conflict” (Wayne State University Press, 2019). Her newest book “Casting a Giant Shadow: The Transnational Shaping of Israeli Cinema” will be published early next year with Indiana University Press. Professor Harris’ latest research focuses on Israel in American cinema.

Brett Ashley Kaplan



Brett Ashley Kaplan is the director of the Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide and Memory Studies and professor in the Program in Comparative and World Literature. Her books, “Unwanted Beauty: Aesthetic Pleasure in Holocaust Representation” (UP Illinois, 2007) and “Landscapes of Holocaust Postmemory” (Routledge, 2011), examine the Shoah’s intersections with art and space. Turning to race and power in contemporary Jewish American literature, she published “Jewish Anxiety in the Novels of Philip Roth” (Bloomsbury, 2015). She is at work on three books: “Convergences: Portraits of Artists who Explore Jewishness and Blackness” (creative non-fiction); “Rare Stuff” (a novel, drafted), and a second novel about Vera Solomon, a survivor of the Kindertransport living in provincial England who befriends at a Vietnamese refugee center in 1979 a Belgian intellectual posing as a do-gooder while hiding his painfully antisemitic articles written during the height of World War II. In addition to scholarly articles and book reviews in venues such as “Memory Studies”, “H-France Review”, “American Literary History”, “Journal of Jewish Identities”, “Modern Philology”, “Textual Practice”, “Criticism”, “German Quarterly”, “Contemporary French Civilization”, “Comparative Literature”, “Studies in Jewish American Literature”, she has written for more public-facing outlets such as “The Conversation”, “As It Ought To Be Magazine”, “Ha’aretz”, and “AJS Perspectives”. She has printed interviews in “Contemporary French Civilization” and “9th Letter” and been interviewed on the “AJS Podcast”, “NPR”, and “The 21st”.

Brett Kaufman



Brett Kaufman joined the faculty at Illinois in 2018. He is an archaeologist specializing in the Mediterranean and Near East, ancient engineering and design, the formation and maintenance of socio-political hierarchy, and reconstructing ecological management strategies of ancient and historical societies. He has directed or supervised archaeological excavations in Tunisia, China, Italy, Israel, and New York. His research has been supported by grants from the National Science Foundation, the National Geographic Society, and the National Natural Science Foundation of China. He received a BA from Brandeis University, and an MA and PhD from the University of California, Los Angeles. Prior to joining the Department of Classics, he held a postdoctoral fellowship at Brown University, and a faculty appointment at the University of Science and Technology Beijing where he maintains an affiliation.

Harriet Murav



Harriet Murav is the Catherine and Bruce Bastian Professor of Global and Transnational Studies, professor of Slavic languages and literatures, professor in the Center for Advanced Study and professor in the Program in Comparative and World Literatures. She is editor of “Slavic Review”. In Spring 2019, she was a Joyce Z. Greenberg Visiting Professor at the University of Chicago. In Spring 2020, she will be a fellow at the Frankel Institute at the University of Michigan. In 2019, her book “David Bergelson’s Strange New World: Untimeliness and Futurity” was published by Indiana University Press. Professor Murav’s new research project, “Archive of Violence: The Russian Civil Wars and the Literature of Abandonment” uses the Kiev District Commission for Relief to Victims of Pogroms (1920-1923) and selected literary works in Yiddish, Russian, and Ukrainian to analyze the extraordinary outpouring of literary creativity in tandem with the extraordinary proliferation of violence in Ukraine and Russia in the revolutionary period.

Dana Rabin



Dana Rabin is professor of history focusing on the legal history of Britain and its empire in the 18th century. She has written two books examining the cultural history of law: “Identity, Crime and Legal Responsibility in Eighteenth-Century England” (2004) and “Britain and its Internal Others, 1750-1800: under Rule of Law” (2017). Her current project, “Jews, Suffrage, and Whiteness in the British Empire, 1740-1858”, investigates Jewish civil rights throughout the British Empire between passage of the Naturalization Act of 1740—allowing Jews and Quakers living in the British colonies to be naturalized without a Christian oath—and “Jewish Emancipation” in 1858 when Jews received the right to vote in Britain. The first publication drawn from the new book is titled “The Struggle for Jewish Naturalization from Jamaica to London, 1748-1753.” On August 16, 2019, Rabin became interim chair of the Department of History.

Bruce Rosenstock



Bruce Rosenstock is professor in the Department of Religion. His most recent book is “Transfinite Life: Oskar Goldberg and the Vitalist Imagination” (Indiana University Press, 2017). He has created and currently maintains the University of Illinois digital library, Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews Multimedia Archive at <http://sephardifolklit.illinois.edu>. He has recently completed a translation and preface of Erich Unger’s “Politics and Metaphysics” for a new edition of Walter Benjamin’s “Critique of Violence”, and other completed work includes essays on psychoanalysis and Kabbalah, the philosophy of Alexius Meinong and his students, and the place of misanthropy in Marx and Agamben. He is presently writing a book titled “Flesh of One’s Flesh: A Black Hebrew Theology of Carnal Israel” that examines the theology of kinship, incest, and holiness from the book of Genesis through the New Testament, concluding with African Hebrew Israelites and their return to the anti-racial message of the Bible’s theology of kinship flesh as the embodiment of God’s glory in the created world.

Dov Weiss



Dov Weiss is associate professor of Jewish Studies in the Department of Religion. Specializing in the history of Jewish biblical interpretation and rabbinic theology, Dov’s first book, “Pious Irreverence: Confronting God in Rabbinic Judaism” (University of Pennsylvania Press), won the 2017 National Jewish Book Award in the category of Scholarship. His recent articles include “Sins of the Parents in Rabbinic and Early Christian Literature” (Journal of Religion, 97:1) “Divine Concessions in the Tanhuma Midrashim” (Harvard Theological Review, 108:1) and “The Sin of Protest God in Rabbinic and Patristic Literature” (AJS Review, 39:2). Professor Weiss’ research interests include Ancient Judaism, Rabbinic thought and literature, medieval Judaism, history of Jewish theology, Jewish biblical interpretation, and modern Jewish thought.



Professor Jennifer Grayson (Hebrew Union College/Xavier Univ.) presents at the Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center

The Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies

This year has been extremely tough on everyone. Before the entirely necessary lockdown, the Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies continued our four main strands of events: a lunchtime faculty seminar for graduate students and faculty, an annual graduate student colloquium in memory studies, showcasing the work of HGMS graduate students, and a major event each April to coincide with the annual commemoration of the Armenian genocide (April 24). We kicked off this year’s events with the second multi-media performance by Ethan Madarieta, and then engaged in the faculty seminar series on a variety of topics throughout the fall and early spring semesters. Please go here for a description of the performance piece: hgmsblog.weebly.com.



The third annual graduate student colloquium, (scheduled for late March 2020), was coming together beautifully with students from across campus including from Ecology, Evolution, and Conservation Biology, Painting, and a dance performance from two dance students. We had to postpone it due to the virus, we now plan to hold it (most likely virtually) on

Friday, September 4, 2020. Mark your calendars!

I am most disappointed that we had to postpone a major, multi-part visit from Kevork Mourad. He is an exceptionally interesting and engaging visual artist, based in New York and I am very grateful to Helen Makhdomian for working with me to organize this visit. This was a major collaboration with the Spurlock Museum, Kevork was to have begun his visit in Chicago where we had advertised his talk widely within the Armenian community, and among our Chicago-based advisory council—this would have been at the Illini Center. Then he would have given an HGMS seminar here plus a large lecture at Spurlock. However, the most exciting

part of his visit would have been an on-site installation at the Spurlock Museum, including an opening reception generously supplied by Spurlock. We had invited art student volunteers to help with the installation and I had high hopes that this visit would engage a wide spectrum of the campus and community. We have rescheduled Kevork’s visit for April 2021 and mark your calendars for his Spurlock talk on April 21, 2021. I am very grateful that we received MillerComm funding plus generous funding from IPRH, CWL, English, Fine Arts, Jewish Studies, and REEEC. For an online interview I recently conducted with Kevork and more about his work, including some very recent videos made during the pandemic, please go here: hgmsblog.weebly.com.

For next fall, 2020, we received MillerComm funding to bring Julia Creet (York) to campus to give a talk entitled, “The Genealogical Sublime: New Narratives of Numerical Selves.” I am very grateful to HGMS and comparative literature graduate student Claire Baytas for co-organizing this visit and very grateful that we received generous funding from The Beckman Institute, The Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology, IPRH(now Humanities Research Institute), SLCL, and the Unit. This was to have been September 14, 2020 but we pushed this visit back to Monday, September 13, 2021.

Please check out this video of a talk Julia gave via York University: www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fkJdgLgXxw

VIRTUAL KALLAH

Dara Goldman



Those of you who have been part of the extended community of the Program in Jewish Culture & Society—even before it was formally known as such—may remember the annual Kallah that was held. These symposia highlighted the work being done by scholars in the program, and several of them took place in the Chicago-land area. It was an initiative launched by the then director, Michael Shapiro, in collaboration with co-founder Gary Porton. Many of us probably associate the term with marriage rituals (the bride). In this case, however, the term refers to a scholarly meeting that Jewish scholars regularly held during the Babylonian captivity. Given this historical connection with the early years of the Program and the association with gathering to learn together in captivity, we decided to revive the term and launch a modified version, a virtual Kallah.

During the second half of the spring semester, we included the “Virtual Kallah” as a regular feature in the weekly email. We highlighted some of the endowed lectures from previous years and several pieces that Jewish Studies faculty had written about past events. Regular readers of the message may recall links to

recorded lectures by Nancy Miller, Shimon Attie and James Young, Yael Zerubavel, and Lisa Silverman. Over the years, the program has regularly asked program faculty to reflect on some of our programming, providing summaries and analysis of prominent lectures, performances, film screenings, exhibits, conferences, and other events that we then included in the annual newsletter and/or shared via the social media and the program website. The Virtual Kallah also recirculated select examples of this work, highlighting—in each case—a piece that was related to the featured lecture. The idea was simply to draw upon our past efforts and accomplishments in order to provide a way to stay connected and engaged with our community of Jewish learning. Data analytics show that a number of you clicked on the links provided, watched part or all of the videos, and opened the shared documents. (Analytics does provide statistics regarding how many minutes of a video users played and what percentage of viewers watched any given minute of a video, but I have no indication of how much of any given document users read after they clicked on the link.) Several of you all reached out to thank us for sharing some of the



Nomi Stolzenberg (USC) & David Myers (UCLA)

connected via the same device. We recorded the session and posted it in mid-May. Since then, over 320 people have viewed the video, with about 18% watching the whole thing. We are delighted that so many people have connected with the content, especially given the plethora of events about *Unorthodox* that were organized before and since our panel. Honestly, I am not sure if any of our in-person programmings has ever reached such a large and geographically expansive audience. For those of you who did not have a chance to attend, you can still access the full video

via [Illinois Media Space](#). We are also in the process of putting together highlights and brief clips for anyone who might be interested in a particular topic or want to utilize portions of the recording in their teaching. Look for an announcement on the program website and in the Jewish Studies weekly email once those become available.

We are hoping to be able to return to in-person programming (although presumably with some modifications) as soon as it is feasible and—most importantly—safe to do so. At the moment, we anticipate that will not happen before next year (i.e. Spring 2021). Consequently, we will continue this new tradition of the Virtual Kallah and offer programming and resources that can speak to and through this moment. We hope that you continue to enjoy and benefit from these offerings. Please let us know if there is anything that you would like to see or if you have ideas about how we can improve our virtual offerings. We are all learning and evolving as we try to adapt to the circumstances, and we would welcome any assistance that might allow us rise to the occasion and help the PJCS community to thrive to the greatest extent possible.

highlights from previous years, to share your memories of the event featured, and/or to engage in discussion about the content.

In April, we expanded our efforts and organized online events that would allow us to connect and interact (in real-time). We organized a discussion of Etgar Keret’s work. Participants watched the recording of Keret’s 2010 lecture, and professor Brett Kaplan and I shared our perspective on the author’s oeuvre. A few weeks later, we turned our attention to the wildly successful Netflix mini-series, *Unorthodox*, based on Deborah Feldman’s memoir. This event gave us the opportunity to invite David Myers (UCLA) to rejoin us and discuss some of his work on the Satmar community of Kiryas Joel that he had presented at the Jewish Studies workshop last year. Taking advantage of the virtual platform and the circumstances of stay at home orders, we were able to include Nomi Stolzenberg (USC)—who happens to be David’s wife and co-author of the book on Kiryas Joel—to discuss Satmar communities from her perspective as a legal scholar. Our own Rachel Harris, who has published extensively on women in Israeli and Jewish cinema as well as on representations of orthodox Jewish women, offered her analysis of the mini-series and compared it to other films that feature similar thematic content. Israel Institute visiting scholar Liat Maggid Alon responded to the presentations and commented on how these issues are represented and understood in an Israeli context (which was especially interesting given professor Stolzenberg’s analysis of the Satmar communities as a particularly American phenomenon). It made for a lively and engaging discussion, with only a few technical difficulties (thankfully), with amazing questions coming in from participants (far more than we could adequately address in the allotted time). Over 180 users joined the session (at its peak), which translated into an even higher number of viewers since—in some cases—multiple people were



Professor Rachel S. Harris (UIUC)

Israel Studies Project brings renowned dancer Omri Drumlevich to campus for a semester in residence in Fall 2019

Omri Drumlevich and **Zina Zinchenko**, former Israeli based Batsheva Dance Company members and Gaga teachers were guest artists in the Department of Dance during the Fall 2019 semester. During his residency, which was sponsored by the



Omri Drumlevich

Israel Studies Project, Drumlevich taught various dance classes, including a Z-motion film class where he produced and shot a new film with students enrolled in the course. He also reconstructed one of Ohad Naharin's acclaimed works, *Decadance* for November Dance, performed at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. Jacob Henss, current Dance at Illinois

graduate student and performer in *Decadance* shared that the cast "found how to be one with the community while being one with the true-self." In October 2019, the Department of Dance also hosted "First Views", an in-progress informal showing of *Decadance* for donors and community members with Drumlevich in the Nevada Dance Studios. Drumlevich also led two Gaga classes offered to the Champaign/Urbana community. At the end of his residency, the Israel Studies Project hosted an end-of-semester showing of Drumlevich and Zinchenko's solo and duet work for invited guests.



Omri's students presenting "first view"

Joshua Kravitz on the proposed visit of Yossi Klein Halevi and Mohammad Darawshe, originally scheduled for April 2020

The Program in Jewish Culture & Society at the University of Illinois announced an event to be held on April 30, 2020. This event was canceled because of the pandemic, and will most likely be rescheduled for the fall of 2021. However, academics don't pause in times of uncertainty and we continue to exchange ideas and information for the future. The live discussion was going to be a conversation between Israeli thought leader and author Yossi Klein Halevi and Mohammad Darawshe, a Palestinian citizen of Israel and civil society leader. In this conversation the two gentlemen would have discussed their own personal anecdotes and experiences on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Their academic research and hopeful thoughts on the possibility of a shared and bright future would have been a major point in their renowned discussion. Both men have traveled all over the world to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion were excited to have this be the start of a multi-year series of events dealing with the complexities of shared communities. Some people may feel uneasy about discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; however, these two men have become friends despite having different opinions on shared communities. One thing they both agree on is that this present-day conflict needs to be resolved and it takes both sides to step up and have a meaningful conversation on how these cultures and societies can coexist on the same land. It

is important for everyone to be a part of this conversation, not just Jews and Palestinians. There are multiple shared communities on this planet and multiple problems that stem from them. It is important to take action and speak up just as Yossi and Mohammad are doing throughout the world. It is also important to recognize the efforts from the Program in Jewish Culture & Society at the University of Illinois and the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, along with others both on and off campus. A tremendous amount of time and energy was put into what promised to be a meaningful talk and series for the campus and community, an objective to which the program and the University remain deeply committed. We hope to see Yossi and Mohammed on campus next year!



Yossi Klein Halevi



Mohammad Darawshe

SAVE THE DATE

We are excited to announce that the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign will play host to the Association of Israel Studies annual conference next summer. The event which attracts scholars from all over the globe combines presentations on the latest scholarship with cultural events. It has been more than 30 years since the event was hosted in the Midwest and in that time Israel studies has grown from a small field with no endowed chairs, dedicated programs or even journals to a thriving scholarly endeavor. In recent years the annual conference has attracted up to 500 scholars. We are excited to have the opportunity to host, as a result of a special gift that will help subsidize costs for the event. Our own Rachel S. Harris, associate professor of Israeli literature and culture, will be chairing the conference, supported by Dara E. Goldman and the Program in Jewish Culture and & Society. Given recent events at the university, there is also a strong desire on our campus to refocus the conversation and highlight our commitment to partnerships with Israel and Israel studies. Indeed, the university administration is especially keen at this time to support academic engagement with Israel and focus on our

capacity as a research institution to promote discussion rooted in scholarly expertise. For 14 years the university has been home to the Israel Studies Project (ISP), housed in the program. Through the resources of the ISP, we have strategically implemented a variety of Israel studies events across campus—including organizing visits from prominent Israeli cultural figures on campus, developing conferences and workshops, and promoting multiple new and revised courses focused on Israel within the Program in Jewish Culture & Society. Through the conferences, workshops, courses, and visits from prominent Israeli figures, we estimate that over the last 10 years more than 2,000 people participated, including more than 700 students participating in semester-long coursework. The hosting of the international organization's annual conference is the next step in our efforts to showcase Illinois as an institution of note in the study of Israel.

ILLINOIS

ASSOCIATION FOR ISRAEL STUDIES

SAVE THE DATE

The 36th Annual Meeting of the Association for Israel Studies

June 6-9, 2021

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Dr. Liat Maggid Alon Joins University of Illinois in visiting position



Introductory note: Over the years, the Program in Jewish Culture & Society has enjoyed several productive collaborations with the Israel Institute. They have sponsored visiting scholars to our campus and also co-sponsored conferences and events that we have hosted. We were delighted to be able to host Liat Maggid Alon as an Israel Institute visiting scholar during the 2019-2020 academic year. She taught Israeli Cinema and Television and a course on Middle Eastern history, presented her work to several campus and community groups, and participated in major events, discussions, and debates throughout the year. We therefore enthusiastically supported her application to serve as an Israel Institute teaching fellow, a program that will allow her to remain at the University of Illinois for an additional three years. In the coming year, she will be teaching a new course for us on the Arab-Israeli conflict, which currently has about 30 students enrolled, along with three additional courses on Israel and the Middle East. We wanted to give Dr. Maggid Alon this opportunity to introduce herself. We hope that those of you who have not met her yet will have the opportunity to do so in the coming years and get—at least—some small sense of the value that she is adding to our program and community.

Hello all. Though I have met many of you in person already, the annual newsletter provides me with a wonderful opportunity to introduce myself to all. As of August 2020, I will be the Israel Institute Teaching Fellow at the University of Illinois. I will be teaching two courses every semester on matters related either to

modern Israel and Israeli society or to Modern Middle Eastern societies – Jewish ones included. I first arrived at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the summer of 2018, which now seems like a million years ago and at least one reality leap away. I was a post-doc associate – an opportunity for which I deeply thank professor Kenneth Cuno (Department of History). In March of that year, I was invited by Dara (Goldman, our own wonderful director of the program) and Rachel (Harris, associate professor in comparative and world literature) to a three-day workshop on women in Israel studies that gave birth to a wonderful partnership with the Israel Institute. As a result, I spent the 2019-2020 academic year as the Israel Institute visiting scholar with the PJCS and Department of History at Illinois, during which I have applied for the three years teaching fellowship position. In the coming years, I wish to contribute PJCS' efforts to inform and educate our students about modern Israel. Together, I hope we will be able to provide many students from all walks of life and backgrounds, with opportunities to engage in a respectful, deep and extensive dialogue about issues that are at the heart of many heated debates both in the classroom (hopefully, in person as soon as possible) and outside it. I hope to see you in my classes as well as in the public events we will be holding throughout the year and will be happy to hear from you in person and engage in conversation. Feel free to reach out to me at lmaggid@illinois.edu.

HGMS

The Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies invited Kevork Mourad to visit campus in April 2020, but regrettably, we had to postpone when all campus events were canceled due to the outbreak of Covid-19. Kevork is a Syrian-born, New York-based Armenian artist who works both in 2D and 3D. He produces large-scale installations, ink drawings, illustrations for animated films, live-action sketches to music, and mixed media pieces for visual performances. An overview of images from Mourad's diverse portfolio can be found on his website: www.kevorkmourad.com.

Helen Makhdoumian, HGMS and English graduate student and the mover and shaker behind our annual Armenian studies events and genocide commemorations, had met Kevork and greatly admired his diverse and moving work; we were utterly thrilled both that he graciously accepted our invitation and that we received generous support from MillerComm, Spurlock, IPRH, CWL, English, Fine Arts, Jewish Studies, and REEEC to bring him to campus and Chicago for a multi-part visit. The wonderful

director of the Spurlock Museum, Elizabeth Sutton, was delighted to host an on-site installation and exhibition of Kevork's work and we had put out a call for art students to volunteer to help set up the exhibit. In addition to a major talk at the Spurlock Museum's Knight Auditorium entitled "Conceptualizing Migration, Memory, and Place through Art", Kevork was to have given an HGMS faculty seminar series workshop and a lecture in Chicago at the Illini Center. All of this has now been postponed until next spring so please mark your calendars for Kevork's talk at the Spurlock at 7 p.m., on April 21, 2021.

During the pandemic, I conducted an online interview with Kevork in May 2020:

BK: Starting with the pandemic in which the whole world is currently embroiled, you made a series of videos that are very

moving and very timely while in quarantine. One of them, "Social Distancing", features a series of beautifully drawn people socializing at a café who sort of float away from each other as social distancing makes our former physical proximities impossible. Can you talk about that piece? [Links to the videos can be found on the next page]:

KM: That video was my first quarantine piece. While all of us have been forced to live in quarantine and in some ways have been having similar experiences, some groups have felt the consequences of this quarantine more strongly and immediately than others (those who are in the arts, for example), which is why I have the musicians end up the last ones in the frame, playing alone in an empty café."

BK: More than most visual artists, your work incorporates music—especially cello—but other musical instruments and genres as well. Can you talk about how you see the connections between the visual and the musical in your pieces?

KM: I come from an illustration background (one

of my degrees is in illustration) and my grandfather was a troubadour in the Kurdish part of Syria near the border with Turkey. With time I realized that to illustrate music was something natural to me and organic to my work, and I treated my drawing tool like a sort of bow hitting on strings. I've often felt like the gestures of my drawing directly translate the rhythms of the music. With this quarantine series, I've been treating the videos like visual poems related to the present and inspired by the emotions I receive from the music. Regardless if the music is cello, percussion, bandoneon, or duduk, I receive the emotions and feel compelled to put them into the visual dimension.

BK: It feels as though part of your artistic practice very consciously involves collaborative projects such as the site-specific installation you were scheduled to produce with

art students here at the Spurlock Museum and which has now been delayed until April 2021. Can you talk about the importance of both creating work in a space for a space and also of working in conjunction with other (emerging) artists?

KM: For my installation pieces, I have the idea of what the piece is about, but the space in which the installation will be created dictates, by virtue of the size and layout of the room, how the piece will be viewed exactly—from which angles, from what height. And this in turn affects the creation of the piece because, in order for the piece to translate the ideas well, I need to know exactly how it will be physically experienced. My installation pieces are large endeavors and would take months to create if I were alone, so having a team of young artists to help in the technical aspects of the creation is essential, but I also received so much energy from the exchange of ideas I experience with other artists. I openly share with them my techniques but also enjoy the inspiration I get from their sharing their own works with me.

BK: Much of your work revolves around the traumas of displacement and the Armenian Genocide. And yet so many of your images are of homes, villages, abodes, often very closely stacked together and very imaginatively configured. Is that a way of registering the importance of the very thing which so many people living in exile find hardest to secure?



Installation view, *The Memories of Stone*, Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, 2019, Courtesy Kevork Mourad

KM: I think that many people in exile seek a sense of community, which can be hard in our societies. I grew up in Aleppo in which we did grow up in spaces where we felt like we lived on top of each other, many faiths together, families and communities stacked up in a city that is full of the history of centuries of all these people living together. My art, in which I recall the architecture and the energy of the city I grew up in, celebrates and is nostalgic for the idea of this multiculturalism and tolerance that is today so easily forgotten or erased.

BK: How do the large scale, global, refugee crises impact your work and compare with the experience of Syrian refugees from the civil war?

KM: I myself am the son and descendant of refugees. Wherever refugees go they try to bring with them and recreate some of the beauty that they left behind. I am indebted to the heritage and the strength of my ancestors and of the Syrian people who welcomed them and allowed them to thrive in a new place. I can't speak to the exact experience of Syrian refugees today since I am fortunate not to have suffered what they have, but my heart and therefore my art is full of the courage they have shown.

BK: In addition to beautiful still drawings you make videos. Can you talk about what it feels like to work in so many media and how you perceive the differences between them?

KM: Growing up, I felt like you were expected to choose a box and stay within it; you were not encouraged to cross-media. Here in New York, in this time, I have discovered that working in different media has been essential to me to be able to use whatever tools seem most fitted to the project at hand, the message I need to get across. No matter the medium in which I'm working, I am playing with similar ideas of time and linearity, even while exploring whatever theme the individual pieces address.

BK: What has it been like to be in New York City during this pandemic? It has been a curse and a blessing to be in New York at this time. It's a hub of creativity and it has been devastating to see things so quiet and to know how much suffering is around us. At the same time, the energy of this place is always with us and I feel like more than ever I have a duty to speak up through my art and show that art is always essential. We need the ideas and hope to inspire us forward, even in the midst of a time that feels like it's about basic survival.

Kevork's videos made during the pandemic:

vimeo.com/407827624

vimeo.com/410025400

vimeo.com/399894511

vimeo.com/406646654

vimeo.com/39826521

Award Winners



Fall 2019 Ronald H. Filler Scholarship Winner

(previous semester)

Johnna Jones is a junior in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, majoring in economics and minoring in Jewish Studies. Johnna is an outstanding student, who has been a James Scholar and made Dean's List both in her first and second years at the University of Illinois. She is also a H.O.P.E. recipient and National Collegiate Scholar. She has held internships in the juvenile court system and the Department of Corrections. After graduation, Johnna hopes to attend law school and eventually serve as a judge. She is also a member of the University of Illinois Illinettes Dance Team, which affords her the opportunity to interact with community members, children, sports fans, and other dancers.



Spring 2020 Ronald H. Filler Scholarship Winner

(previous semester)

Joshua Kravitz is a senior in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, majoring in political science and minoring in Jewish Studies. This award is the most recent addition to his list of accolades and achievements, which include making Dean's List every semester and earning multiple recognitions by the National Honors Society. He is a familiar face to many of us in the Program in Jewish Culture & Society, as he is currently completing his fourth semester of Hebrew in addition to the Jewish Studies coursework he has taken toward his minor and his involvement in many of our sponsored and co-sponsored activities. He also completed a study abroad semester at Tel Aviv University during the Fall 2019 semester. Josh will also be leading a Mayanot Birthright trip to Israel in May 2020. After graduation, Josh plans to join the workforce and gain knowledge and experiences in business and development. He hopes to return to academia and pursue a professional degree in law or business.



Gendell Family and Shiner Family Fellowship Award Winner

Lizy Mostowski is a PhD student in the Program in Comparative & World Literature and recent recipient of Gendell Family and Shiner Family Fellowship from the Program in Jewish Culture & Society for the spring semester of 2021. Her dissertation, tentatively titled "Polish-Jewish Literature After the Holocaust: Witnessing, Collective Memory, and Fictitious Remembering", is a study of post-Holocaust Polish-Jewish literature as a form of witnessing. It addresses the works such as the Polish manifesto "My, ydzy polscy" ["We, Polish Jews"] (1944) by Polish national poet, Julian Tuwim, the Yiddish epic poem "Tsu Poyln" ["To Poland"] (1946) by Abraham Sutzkever, and the Polish memoir "Rodzinna historia l ku" ["Family History of Fear"] (2005) by Agata Tuszy ska as forms of reconstructing and preserving lost cultural landscapes. In putting disregarded works of Polish and Yiddish literature back into conversation with one another, the dissertation, a study of the problem of remembering after the Holocaust, itself is an act of recovery of Polish-Jewish culture. The project is incredibly timely as it will examine the haunting presence of Polish-Jewish culture in contemporary Polish society and its impact on the memory of the Holocaust in Poland.



Gendell Family and Shiner Family Fellowship Award Winner

Tyler P. Dolan is a doctoral student in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. His dissertation project seeks to make two interventions. First, the demonstrated cultural, juridical, and historical connection between Jewish writers in Yiddish and in Russian in the Revolutionary period naturally engenders a comparative approach, but also a generic evaluation. Pogrom literature, as it was written across the linguistic terrain of the borderlands, is a unified genre worthy of unified consideration. By weaving the pogrom stories in Yiddish—a language whose influence was never as wide before and so drastically reduced in the aftermath of the Holocaust—with those writing in the dominant language of the early Soviet Union, the dissertation builds upon extant scholarship that mainly addresses each national

literature separately. This project is not among the first to interrogate the division of literatures into national canons, but the almost universal multilingualism of the East European Jewish community makes the explicit rejection of those divisions more urgent. Second, a close attention to the historical conditions that inform pogrom literature requires a reckoning with changes in political, national, and ethnic consciousness that make the pogroms a historical possibility for literary consideration. The biopolitical turn so crucial to our understanding of modernity—its "decisive event"—also grants insight into the aesthetics of violence at the core of pogrom literature. With biopolitics as a frame, the project situates the pogrom violence of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries within the context of emerging and changing modernity and the historical conditions that make the human body—and populations of human bodies—precisely what is at stake in political calculations; pogrom literature, like all literature, is both created by its political and cultural context and has a role to play in the creation and framing of that same reality.



Gendell Family and Shiner Family Fellowship Award Winner

Helen Makhdoumian is a PhD candidate in English (literary studies) working on graduate certificates through The Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies (HGMS) and The Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory. Her dissertation, tentatively titled "A Map of This Place: Resurgence and Remembering Removal in Armenian, Palestinian, and American Indian/First Nations Literatures", develops a connective study of how memories of dispossession and removal travel spatially, intergenerationally, and across cultures. By drawing out the knots of critical and creative reflection on remembrance practices that appear across these seemingly disparate literary archives, the project carries forward two developing theoretical frameworks within contemporary cultural memory studies: one, the migration of memory and two, migration and memory. The first framework emphasizes how memory "travels" across territorial and social boundaries. The second framework studies the incorporation of immigrants into a host nation's polity via their participation in that state's collective memory. Her project aims to trouble the Eurocentric lineage of critical theory that undergirds these two frameworks. It does so by engaging conversations

about indigeneity, sovereignty, and witnessing often missing in previous applications of them. "A Map of This Place" thus brings Indigenous studies and settler colonial studies to the center of transnational and transcultural memory studies.



Karasik Scholarship Award Winner

Leianna Xenia Hamel is a PhD candidate in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures (also completing a graduate certificate in Jewish Culture and Society) at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her dissertation project, entitled "Undisciplined Bodies: Deviant Female Sexuality in Russian and Yiddish Literatures, 1870s-1930", analyzes the depiction of female bodies and eroticism in Russian and Yiddish literatures alongside medical, anthropological, and journalistic examinations of female sexuality. The project employs a Foucauldian framework to analyze how the discourses surrounding the erotic female body sought to know and thus control its subject, with the literary text and the scientific tract serving very different functions within these discourses. She argues that artistic literature served as a space of increasingly unregulated pleasure for the reader, while the non-fictional texts tried to exercise discipline and control over the reader's carnal thoughts and behavior. Furthermore, the dissertation shows how the Russian and Yiddish print cultures interacted with one another in the late imperial and early Soviet periods. With its strongly historical, theoretical, and comparative approach, the project offers new insights into the constructions of female sexuality in Russian and Yiddish literary and non-fictional texts from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Leianna is planning to use the Karasik scholarship to access materials in Jerusalem, participate in a conference in Israel (in whatever format the conference now takes), and continue her study of Yiddish through the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.



Ronald H. Filler, founder and sponsor of the Filler Scholarship, at the 2018 Filler Scholarship dinner.

The campaign to support Hebrew instruction

Over the past few decades, modern Hebrew instruction on the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign campus has been housed in several departments. From 1987 to 2003 it was taught in the Department of Linguistics. 1992 to 1996 were the years of peak enrollment, at least 50 students took first semester Hebrew in each of those years. From 2003 to 2010 classes were split between the departments of Religion and Linguistics. During these years enrollment in Hebrew was going down across the country, but the enrollment collapse at U of I was particularly severe. Perhaps this was due to the rootlessness of Hebrew instruction.

With enrollments shrinking steadily from 2010, it became necessary to find more academic units to pay for the cost of instruction as revenue from tuition was inadequate to cover expenses. Beginning about 2010 our Program in Jewish Culture & Society, the Department of Religion, the Department of Linguistics, the College of LAS, and other academic units each kicked in a little money to maintain modern Hebrew classes.

In 2014 the university determined that overall, the campus should not support all the less commonly taught languages, which includes Hebrew. From the peaks of the mid-1990s, by 2007 enrollment in first semester Hebrew was down to about 30. In 2011 the enrollment had shrunk so far that only one section was required, something less than 20 students.

The college recommended to the executive committee that it administer modern Hebrew instruction using whatever paid instructors the program could afford and use online instruction from what is now called the Big Ten Academic Alliance for all other classes.

The faculty knew (and still knows) based on research that online instruction for foreign languages is insufficient to properly train students to engage with Jewish material in Hebrew. But more than that, the executive committee felt that modern Hebrew language instruction is one of the basic, core, essential, primary, routine purposes of any program in Jewish Studies.

This meant finding adequate funding to pay a trained, qualified instructor to teach a four-semester sequence in Hebrew. General requirements for all university students include completing three semesters of a language other than English (or the equivalent). College of LAS and Gies College of Business students must complete a fourth semester (or demonstrate comparable proficiency); some majors require additional language training.

University funding did not go to absolute zero, but from 2014, the vast bulk of the expense for Hebrew had to come from the budget of the program. Regular donations and irregular fundraising have not proven enough to maintain funding at the level needed to employ a full-time instructor.

The program took up the challenge of funding Hebrew in 2014 with some surplus funds on hand, but with reimbursement based on student enrollment continuing as low as it is and not rebounding, the ability to cover some of the expenses from tuition has been minimal. The program did employ a full-time instructor, Sarah Feldman, until 2018 when she left for a position at Harvard University.

Since then, we have been employing graduate students, but they're a transient lot. Also, on occasion, the best possible candidate has been a foreign graduate student, legally only able to teach three courses per year.

A full-time instructor would be preferable for multiple reasons. Students would be confident to enroll in Jewish Studies knowing from year to year that there would be an instructor, allowing them to count on taking Hebrew for the foreign language requirement. If there is a full-time Hebrew language instructor on campus, they could do far more for the students than just teach, they could help students in other ways. We'll do all we can to get the word out that there is a full-time instructor. Hopefully, the instructor would advertise the program, bringing in more students. Tuition dollars from a larger number of students will only help.

The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences has made a firm commitment to continue its support if the program can guarantee partial funding. To that end, the Advisory Council agreed to initiate a fundraising campaign to ensure the continuation of modern Hebrew instruction.

The campaign has a very specific target, \$545,000. There is a reason for this unusual amount. The (first) \$45,000 will be used to support an instructor for three years. From this fund, \$15,000 will be used each year to support the instructor. The college will contribute supplemental salary and benefits. As soon as we raise the remaining \$500,000 the college has promised to contribute supplemental salary and benefits on top of whatever will be earned by the \$500,000 endowment. Naming rights are available.

When you make a pledge, the college is allowing four years for us to actually contribute. One member of the advisory council has offered a matching gift program if certain fundraising goals are met.

As of June 30, eight donors have pledged a total of \$62,000. \$37,000 is designated for the first three years, the remaining \$25,000 is pledged to the permanent endowment.

Paul Winterbotham, the college development officer who supports the program, is reaching out to the advisory council and outside donors on our behalf, to ensure the survival of modern Hebrew instruction in Urbana-Champaign. Please make a pledge when he contacts you.

Donors

Endowments

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- Ronald Filler Endowment Fund
- Gendell Family and Shiner Family Fund
- Samuel and Sheila Goldberg Lectureship Fund
- Greenfield/Lynch Lecture Series Fund
- Hebrew Program Endowment Fund
- Karasik Scholarship for Study Abroad Fund
- Krouse Family Visiting Scholars in Judaism and Western Culture Fund
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- Gary Porton Fund
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- Tobor Family Endowed Professorship in Jewish Studies Fund

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- Microsoft Giving Campaign
- Benevity Community Impact Fund



Thank you to all of this past year's donors for your impact on the future success of the program. We encourage your continued

commitment and hope others partner with us in the upcoming year. Gifts can be made directly by going to jewishculture.illinois.edu/giving and selecting the fund of your choice. For further information on giving towards a specific purpose, to better understand the impact of your gifts, or to learn more about our Teaching of Hebrew initiative, including leading gifts, please contact me directly at either **(217) 300-6222** or **paulww@illinois.edu**. I look forward to learning about you would like the program to grow on campus!

– Paul Winterbotham

The Future of Trauma and Memory Studies Reading Group

Fall 2019-Spring 2020: Reflections

Dilara Caliskan and Claire Baytas

As part of the Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide and Memory Studies, for Fall 2019 and Spring 2020, we, the Future of Trauma and Memory Studies Reading Group, chose “memory in motion” as the central theme of the meetings. Our aim was to explore the intersections between the concepts of “memory” and “motion” from the perspective of different disciplines and backgrounds. In order to explore how the relationship between memory and motion can be investigated through different texts from different contexts, we conducted meetings on several topics such as “motion and cultural memory,” “gender and memory” and “borders, trauma and memory.” We read the theoretical texts of prominent memory studies scholars such as Jan Assmann, Ann Rigney, Maurice Halbwachs, and Avishai Margalit to provide a firm grounding in central questions of memory studies: how memory operates on individual and collective levels, how it migrates across time and space, and how and why we remember and forget. Our discussions then examined memory “in motion” through different case studies, including incarceration on the United States borders and threats to the preservation of cultural memory through destruction of libraries.

As both of us co-directors spent some time abroad conducting

dissertation research or fieldwork this year, we joined certain meetings virtually rather than in person, and held discussions with a perspective informed by our different experiences and environments. We had the enjoyable occasion to discuss a selection of chapters on memory, gender, and activism from the recently published *Women Mobilizing Memory* (Columbia UP, 2019), including the opportunity to talk about Dilara’s contribution to this book with the author herself. The reading group furthermore had the pleasure of promoting HGMS’s annual Memory Studies Conference, as well as have graduate students affiliated with the reading group sign up to participate in the conference. Although the event had to be postponed due to the pandemic, we look forward to the virtual version of the conference when it is held over Zoom on September 4, 2020.

Looking at the intersections between memory and motion through our monthly meetings greatly enriched our past year’s program. We look forward to continuing to lead the Future of Trauma and Memory Studies Reading Group for the upcoming 2020-2021 academic year, to researching and discussing a variety of new topics, and to collaborating with institutions and scholars across and beyond our campus.

Illinois at the Association for Jewish Studies

Reported by PhD student Lizy Mostowski

The Association for Jewish Studies held their Annual Meeting in sunny San Diego, California from December 15-17. Many University of Illinois faculty members and graduate students were in attendance.

Prof. Brett Ashley Kaplan presented her paper “JewKlansman” on a riveting panel called “Jewishness and Blackness Through the Lens of BLAKKKLANSMAN”, Prof. Dara Goldman presented her compelling paper “A ‘Polaco’ by any Other Name: Jewish Characters and Jewishness in Recent Cuban Literature”, Prof. Dov Weiss presented his paper “Jews, Gentiles and Gehinnom in Rabbinic Literature”, and Prof. Rachel Harris co-organized the Women’s Caucus Breakfast. PhD Candidate Naomi Taub participated in the roundtable discussion “Jewishness Beyond Liberalism: New Directions in Jewish American Cultural Studies”. PhD Candidate Diana Sacilowski and I participated in a panel entitled Post War Communist Jewish Writing. Sacilowski presented her paper “Speaking Silence: Expressions of Polish-Jewish Identity in Hanna Krall’s Sublokator and Magdalena Tulli’s Włoskie szpilki” and I presented my paper “‘Polish national (Jewish origin)’ [‘narodowość polska (pochodzenie żydowskie)’]: The Exilic Poetry of March of 1968”. Our panel was chaired by Katka Reszke, author of Return of the Jew, an important look at the



Bagel Brunch at Illini Hillel

third-post Holocaust generation in contemporary Poland.

The Annual Meeting is an exciting occasion to learn about new research by foremost scholars in the field and to meet with colleagues from around the world. I am grateful to the Program in Jewish Culture and Society for their support which gave me the opportunity to attend. As always, the Association for Jewish Studies’ Annual Meeting was the most exciting and inspiring event of the academic year (in my opinion)!

New course on Jewish American and U.S. Minority literatures

Professor Brett A. Kaplan developed a new course on Jewish American and U.S. Minority literatures in dialogue that was taught for the first time (by her) during the Fall 2019 semester. This course focuses on the connections across and among ethnic and immigrant groups in the U.S. that have both shaped and been shaped by Jewish American communities. The course counts towards the requirement, implemented a few years ago, that all undergraduate students take at least one course focusing on U.S. minority cultures. Professor Kaplan taught the inaugural version of the course this year. Here is what she had to say about the experience:

I hit the jackpot of students for the inaugural class of JS 209/ CWL 209/ENGL 222, Jewish American and U.S. Minority Literatures in Dialogue. Hailing from physics, psychology, journalism, accounting, business, health sciences, civil engineering, history, social work, English and other disciplines, students came together to read a wide variety of literary texts expressing immigrant and/or minority experiences in the U.S. Over the course of the semester the pupils learned careful reading and writing skills and honed their ability to make arguments about texts. For their

final essays I encouraged them to write and think outside the box and received an array of fantastic fiction and non-fiction essays telling stories of LGBTQ struggles to find an identity, immigrant experiences from Puerto Rico, Russia, Ethiopia, and many other places, love stories of cultural difference, fictional and non-fictional stories about adoption, race wars in schools, becoming the representative of the Jewish people as a Jewish minority, baking in a Chicago bakery with Polish, Jewish, and Mexican co-workers, and many other beautifully written narratives. Taken as a whole, these final essays offered profound reflections on the themes we discussed all semester including alienation; isolation; community; cross-cultural, religious, and racial convergences; generational differences; stereotyping and defying expectations; aesthetics and art. I feel very lucky to have learned from these exceptionally sensitive and bright young adults all semester!

The course is being offered again this Fall (Fall 2020) and will be taught by Lizy Mostowski, an advanced graduate student in Comparative and World Literature and Jewish Studies who works with Professor Kaplan.



Audience at Antisemitism: Historical Perspectives.

In Memoriam

During the past year, the Program in Jewish Culture & Society lost three people who provided invaluable contributions to the program and local Jewish community at various stages of its development: Sandra Lee Brottman, a supporter of Beth Tikvah Congregation, the president of the Beth Tikvah Sisterhood and the president of the Midwest Federation of Temple Sisterhoods as well as one of the organizers of a Jewish summer camp OSRU; Maurice P. Raizes, member of the University of Illinois President’s Council and the generous donor for the Endowment Fund for the Program in Jewish Culture and Society along with numerous other funds; and Sheldon Drobny, whose support helped nurture the initial development of the Program. We would like to take this opportunity to remember the lives of those we lost and honor their commitment to Jewish cultures, communities, and causes.

זיכרוננו לברכה; may each of their memories be a blessing.

Sandra Lee Brottman

Sandra Lee Brottman (nee Epstein), 86, passed away peacefully on April 27, 2020. Sandra was the loving wife of the late Irwin Brottman for 49 years. Her love of Irwin Brottman began when she met him while attending high holiday services at the University of Illinois. She was Irwin’s partner in life and all that it offered. Sandy’s commitment to the Jewish community and scholarship was infinite. Beth Tikvah Congregation was a paramount part of her life and her family’s life for 53 years. Sandy was president of the Beth Tikvah Sisterhood and the president of the Midwest Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. Her commitment to the Jewish faith extended to OSRUI, a Jewish summer camp, which all of her children attended, and which she supported as a board member. Sandy will be missed by all, family and friends. She will live on in our thoughts, our memories, and our actions each and every day.

Maurice P. Raizes

Maurice P. Raizes earned a bachelor’s degree and a juris doctor degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1951 and 1953, respectively. He and his wife, Sandra F. Raizes, a 1953 graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign have generously supported the University of Illinois through the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics I Fund, the Law School Annual Fund, the Abram Sachar Heritage Society Fund, the Fund for the Jewish Studies, and the Endowment Fund for the Program in Jewish Culture and Society. Expressing his loyalty to the affairs of the University in 1989, Maurice P. Raizes became a member of the President’s Council, the university’s highest donor recognition organization. He served as a member of the University of Illinois Foundation since 2007 and was a life member of the University of Illinois Alumni Association. The Program in Jewish Culture & Society expresses our deepest sympathy to the family of Maurice P. Raizes. The memory of his contribution will live on in our hearts.

Sheldon Drobny

Sheldon Drobny passed away on January 24, 2020, at his home in Highland Park, Illinois. Sheldon was a significant Chicago investor who founded Air America Radio, the first progressive talk radio network. During its early years, Sheldon and Anita Drobny provided significant support to the Program in Jewish Culture & Society. Sheldon was a loving father of Jennifer (Tom Chernaik) Drobny- Chernaik, Michael Drobny, Dr. Jessica (Amitay Feder) Drobny-Feder and the late Julie Beth Drobny. Proud grandfather Sasha, Sam, Eden, and Adam. Dear brother of Irving (Arlene) Drobny and Arnold (the late Susan) Drobny.

Last Year’s Events

2019

Thursday, August 24

“Primo Levi: Between Testimony and Fiction”

HGMS Workshop with Philippe Mesnard
2090 Foreign Language Building, Noon

Sunday, September 1

Welcome Bagels

Launch of a new semester and connect with new and old friends.

Illini Hillel, The Margie K. and Louis N. Cohen Center for Jewish Life, 503 E. John St. Champaign. 11:30 a.m.

Monday, September 9

“Reflections of a Jerusalem Correspondent”

An Evening with Etgar Lefkovits
Illini Hillel, The Margie K. and Louis N. Cohen Center for Jewish Life, 503 E. John St. Champaign, 5 p.m.

Monday, September 16

FILM Guided Viewing and Discussion of Red Sea Diving Resort

Dr. Liat Maggid Alon (Israel Institute visiting scholar) and Waga Brok (Illini Hillel)
Illini Hillel, Cohen Center for Jewish Life 503 E. John St, 7:30 p.m.

Monday, September 23

“Grandma’s medicine, iraganeko zuloa”

HGMS student performance by Ethan Madarieta
210 Levis Faculty Center, 7 p.m.

Thursday, October 10

First View:

Dance Performance Workshop

Omri Drumlevich, visiting lecture/ choreographer
Dance Studios, 905 West Nevada, 5 p.m.

Thursday, October 24

Primo Levi: Between Testimony and Fiction

HGMS faculty seminar with Philippe Mesnard
2090 Foreign Language Building, Noon

Friday, October 25

Faculty Shabbat

Shabbat dinner at the Cohen Center for Jewish Life.

Illini Hillel, The Margie K. and Louis N. Cohen Center for Jewish Life 503 E. John St.,Champaign. 7 p.m.

Sunday, November 3

Community Gaga Class

Omri Drumlevich (former dancer with Israeli based Batsheva Dance Company) movement class
Nevada Dance Studio, 905 W. Nevada St. 1 p.m.

Monday, November 4

Next Year in the Caribbean: Race, Religion, and Roots in the Jewish Atlantic World

“Between Ancestry and Belief: ‘Judaism’ and ‘Hinduism’ in the Nineteenth-Century”
PJCS Workshop with Leora Batnitzky
109 English Building, Noon

Race and Grace: Rethinking Paul and its Implications for Modern Jewish Thought and Christian Theology”

Goldberg Lecture: Leora Batnitzky (Princeton University)
Foreign Language Building, 5:30 p.m.

Thursday – Saturday, November 7-9
Reconstruction of an Ohad Naharin Masterwork Performance

Student performance featured in the Department of Dance’s *November Dance*
Omri Drumlevich, visiting lecturer/ choreographer performing.
Colwell Playhouse, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 13

“The secret of solidarity: helping Jews in the Holocaust”

Rosenthal Lecture: Mark Roseman (Indiana Univ.)
Lucy Ellis Lounge, 7 p.m.

Thursday, November 14

Antisemitism: Historical Perspectives, Panel Discussion

Mark Roseman (Indiana University) and Peter Fritzsche (history), moderated by Harriet Murav (comparative and world literature)
Third floor, Levis Faculty Center, 4 p.m.

Tuesday, December 3

Israel on the Screen: Between Fauda and Shtisel

Liat Maggid Alon, Israel Institute visiting scholar (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)
Anshe Emet Synagogue 3751 North Broadway, Chicago, 7 p.m.

Monday, December 9

Exodus or Expulsion: Reconstructing the past of the Jews of Egypt in the 20th Century

PJCS workshop with Liat Maggid Alon, Israel Institute visiting scholar (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)
109 English Building, Noon

Sunday, September 1

Welcome Bagels

Launch of a new semester and connect with new and old friends.

Illini Hillel, The Margie K. and Louis N. Cohen Center for Jewish Life 503 E. John St. Champaign. 11:30 a.m.

Wednesday, December 11

Omri Drumlevich -Final Showing

Omri Drumlevich and Zina Zinchenkoshare their films and dance works.
Dance Rehearsal Krannert (DRK), level 2 Krannert Center for the Performing Arts (500 S. Goodwin Ave, Urbana), 7 p.m.

Thursday, December 12

“A Nice Jewish Boy who Believes in Jesus:” Fear, Fury, and the Campaign against Messianic Judaism in Britain

HGMS workshop with Gavin Schaffer is senior lecturer in British history at the University of Birmingham (UK).
109A English Building, Noon

2020

Sunday, January 26

Welcome Back Bagels

The launch of a new semester and connect with new and old friends.

Illini Hillel, The Margie K. and Louis N. Cohen Center for Jewish Life 503 E. John St. Champaign, 11:30 a.m.

Monday, January 27

“Liberation Heroes: the Last Eyewitnesses” documentary

Screening and discussion by Scott Gendell, member of the PJCS advisory council
Illini Hillel, 503 East John Street, Champaign, 7 p.m.

Monday, February 3

“From Metaphorical Wings to Allegorical Sea Monsters”

HGMS seminar, Akiva K. Segan, independent artist presentation on Holocaust art
109 English Building

Monday, February 10

“Pastures of Love and Mountains of Sacrifice. Pontic Parakathi Singing and the Memory of Violence”

HGMS seminar, Dr. Ioannis Tsekouras (Music, University of Illinois)
109 English Building

Saturday, February 15

Community reception

Sunday, March 1

“At the Heart of Islamic Empire: The Jews of Abbasid Baghdad and the Cairo Geniza”

Lecture given by professor Jennifer Grayson (Hebrew Union College/Xavier University)
Multipurpose room, Temple Jeremiah, 937 N. Happ Rd., Northfield, IL, 11:15 a.m.

Monday, March 2

“At the King’s Gate”: Jewish Government Officials and Rabbinic Authority in Abbasid Baghdad”

Lecture given by professor Jennifer Grayson (Hebrew Union College/Xavier University)
Bruce D. Nesbitt Afro American Cultural Center, 1212 W. Nevada Street, Urbana, 5 p.m.

Monday, March 9

“Narrating the Legacy of Aristides de Sousa Mendes, Portuguese Consul of Bordeaux in June 1940: Intersections of Personal, Familial, National, and International Memory Projects”

HGMS seminar, Michele Koven (communication, University of Illinois)
109 English Building

Monday, April 20

Virtual Kallah Zoom Session — Etgar Keret and 21C. Jewish Writing

An evening with Etgar Keret, professor Brett A. Kaplan and professor Dara E. Goldman
Discussion, 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 7

Virtual panel discussion of the mini-series: Unorthodox

Rachel S. Harris (University of Illinois), David Myers (UCLA), and Nomi Stolzenberg (USC)
7:30 p.m.

Highlights from our plan for 2020-2021

Mark your calendars for some of the exciting virtual programming that we have planned for this year. Our calendar of events will continue to evolve and develop long after this newsletter goes to print. Please refer to our program website, our weekly email, and our Facebook page for the latest information about upcoming events. You are also welcome to contact the PJCS/HGMS office for additional information about our activities.

2020

Monday, August 31
On a Personal Note: A conversation with Violinists Yulia Ziskel and Joe Deninzon
7:30 - 8:30 p.m. | Zoom

Friday, September 4
Third Annual HGMS Graduate Student Symposium
9 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. | Zoom

Monday, September 14
HGMS Workshop
Bryan K. Roby, assistant professor of Judaic studies at the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor
Noon - 1 p.m. | Zoom

Monday, October 12
HGMS/Future of Trauma Studies workshop on Gender and Activism in Memory Studies
Noon - 1:30 p.m. | Zoom

Monday, October 19
Lunch & Learn with Ashager Araro
11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. | Zoom

Monday, October 19
Roots and Routes: Ethiopian Cultural Communities and Diversity in Israel
Presentation with Ashager Araro
3:00 p.m. | Zoom

Monday, October 26
Book Launch with Rini Mehta
Noon - 1 p.m. | Zoom

Monday, November 9
Sound Monument, Concentration Camp Plaszow, Poland
PJCS - Krouse workshop with Karolina Ozog
Noon - 1 p.m. | Zoom

Tuesday, November 10
PJCS - Krouse Presentation with Kamil Karski
Re-Membering Plaszow. Key ideas for the Museum-Memorial Place of the Polish Force Labour and Concentration Camp (1942-1945)
3 p.m. | Zoom

2021

Sunday - Tuesday, April 11-13
Next Year in the Caribbean: Race, Religion, and Roots in the Jewish Atlantic World
Participants to include Aviva Ben-Ur of University of Massachusetts Amherst, Sarah Phillips Casteel of Carleton University, Laura Liebman of Reed College, and Stan Mervis of Arizona State University

Wednesday, April 21
"Conceptualizing Migration, Memory, and Place through Art"
HGMS & MillerComm invites Kevork Mourad
Spurlock Museum, 7 p.m.

June 6-9
37th Annual Conference of the Association for Israel Studies | Virtual

The following events, originally planned for Spring 2020, have been postponed. We are still exploring options for how the best reschedule them. We will share details as soon as they are finalized. Watch for updates in the weekly email and visit the Program website or contact the program office for additional information.

"Words of the Living God: Truth, Memory, and Cultural Conflict in 'The Collected Plays of Chaim Potok'"
Presentation by Rena Potok (Villanova University), Chicago

"Cultural Migration and Fusion in 'The Collected Plays of Chaim Potok'"
Greenfield/Lynch Lecture: Rena Potok (Villanova University) with performance of selected scenes

In Conversation
Yossi Klein Halevi and Mohammad Darawshe on Israel and Palestine, campus-wide