As I say every year, everything we do is made possible by our friends and donors. The faculty we hire, the courses we teach, the public lectures we organize, the workshops we convene – the entire presence of Jewish Studies at Illinois – it all comes from the support of our contributors.

We want to thank all of our friends who continue to give with such generosity. We simply couldn’t do our work without them.

If you are interested in becoming a friend of the Program, please don’t hesitate to get in touch with me at bunzl@illinois.edu. Even the smallest contribution makes a difference!

Matti Bunzl
Director, Program in Jewish Culture & Society
Professor, Department of Anthropology

DeAR FRIENDS,

The Program in Jewish Culture & Society at the University of Illinois is ready for another exciting year of teaching, research, and intellectual fellowship!

Great impulses are emanating from the Program’s Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies, directed by Michael Rothberg. Over the last few years, the initiative has become a major player on the international scene, joining important ventures like NITMES: Network in Transnational Memory Studies. In November, we will host a two-day workshop with our colleagues under the title “Diasporic Memories, Comparative Methodologies.” You can read more about this and other exciting developments in this newsletter.

We are also continuing our tradition of inviting the leading figures in Jewish Studies. This academic year, we will host Paul Mendes-Flohr for a week in September, welcome Rachel Harelick in October, and visit with Christine Havens and Claudia Koonz in March.

Most importantly, though, we are a presence in the classroom. Every semester, we offer about 20 courses, teaching well over 1,000 students in the process. And the response is tremendous. We have had a robust Jewish Studies minor for years. But the demand was greater – and we are thrilled that, starting this academic year, we are also able to offer a Jewish Studies major.

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Matti Bunzl
Director, Program in Jewish Culture & Society
Professor, Department of Anthropology
In 1959, the sociologist and rabbi Albert I. Gordon published Jews In Suburbia. In that now classic study, Gordon endeavored to help his readers understand the nature of Jewish life in the postwar United States. In order to do so, he had to investigate the lives his subjects increasingly led outside of the cities that had been home to previous generations of U.S. Jews. In shifting his focus to the urban and metropolitan fringes, Gordon was not alone. Many sociologists of the period focused their studies on examinations of the newly built suburbs that seemed to appear almost overnight in locations across the United States after 1945. Now-famous scholars and writers such as Herbert Gans, David Riesman, William H. Whyte, and John Mead looked to newly built communities such as Levittown, New Jersey, and Park Forest, Illinois, to try to understand what it meant to live in one of the thousands of look-alike houses that had been constructed on relatively small lots in newly built developments all across the country. What did it mean, they all asked, to leave behind extended families living in inner-city brownstones and apartment buildings for a life lived without in-laws in a house of one’s own? What did it mean to leave ethnically-identified neighborhoods in favor of suburbs that were often restricted—through a variety of practices—to whites alone?

Although his disciplinary colleagues concerned themselves primarily with questions of community formation and with sometimes ill-informed and stereotypical critiques of the cultural uniformity they feared would result from the architectural uniformity that characterized much mass-suburban housing, Gordon focused instead on asking a more precise set of questions: How were Jews faring in suburbia? How was the change of location changing the character of Jewish life in the United States? “What,” he asked, was “happening to their family life, their children, their religious values and practices? How do they relate to their Christian neighbors, and how do these in turn relate to the Jewish?”

Gordon wrote decades before the emergence of scholarship examining the critical study of white identity formation in the United States, but his text is important for what it reveals about the tensions inherent to Jewish identity formation and its relationship to postwar suburbia. He noted, for example, that anti-semitism resulted in exclusionary practices conducted by real estate agents who refused to show homes in restricted areas to Jews, that Gentlemen’s Agreements still prevented Jews from having fair access to housing in many neighborhoods; that unfair lending practices restricted opportunities for Jews to purchase new houses in some areas. Nevertheless, he noted that many postwar Jews fled to the suburbs because they were themselves attracted by the possibility of living in segregated, all-white neighborhoods. He also simultaneously acknowledged that his subjects preferred living among whites while still remaining “in a manner characteristic of minorities, a conspicuous group in suburbia.” Jews could “pass,” in the suburb if they wished to do so then, but not for long.

In my recently published book, Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America (University of Minnesota Press, 2013), I study the relationships that existed between various forms of whiteness—including those formulated in connection to Jews—and ordinary houses. I examine the ways textually and visual representations of ordinary postwar houses continuously and reflexively created, re-created, and reinforced midcentury notions about racial, ethnic, and class identities—specifically, the rightness of associating white identities with homeownership and citizenship. By looking carefully at house form and at representations of house form, the book examines the ways in which postwar domestic environments became powerful ciphers for whiteness, affluence, belonging, and a sense of permanent stability in the years between 1945 and 1960.

The fifteen year period that frames this study is especially well suited to an examination of whiteness: Jews were newly identified as white during the 1950s was not the result of any broad societal acceptance of difference; rather, it was related to the group’s ability and desire to assimilate and blend—to become white. As I show in Little White Houses, the issues that resulted from this identity shift were clearly legible in the literature, marketing, and forms of ordinary houses and gardens.

In her book, How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America (1999), Jews were not considered “white” in the United States until sometime after the immediate postwar period. The ability to own a home in the suburbs was a sign of belonging to the middle class, and to belong to that class was to be further bleached. Indeed, Brodkin positions the suburbs as the site in which Jews learned “the ways of whiteness” through the help of radio, magazines, and television programs. But they also learned those lessons from the spaces of the houses and gardens in which they lived every day. Houses, and the literature and media representations surrounding them, coach immigrants in the assimilation and whitening process. They defined expectations to live by through the spaces of daily domestic life and the objects and surfaces that filled those spaces. Representations of houses joined the houses themselves to provide articulations of the expected and hoped-for occupants for postwar housing. That Jews and some other ethnic groups were newly identified as white during the 1950s was not the result of any broad societal acceptance of difference; rather, it was related to the group’s ability and desire to assimilate and blend—to become white.
RHONA SEIDELMAN ON HER BOOK-IN-PROGRESS
UNDER QUARANTINE: THE CASE OF JEWISH IMMIGRANTS TO THE JEWISH STATE, 1949-1952

You could say that this book is about a fence. When Israel’s central immigration camp, Shaar Ha’aliya opened in 1949 it was separated from the area around it by a barbed wire fence. Photographs and archival documents illustrate that this was no small, token barrier, but a real obstacle in some areas measuring perhaps ten feet tall. Less than one year after the establishment of the Jewish state and four years after the Holocaust ended Isra-
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el’s ‘Gate of Aliya’ was linked to an image of the tallest. This image raised many questions about the motivation for, and implementation of, so threatening a barrier; about the reactions to it, how it was understood, interpreted and received; about its failure to act as a deterrent to these people who crawled under it, and whether – par-
ticularly as new immigrants - there were any consequences to their act of defiance.

As my book sets out to show, this fence encapsulates a complex and controver-
sial phenomenon. Its story, and the many questions it raises, are at the heart of the history of Shaar Ha’aliya and the quarantine there of Jewish immigrants in the first years of the Jewish state.

No a Quarantine?
The easiest way to understand Shaar Ha’aliya is as Israel’s Ellis Island. It was the major immigration processing camp in Israel during the period of the mass immigration that followed the establish-
ment of the state in 1948. The central port of entry during an influx of immigra-
tion unprecedented in its speed and in its proportion to the residing population, Shaar Ha’aliya was intended to create order by systematizing the social, military and medical processing that the immi-
giants were required to undergo.

After first learning about Shaar Ha’aliya I began my dissertation with what turned out to be a rather naïve assumption that my contribution to scholarly research would be a detailed study of the camp’s quarantine policy. Knowing that Shaar Ha’aliya was isolated and fenced off, and also knowing about the central role that health concerns played in the camp’s con-
oposition and function, it seemed obvious to me that Shaar Ha’aliya was a quarantine. At that early point in my work I turned to the OED to be sure that I understood exactly what defines a quar-
tantine. The definition I found reinforced my initial assumptions:

A period (originally of forty days) during which persons who might serve to spread a contagious disease are kept isolated from the rest of the community, especially a period of detention imposed on travelers or voyagers before they are allowed to enter a country or town, and with-
tile (inhabitants); commonly, the period during which a ship, capable of carrying contagion, is kept isolated on its arrival at a port. Hence, the fact or practice of isolating such persons or ships, or of being isolated in this way. (my emphasis)

But, more importantly than the OED, the most significant factor that encouraged me to track the Shaar Ha’aliya/quarantine equation was my discovery of numerous archival documents that dealt with that exact issue. And so I determinedly set out to pursue an understanding of Shaar Ha’aliya’s function as a quarantine for Israel’s early immigrants.

However, this course of study very rapidly became both more complicated and more fascinat-
ing than I had anticipated. In the existing literature on the mass immigra-
tion Shaar Ha’aliya is referred to in any number of ways: a processing camp, a transit camp or an immigrant camp. Quarantine does not appear in this variety of terms. Moreover, as my research progressed, I encountered resistance to my understanding of Shaar Ha’aliya as a quarantine. One colleague cautioned that the rhetoric of quarantine must be distinguished from policy and that even if people referred to it as a quarantine, that doesn’t necessarily mean it actually was one. Another historian was more forthright in his objection, adamantly asserting that it is historically inaccurate to label Shaar Ha’aliya a quarantine since his own research shows the state of Israel never quarantined incoming immigrants during the mass immigration.

What made these reservations all the more intriguing was the fact that, in many ways, they were echoing the voices coming through in the archival docu-
ments. Soon after its establishment in 1949, authorities found themselves in a fascinating discussion of Shaar Ha’aliya’s function and perception as a quar-
tine. The idea that the central port of arrival for Jewish ‘olim’ to the Jewish state could be a quarantine raised passions and resulted in contentious, turbulent debates. Apparently – as evidenced by the reactions I received when making this association today - the contention and disagreement surrounding this issue has survived to the present day.

Another, more tangible point of conten-
tion is evident in the archival documents as well: To what extent was the isolation at Shaar Ha’aliya actually enforced? As I found in photographs and documents, the barbed wire fence and the police guards at the camp did not actually prevent people from coming in and out. This gap between prescription and practice was noted and discussed widely. The Shaar Ha’aliya administration knew that these breaches were a regular occurrence, but they did not see them as an indication that the quarantine was failing, and that the barbed wire fence and police could be removed. Instead, they continued to

structures that governed the postwar housing market (the operations and poli-
cies of banks, government agencies, real estate boards, construction industries) and that resulted in the wide-spread segregation that still characterizes U.S. cities and the housing market today. But by studying the fine-grained aspects of postwar houses and housing representa-
tions, by examining the ubiquitous and ordinary forms of the visual and material world, we can begin to understand an enriched dimension of the histories of housing inequality and segregation in the United States. By looking closely at what some might consider the detritus of everyday life—magazine articles and advertisements, television programs, material culture, and more—we learn about the ways in which everyday acts of participation in a dominant culture are formulated, taken for granted, rehearsed, and enacted, and how the structures are reinforced. The history of housing segre-
gation in the United States belongs to the everyday encounters Americans had with their stove tops, their curio cabinets, their bookshelves, their gardens, and their neighbors; it belongs to the books they read, the magazines they browsed, and the television programs they watched. It is a story that belongs—whether or not we wish to claim it—to all of us.

Note: Portions of this text are excerpted from Little White Houses: How the Post-
war Home Con
trolled Race in America (University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
paradoxically insist that the quarantine was necessary to protect the Yishuv from diseases borne by the immigrants.

** Axes of Conflict**

My research has taken me well beyond the initial question that motivated this book: was Shaar Ha’aliya a quarantine? This query, though apparently simple, in time no longer seemed so. Both archival documentation and current historiography revealed a paradoxically ambiguous, contradictory, and tensioning. As such, it became clear that a different issue must also be addressed: what can be learned from the many conflicts surrounding the Shaar Ha’aliya quarantine? These are the questions that this book sets out to understand.

Each of the three chapters explores a different sphere of conflict: structure, meaning, and memory. ‘Structure’ focuses on the marginalization and in-israeli historiography and in-israeli official public reminiscences, shedding light on why the association between Shaar Ha’aliya and quarantine could – to many - still be considered problematic.

This book goes historical context to an issue that continues to plague contemporary society in and outside of Israel. The medically defended exclusion of outsiders, it deepens our understanding of the link between medical authority, immigration control and nation-building in the 20th Century, and it challenges reductive definitions of quarantine as a top-down public health policy. And finally it offers a revision of the current understanding of Israel’s post-1948 immigrants. Rather than paint them purely as victims of discrimination and bigotry, which is the existing trend in scholarship, I assert that we must see these immigrants as the embodiment of a new type of Israeli hero. For - as their widespread and natural definition of quarantine shows - they were, to a large extent, empowered agents of change and rebellion.

I argue that the ambiguity and tensions revealed when we study Shaar Ha’aliya make it both so significant and so challenging. Shaar Ha’aliya-as-quarantine destabilizes two concepts that are often mistaken as essential: quarantine and Israel. Again and again in my work I see people in these critical early years trying to figure out how this new entity “Israel” will be defined; others struggle to understand what ‘quarantine’ means. Still others are trying to figure out what the association between the two – quarantine and Israel – says about both, as ideal and as reality. The testing of the boundaries of these concepts, and the diminish-ment of their memory are at the heart of the conflicts of quarantine I study. And this is the phenomenon that this book encapsulates: A quarantine that is not a quarantine, marking a space that was at once open and closed, rational and indefensible, oppressive and reassuring, subversive and subverted.

Rhona Saidman was Schusterman Visiting Professor in the Program in Jewish Culture & Society at the University of Illinois from 2010/11 to 2012/13. In 2013/14, her visiting professorship is made possible by the Israeli Studies project. She completed her dissertation "Shaar Ha’aliya: Conspign, Aliya and Quarantine during Israel’s Mass Immigration, 1949-1956" at Ben-Gurion University in 2008 under the supervision of Shifra Shavit and Ilan Troen.

**EUGENE AVRUTIN ON THE CONFERENCE**

“The Micropolitics of Small-Town Life in Eastern Europe”

Research in urban history of Eastern Europe – as anywhere else in the world – focuses on cities, namely the metropolis. Yet until the beginning of the twentieth century, small urban communities were the principal habitat of the vast majority of people in Eastern Europe. Surprisingly little is known about the political and social universe of small towns. What exactly was a small town? “A town is always a town, wherever it is located, in time as well as in space,” Fernand Braudel remarked famously in his magisterial Civilization and Capitalism. “It do not mean that all towns are alike,” Braudel went on to qualify, but they all speak the same basic language. Braudel introduced five essential features of material life common to towns, from Europe to China: the continuous dialogue with their rural surroundings; the supply of manpower; their self-consciousness; their inevitable location at the center of communications networks; and their relationship with the countryside and the city. Of course, the challenges of definition are formidable, and not only for the historian. We need only to recall the numerous challenges governments faced in social engineering populations and territories in the last three centuries to appreciate how fluid the boundaries really were between “towns” and “villages,” and perhaps even “cities.”

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between coexistence and conflict, which has informed most historical analysis of interethnic social relations in the modern world, obscures the fact that tension was a fundamental, even productive, reality of everyday life.

Co-organized by Eugene M. Avrutin (University of Illinois) and Yonne kleimann (Leipzig University), the symposium brought together a diverse group of scholars from the United States, Canada, and Europe. The first panel “Entangled Lives” focused on neighborly relations and the problem of crossing and maintaining boundaries and borders in a multicultural setting. In the second panel, “Narratives and Representations” a literary critic and social historian examined, from two different perspectives, the representations of small town in autobiography and fiction. “Mobility and Innovation” addressed the question of how small towns coped with broader political and economic change and transformation. The presentations in the fourth panel, “Politics and Power,” delved into the problem of political cooperation and competition in ethnically mixed towns, as well as nationally politics. The final panel “Networks” focused on the problem of communication of the small town with the wider world, as well as diaspora politics. Due to severe weather, the keynote talk by Professor Timothy Snyder (Yale University) was rescheduled.

Eugene M. Avrutin is Associate Professor of modern European Jewish history and Yvonne kleimann are both Family Scholar in the Program of Jewish Culture and Society at the University of Illinois. He is the author of Jews and the Imperial State: Identification Politics in Tsarist Russia (2010) and the co-editor of Photographing the Jewish Nation: Pictures from S. An-sky’s Ethnographic Expedition (2006), Jews in the East European Borderlands: Essays in Honor of John Dylek Alter (2012), The Story of a Life: Memoirs of a Young Jewish Woman in the Russian Empire (2011), and Russia in Motion: Cultures of Human Mobility (2012).

MEET OUR STUDENTS

ERIC MCKINLEY

Long before I began my research, the shape of my dissertation, and thus my career as a graduate student in the Department of History, was influenced by the Program in Jewish Culture & Society. I am fortunate to count myself among the interdisciplinary community of scholars housed by the Program, one of the most exciting academic spaces on campus. In my dissertation, “Intimate Strangers: Intermarriage among Jews, Catholics, and Protestants in Germany, 1875-1935,” I seek to understand the changing institutional and individual relationships among German Protestants, German Catholics, German Jews, and the German state. Examining intermarriage as a practice and an idea, I attempt to grasp shifting German identity in the context of confessionally “mixed” families who negotiated these meanings among one another, their religious communities, and the state.

My research addresses intermarriage in Germany from multiple perspectives: the state, the institutions, intellectuals, and individuals. First, two pieces of legislature set the tone of my dissertation and also provide its historical frame. The first was the implementation of obligatory civil marriage in 1875. The Civil Marriage Law required that all marriages which took place within the borders of the German Empire, politically united in 1871, had to be validated by a civil servant prior to any religious ceremony. The law opened up new paths for intimate unions in Germany, particularly between Jews and Christians, while at the same time introducing the state as the primary regulator of marriage in the context of a secularizing society. In 1935, the Nazi state implemented the Nuremberg Laws, which outlawed marriage between Jews and “Aryans.” The laws did not undo the Civil Marriage Act but rather offered an even more dramatic re-definition of marriage and family. Whereas 1875 shifted the regulation of marriage from religious institutions to the state, 1935 made race, rather than religion, the category by which the state measured marital legitimacy.

Between these two state legislations, I analyze literature, in the form of short stories published in religious weekly papers and pamphlets distributed to parish communities, designed to discourage intermarriages from taking place. These documents establish the institutional parameters of the intermarriage conflict. Through these texts, I assess issues such as love, tolerance, and power in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By asking how love and tolerance were interpreted through the lens of intermarriage, I begin to define the different ideas of what it meant to be a Protestant German, a Catholic German, or a Jewish German. Intimacy at the level of the individual challenged notions of belonging but reinforced the division at the institutional level.

My research into clerical and judicial involvement with mixed families reveals a more interactive dimension of the history of mixed marriage. Religious institutions, mostly the Catholic and Protestant, intervened into the intimate lives of parishioners, sometimes reshaping families in unexpected ways. The cause of the intervention was the unclear, and thus attainable, religious status of children from intermarriages. While persuasion was the primary method by which these community leaders attempted to secure the affiliation of children, there were also legal paths that were exploited. In particular, religious clerics (Jewish leaders seldom used these legal means) often cited a still applicable early nineteenth century law that could undermine the family’s desired education for the children. Frequently, this resulted in German courts—most often in response to legal challenges posed by pietist clerics—creating mixed families by the authority of this law, despite the wishes of the family.

The history of intermarriage is also an optimal site to analyze the interaction of race and religion. While Jewish historians have devoted their attention to this historical problem, it remains largely unmapped in the case of Catholics and Protestants, particularly as a unified history. I analyze how social scientists, particularly demographers, of the period researched and wrote about race and
religion in the context of intermarriage under the auspices of Judaism (primarily Zionism), Catholicism, and Protestantism. It is perhaps not surprising that they were not objective in their interpretations of intermarriage statistics, but their objectives varied. I suggest that the demographers were guided by conflicting assumptions regarding the established but evolving category of religion and the problems resulting from the fact that the “intermarriage problem” in Germany existed mostly between Protestants and Catholics; the latter was a function of the exclusion of German Jews, which necessitated their shaped meanings of race and religion for Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant social scientists. Ultimately, my research into the lived experience of intermarriage—based largely on memoirs and published vignettes of memory—reflects and challenges historical constructions of “mixed” relationships in Germany from 1875 to 1935. It is worth noting that some components of my research rely mostly on Protestant and Catholic voices because they are historical voice. By highlighting absent voices in different contexts, I hope to generate conversation regarding the ways in which historical narratives are shaped by exceptional events. I ultimately suggest that the history of intermarriage in Germany between 1875 and 1935 is a story that can be told neither exclusively from the Jewish perspective, nor from one where Jews are excluded, but rather as an intimate and collective story of neighbors in German history.

What ties all of my research together is sometimes the only ones available. At other times, it is the Jewish experiences that are most present. The former lexicon resulted from the fact that the “intermarriage problem” in Germany existed mostly between Protestants and Catholics; the latter was a function of the exclusion of German Jews, which necessitated their intermarriage—based largely on memoirs and published vignettes of memory—reflects and challenges historical constructions of “mixed” relationships in Germany from 1875 to 1935. It is worth noting that some components of my research rely mostly on Protestant and Catholic voices because they are historical voice. By highlighting absent voices in different contexts, I hope to generate conversation regarding the ways in which historical narratives are shaped by exceptional events. I ultimately suggest that the history of intermarriage in Germany between 1875 and 1935 is a story that can be told neither exclusively from the Jewish perspective, nor from one where Jews are excluded, but rather as an intimate and collective story of neighbors in German history.

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“Kundry” stands for enlarged knowledge, while Guernemann finds her just as dumb as the “pure fool” Parsifal when he first arrives in the Grail realm. She is a figure who resists unambiguous assignation, casting thereby at least a shadow of doubt on wholly positive assessments of the utopian character of the conclusion, such as Ulrike Kienzle’s conviction that Kundry achieves nirvana, entering “into the eternal presence of the divine.”

Another consideration is advanced by Stefan Mösch: if Kundry is a guilt-ridden “pure fool” Parsifal when he first wanders past (bearing in this context his blond, bearded, Christ-like Parsifal figure holding the Holy Spear, from his 15 Illustrations of “Germania” painting by Philipp Veit and Edward von Steine dating from March 1848, at the time of the ill-fated revolution (Figure 4). This is the banner that was displayed at that time at the parliamentarily assembly held in St. Paul’s Church in Frankfurt. The term “Ger-

mania” stems from the widely-circulated ethnographic work Germania written by Cornelius Tacitus around 98 AD. Veit’s “Germania” figure is softened by the pres-
ence of the hemp branch denoting peace. The double-eagle coat of arms and oak leaves in the hair are German symbols. Scutiny of the “Germania” figure reveals that it is androgynous. The feminine head is too small for the thick, solid body; the hands are given a muscular male ap-
pearance. This hybrid depiction conveys a mixed message, whereby the robed stereotype symbol with its chauvinistic narrowing of perspec-
tive that became dominant in Germany long before the outset of the Third Reich. Growing from seeds planted by the composer, this development increasingly negated Wagner’s modernistic thrust and diminished his international stature.

Kundry embodies the tragedy of the hard, inhuman brutality of the undifferentiated row of soldiers making up the firing squad. The landscape in the background of the Hitler poster suggests the Rhine Valley, with the river flowing north past the fabled “Lorelei”; one is reminded of the northern landscape provided for Stassen’s depiction of a blonde, beard Christ-like Parsifal figure with Grail and two doves to illustrate Wölzogen’s publication Germania Faith of 1909. Stassen was no stranger to politi-
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mania” stems from the widely-circulated ethnographic work Germania written by Cornelius Tacitus around 98 AD. Veit’s “Germania” figure is softened by the presence of the hemp branch denoting peace. The double-eagle coat of arms and oak leaves in the hair are German symbols. Scutiny of the “Germania” figure reveals that it is androgynous. The feminine head is too small for the thick, solid body; the hands are given a muscular male appearance. This hybrid depiction conveys a mixed message, whereby the robed symbol with its chauvinistic narrowing of perspective that became dominant in Germany long before the outset of the Third Reich. Growing from seeds planted by the composer, this development increasingly negated Wagner’s modernistic thrust and diminished his international stature.

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Last Fall, the Jewish Museum in Frankfurt am Main was the final venue for a major exhibition on the Jewish Book Controversy, entitled “Wunder in einem Wunder, Johannes Reuchlin und der Streit um die jüdischen Bücher” (“Miracle with a Miracle, Johannes Reuchlin and the Jewish Book Controversy”). The exhibition, curated by Professor David H. Price and Professor Valerie Hotchkiss, was a collaboration of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at the University of Illinois, the Klau Library, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (Cincinnati), the Institut für Stadtgeschichte Frankfurt am Main, and the Jüdisches Museum Frankfurt am Main.

First mounted at the University of Illinois in April 2011, the exhibition marked the 500th anniversary of the publication of Johannes Reuchlin’s Augenspiegel (Eye Glasses), a work written in opposition to an imperial mandate of 1509 to confiscate and destroy all Jewish books in Renaissance Germany. Reuchlin’s impassioned and ultimately successful defense of Jewish writings and legal rights represented a stunning intervention by a Christian scholar. Reuchlin’s deed was acknowledged by Josel von Rosheim, the most important Jewish leader of the sixteenth century, as a “miracle within a miracle.”

The mandate against Jewish books resulted from a propaganda campaign supported by the theology faculty of the University of Cologne, various houses of the Dominican and Franciscan Orders in Germany, Archduchess Kunigunde of Bavaria, and Emperor Maximilian I, to end the practice of Judaism through confiscation and destruction of the Talmud, prayer books, and all Hebrew writings, except the Bible. The principal leaders of the campaign were the anti-Jewish agitator and recent convert Johannes Pfefferkorn and Jacob Hooftgraten, a professor of theology and a Dominican inquisitor in Germany.

The early sixteenth century roughly corresponds to the nadir of Jewish life in Western and Central Europe prior to the Holocaust. Jews had long since disappeared from England (expulsion 1290) and France (expulsion from crown territories, 1394) and, then, rather suddenly, with the cataclysmic expulsion of the world’s largest Jewish community from Spain in 1492 and the forced Portuguese conversion of 1497, it appeared that the end of Judaism in Europe was imminent. Jews were also driven out of several important territories in Italy, such as Sicily and the Kingdom of Naples. The fifteenth-century anti-Jewish campaigns in the Holy Roman Empire had also been violent and effective, resulting in the banishment of German Jewish communities from over one hundred jurisdictions or territories.

In this dangerous time, however, a tiny number of Christian scholars began to cultivate contacts with learned Jews for a rather different purpose—they were seeking Hebrew and Jewish scholarship, hoping to acquire new methods for theological education and research. Ultimately they would succeed, for the embrace of Hebrew in the Renaissance would inaugurate Christian scholarship and lay a permanent foundation for the modern study of the Bible. Johannes Reuchlin was the author of the first Hebrew grammar designed to teach the language to Christians (his grammar appeared in 1506). He had learned Hebrew from Jewish teachers and rabbis, including the renowned Italian scholar Obadiah Storno. Later, in the midst of the raging controversy, Reuchlin would publish warm tributes to the learning and piety of his Jewish teachers.

The imperial mandate of 1509 justified the harsh measure of total confiscation with the allegation that Jewish books were either blasphemous or heretical, charges that had also been made in a series of venomous anti-Jewish pamphlets. Emperor Maximilian claimed the books “turn one away from our Christian faith.”

Once Maximilian issued the confiscation mandate, all Jewish books were seized in Worms, Frankfurt and five other Rhine-Rhenish communities. Several groups worked to stop the new policy, most importantly the powerful Jewish community of Frankfurt. After the Frankfurt community achieved a moratorium on the confiscations, the emperor sought evaluations of the policy from four universities and three individual scholars, including Reuchlin. While all the other experts submitted enthusiastic endorsements for resuming the confiscations, to everyone’s astonishment, Reuchlin argued against Maximilian’s tactic, forcefully contending that the book confiscation did not accord with imperial law and was not justified on religious or theological grounds. Although Reuchlin’s defense of Jewish books was a major blow to the anti-Jewish campaign, the agitators were not prepared to give up. As a basis for restarting the campaign, the inquisition in Germany and the faculty of theology at the University of Cologne convened heresy trials against Reuchlin for having expressed views “impermissibly favorable to Judaism.”

Not only the founder of Christian Hebrew studies, but also one of the leading lawyers of the time, Reuchlin was able to mount a potent legal defense. Two courts (in 1514 and 1516) found Reuchlin innocent of all charges and, in an unprecedented move, assessed the inquisitor for the defendant’s costs. Reuchlin also won the popular vote, becoming a cause célèbre throughout Europe and rallying humanists against those who would question a scholar’s need and desire to study the Bible and other Jewish writings in Hebrew. Nonetheless, many powerful forces continued to rally against his defense of Jewish writings, including the king of France, the king of Spain (and future emperor Charles V), theology faculties at Cologne, Paris and Louvain, and many in the church hierarchy, including Adrian of Utrecht, soon to be Pope Adrian VI.

Although Pope Leo X, a Medici patron of the humanist movement, had previously supported Reuchlin against the inquisition in Germany, after the outcome of the Reformation in 1517 pressures from conservative forces within the curia became unbearable. The new political dynamic made it impossible for the pope to undermine an inquisitorial authority.
Program in Jewish Culture & Society • Research

Meet Our Students

TALI SEGEV

I was first attracted to the Global Studies major because of my love for traveling. Romantically seeking out the unfamiliar, I grew up with dreams of living abroad, immersing myself in foreign worlds, and expanding my own identity through the languages, cultures, and histories of others. And while I still have those dreams, my undergraduate experiences at the University of Illinois brought me closer to my own language, my own culture, and my own history. What I had not realized was that same curiosity that led me to Global Studies—the passion to discover the unknown, to enter territories descriptively unfamiliar to me, to understand a world that confused and excited me—would be fueled and fulfilled by my studies in the Program in Jewish Culture & Society.

However, this is not the only type of traveling I have experienced. The classes I took through the Program in Jewish Culture & Society offered me the opportunity to expand my definition of an entity which I had not realized had room for expansion. Within this classroom setting, I grew through the discovery of Jewish stories beyond my own.

From analyzing the Jewish narrative in literature with Brett Kaplan, to interpreting confrontational Midrash with Dov Weiss, to expanding my Hebrew abilities with Yose Kedem and Rhona Seidman, the Program was an immense addition to my college experience, both academically and personally. I entered Jewish enclaves that existed in New Jersey, Babylonia, and Tel Aviv, and through doing so I punctured my own Jewish bubble that had been predictably drifting back and forth between Skokie and Urbana.

I know I will bring this newfound understanding of Jewish life with me wherever I go. Abroad, I will continue discovering old synagogues, abandoned tenements, and thriving kosher markets; my ears will ring with the sounds of Hebrew and Yiddish, people will ask me questions about my heritage and my family, and I will answer them proudly, sharing the stories of my grandparents, the journey that I began within the Department of Religion and a faculty member in the Program in Jewish Culture & Society is far from finished.

The values of curiosity, confrontation, and community that were instilled within the classroom persist, and I intend to continue traveling around the Jewish world, both physically and mentally.
Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert delivered the 2012/13 Goldberg Lecture in September. The Stanford University Religious Studies Professor, author of the acclaimed book *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender*, spoke on “Judaism in the Public Square: Conflicts over Urban Space from Antiquity to the Present.” During her visit, she also presented “The Eruv of Court-yards as a Principle of Integration” to the Jewish Studies Workshop. She is flanked here by Program in Jewish Culture and Society Executive Committee members dov Weis and bRue Rosenstock.

In September, the Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies Initiative organized an evening on Primo Levi to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the writer’s death. Titled “Reading Primo Levi,” it featured dramatic readings of Levi’s work courtesy of University of Illinois theater faculty along with commentary from scholars. From left to right, the participants were Larry Smith, Peter Davis, Amy Stoch, Michael rothberg, Robert s.C. Gordon, Emanuel Rota, El-eonora Stoppino, and Jonathan Drucker. Gordon, professor of Italian at Cambridge University, also presented a lecture on “Auschwitz-Italy” during his visit to Illinois.

Carol Zemel (Middle), with (from left) Rachel S. Harris, Brett Kaplan, Elisabeth Friedman, and Virginia Dominguez. Zemel, professor of Art History at York University, visited in October to deliver the inaugural Vivian Marcus Memorial Lecture on “Imagining Return: The Provocative Art of Yael Bartana.” She shared another aspect of her research on contemporary Israeli art during a Jewish Studies Workshop presentation on roee rosen.

Samuel Moyn, professor of History at Columbia University, visited Illinois in October. He took part in an event organized by the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory on his book *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* and gave a presentation to a joint meeting of the Jewish Studies Workshop and the Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies Initiative Work-in-Progress Seminar under the title “Renaissance, Human Rights, and Jewish Internation-alism.” Here he is flanked by English professors Michael rothberg and Lauren goodlad.

Israel filmmaker Joseph Cedar visited Illinois in October as part of the Israel Studies Project. During his stay, the Academy Award-nominated director took part in a Jewish Studies Workshop and attended a standing-room-only screening of *Footnote* at the Hillel Building. The film was followed by a discussion with Program in Jewish Culture and Society Faculty members Rachel S. Harris, Brett Kaplan, and Dov Weis. Here, Cedar (right) is chatting with Weis in the Jewish Studies seminar room just prior to his workshop presentation.

London-based Palestinian writer Samir el-Youssef visited Illinois in November. The co-author (with Etgar Keret) of *Gaza Blues* as well as the novels *Illusion of Return* and *Treaty for Love* took part in an evening focused on his prose and criticism and met with students in a seminar co-organized by the Program in Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies (pictured here).

Matan Hermoni (left), pictured here with Program in Jewish Culture and Society administrator Craig Alexander and Executive Committee member Rachel S. Harris. Hermoni, one of Israel’s leading young writers, visited the campus for several days in November. During his stay, he gave a reading of his work (including from his Sapir Prize-nominated novel Hebrew Publishing Company), gave a presentation to the Jewish Studies Workshop, and visited numerous classes.

At the 2013 meeting of the Modern Language Association, Program in Jewish Culture and Society Faculty Member Yasemin Yildiz received the Alisa and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for Studies in Germanic Languages and Literatures for her book *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition* from MLA President Marianne Hirsh. A few weeks later, Yildiz delivered a public lecture on campus in which she focused on the German-Jewish dimensions of her work, including reflections on Franz Kafka and Hannah arendt.
Amir Eshel, the Edward Clark Crossett Professor of Humanistic Studies at Stanford University, visited in February. He delivered the bi-annual Rosenthal Family Lecture in German- and Habsburg-Jewish History, speaking about “Futurity: On Poetry and the Arts after Auschwitz.” He also gave a presentation titled “Between Past and Future: Hannah Arendt’s Poetics and Politics of Insertion” to a joint meeting of the Jewish Studies Workshop, the Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies Works-in-Progress Seminar, and the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures. Here he is with Program in Jewish Culture and Society faculty member Yasemin Yildiz.

Political theorist Julie Cooper (left), pictured here with Program in Jewish Culture and Society Executive Committee member Brett Kaplan, visited our campus in February for a spirited discussion of her paper “A Diasporic Critique of Diasporism.” The text is part of a book project the University of Chicago professor is pursuing under the title “Politics Without Sovereignty? Territory, Diaspora, and Sovereignty in Jewish Political Thought.”

David Kazanjian (right) with Program in Jewish Culture and Society Executive Committee Member Michael Rothberg, who also directs the Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies Initiative. Kazanjian, a professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania, was on campus in February to discuss his paper “Images, wherever they lodge”: From Armenian Ruinenlust to Armenia’s Walkscapes” at the Initiative’s works-in-progress seminar. The visit was co-sponsored by the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory.

Sara Horowitz, Director of Jewish Studies at York University, delivered the 2012/13 Einhorn Lecture in April. The author of Voicing the Void: Muteness and Memory in Holocaust Fiction, she spoke about “Reinventing Anne Frank.” She also gave an indelible presentation to a joint meeting of the Jewish Studies Workshop and the Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies Works-in-Progress Seminar under the title “If He Knows to Make a Child...: Memories of Birth and Baby-Killing in Deferred Jewish Testimony Narratives.” Here, she is pictured second from the left with (from left) Jonathan Druker (Illinois State University), Brett Kaplan (Illinois), Ari Einhorn, and Michael Kotzin (Executive Vice President of the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago).

Anthropologist Esra Özyürek visited Illinois in March at the invitation of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies Initiative and in co-sponsorship with the European Union Center and the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures. Now a professor at the London School of Economics, she presented the paper “Creating Parallel Communities of Perpetrators: Muslim-Only Holocaust Education and Anti-Semitism Prevention Programs in Germany” to the HGMS works-in-progress seminar. Here she is flanked by Michael Rothberg and Yasemin Yildiz.

Lawrence Kritzman (right), with French professors Armine Mortimer and Marcus Keller, Kritzman, Professor of French and Comparative Literature at Dartmouth College and editor of Auschwitz and After: Race, Culture, and “The Jewish Question” in France, visited Illinois to give a lecture on “The Jews Who Are Not One: Politics & French Culture.” The visit, which was organized by the Department of French, was co-sponsored by the Program in Jewish Culture & Society.

Guy Ben-Ner visited Illinois in April as part of the Israel Studies Project. The video artist extraordinaire, who represented Israel at the 2005 Venice Biennale, spent several days on our campus. He gave lectures, spoke to classes, and did several studio visits. Here, he is pictured during his presentation to the Jewish Studies Workshop. During his trip, which coincided with a solo show at Chicago’s Aspect Ratio Gallery, Ben-Ner also spoke at the University of Chicago.

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MICHAEL ROTHBERG ON
THE DEVELOPING INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS
IN HOLOCAUST, GENOCIDE, AND MEMORY STUDIES

Since its creation in fall 2009, the Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies (HGMS) has been dedicated to exploring histories of trauma and violence in international and comparative contexts. From our inaugural conference, “Genocide, Memory, Justice: The Holocaust in Comparative Contexts” to our fall 2012 workshop “Reconciliation, Reification, Recollection: Postmemory and Justice in a Transnational Age,” our events have always brought together scholars of diverse areas, including Eastern and Western Europe, Africa, and North and South America. Recently, we have begun to “internationalize” the profile of the South America. Recently, we have begun to “internationalize” the profile of the institution by joining some exciting new projects.

In 2012, HGMS became a partner of Mnemonics: Network for Memory Studies (http://www.mnemonics.ugent.be/about/). Mnemonics is a new collaborative initiative for graduate education in memory studies. It brings together several of the leading campuses in Europe and the US involved in the study of cultural memory and consists of members from the Danish Network for Cultural Memory Studies and the Swedish Memory Studies Network as well as programs at Ghent University, Goethe University Frankfurt, Goldsmiths—University of London, and Columbia University. Mnemonics organizes an annual summer school around specific themes in memory studies, hosted by each of the partners in turn and lasting three intensive days. Graduate students affiliated with the partner institutions and a number of students external to the network are given the opportunity to present and receive feedback on their research projects. Faculty from all of the partner institutions participate in the discussions, and prominent invited speakers bring their perspectives to the debates.

As a partner institution, our HGMS initiative sends two graduate students per year to the summer school with partial fellowships. The first Mnemonics event took place in September 2012 at Aarhus, Denmark and addressed the theme “Aesthetics and Ethics of Memory.” Jennifer Davis and Max Heimer from the Art History program attended as representatives of HGMS and came back with enthusiastic reports about the opportunity. As Aimee wrote: “The first conference of the Network for Memories Studies was a great event that I was very fortunate to be part of. The breadth of papers and individuals brought together from Australia, U.S., Europe and Brazil made for a space of critical thinking, collaboration and fruitful discussion that I found very enriching. The engagement of the graduate students, organizers, participants of the conference and prominent invited speakers throughout the three days of the conference allowed for deep discussion about memory and the ethical implications of representation."

In fall 2013, Lauren Hansen from the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures and Jessica Young from English will attend “Memory Unbound,” the second summer school in Ghent, Belgium, along with Professor Michael Rothberg. In 2014, Mnemonics will move on to Stockholm. HGMS is scheduled to host the annual event in 2016.

While Mnemonics seeks to serve graduate students, another international network that HGMS has joined focuses primarily on faculty but also provides opportunities for students to get involved. NITMES: Network in Transnational Memory Studies was initiated by Professor Ann Rigney of Utrecht University. Partially funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), the project’s goal is to intensify collaboration between a number of key players in the field of cultural memory studies and lay the foundations for new longer-term projects. In a series of international workshops and through regular exchanges between the participant institutions, NITMES seeks to re-orient the conceptualisation and study of cultural memory away from the national frameworks in which it has long been studied to the transnational frameworks (European, regional, global) in which memory narratives are currently produced, circulated, and debated. In addition to Rigney and Michael Rothberg from Illinois, the other founding members of the initiative are Aleida Assmann from Konstanz, Astrid Erll from Frankfurt, Rosanne Kennedy from the Australian National University, and Barbara Tompoulet-Pierna from Lund. NITMES has an online presence through its website (http://www.utrechtmemorystudies.nl/nitmes/) and plans to produce publications.

The lively, first meeting of NITMES took place in June 2013 in Utrecht with the conference “Memory With/in/out Borders.” The University of Illinois will have the opportunity to host the second network meeting during a two-day workshop in November 2013. The Illinois event—“Diaspora Memries, Comparative Methodologies”—will bring together several of the world’s leading scholars of cultural memory, along with emerging scholars and graduate students, to explore the forms and processes of remembrance of diverse diasporic groups. The workshop will seek to advance thinking about collective remembrance beyond the frameworks that have dominated study until recently. In the past twenty-five years, memory studies has emerged as a new interdisciplinary field of cultural inquiry. The development of this field was linked from the outset to investigations of national memory cultures and institutions, with the nation-state taken as the most self-evident framework for analysis—most famously in Pierre Nora’s lieux de mémoire project, which began...
in France and was republished in various other European countries. In contrast to this nation-based framework, the Illinois workshop will explore non-national groups—especially diasporas and other diasporic formations will be at the center of our considerations. The event will consist of one day of public events, in which visitors will present papers and take part in a round-table discussion on issues in transnational memory studies, and one day of smaller meetings between Illinois faculty and graduate students and the visiting scholars, in which pre-circulated work-in-progress papers and take part in a round-table discussion on issues in transnational memory studies. In the coming years we look forward to developing our international partnerships along with our local collaborations.


Through HOMAS’s international cooperations, its ongoing conference and workshop series, its certificate program for graduate students, and the cutting-edge research of its faculty, our initiative is helping establish the University of Illinois as one of the top campuses for research in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies.

women and with the cold but consistent way in which he uses black characters to turn the plot but never develops them into fully realized personages (the only exception is The Human Stain’s Coleman Silk, who is black but “passing” as Jewish). I first turn to Roth’s early works “Eli, the Fanatic” (1957), Goodbye Columbus (1959), and Roth’s signature novel, Portnoy’s Complaint (1969). All of these texts illuminate how Roth subtly portrays the continuum between victim and perpetrator and thus complicates our understanding of these terms. “Eli” encompasses what would become most of Roth’s enduring themes: anxiety, psychoanalysis, fanaticism, counterfactual reality, ghosts, madness, passing, and doubling. “Eli” is also one of the many moments where Roth flauxs his anti-establishment muscles and proceeds to take apart all sorts of taboo subjects, especially, in this case, the vast gap between assimilated Jews and Hasidim. But as an outlier, Roth would go on to play straight into the eye of several storms and knock apart piecies of all stripes. In the final part of the chapter I move on to the very funny Portnoy’s Com- plaint wherein the title character offers a series of reminiscences to his analyst layering childhood memories onto tales of his affairs with a number of women, none of whom Portnoy seems to love or respect. His unquenchable desire drives the narrative and runs aground in Israel where, as he tells Dr. Spielvogel: “Doctor: I couldn’t get it up in the State of Israel! How’s that for symbolism, buff?” (257). Israeli quite literally emasculates Portnoy and thus, with all the novel’s anxieties over gender and what Jewish victimiza- tion would have looked like had Portnoy’s family not emigrated, Portnoy himself is subject to his greatest fear because of the force of the Jewish state.

In another chapter I examine three of Roth’s hystorical middle novels Operation Shylock (1993), The Counterlife (1986), and Sabbath’s Theater (1995). The third novel especially takes the continuum between victim and perpetrator and locates it within gender because Roth’s troubled character, Mickey Sabbath, is disgraflaged through his relationship with an undergraduate. Because she initiated the sexual nature of their relationship, the undergraduate, Kathy, cannot be seen as a victim of Sabbath, nor can he be seen as a perpetrator; and yet it is within Sabbath’s dialogue with Kathy that he aligns himself with Nazis and thus with persecution: “If they send me up for sodomy, the result could be death. And that might not be as much for you as you may have been led to believe. You may have forgotten, but not even at Nurenberg was everyone sentenced to die” (586). In other words, even some Nazis were let off. It’s a startling moment for Sabbath, whose overall argument is precisely against the demonization of what he maintains is simply the “delight- ful Dionysian undertone of life” (587) and therefore against viewing him as akin to one of the perpetrators on trial at Nurenberg. By using this analogy Sabbath cracks open the divide between German and Jew, between victim and perpetrator. And he also, less surpris- ingly, identifies across the other side of the divide with victims.

I then analyze Roth’s The Human Stain (1990) a novel that, like Sabbath’s Theater, features a diagnosed teacher, Coleman Silk, who decided to “pass” as Jewish. I place “pass” in scare quotes because the very idea indicates a much less flexible conception of race than is either accurate or ethical. Sik, a teacher at a small college, asked if two absent students were “spooks” as in spectres, and was misunderstood as making a racist slur because, unbeknownst to him, the students in question were black. This novel (as had Sabbath’s Theater) contains a satire of feminists and woman academics that deepens the problematic nature of his representations of women but also imbricates with the continuum between victim and perpetrator because the satirized feminist, Delphine Roux, turns out to be racist. The central char- acter, Coleman, perfectly exemplifies the anxiety around the continuum of victim and perpetrator because he is mistakenly perceived as racist when, unknown to all, he came from a black family. He is perceived as a perpetrator of hate speak when his family has historically been positioned as victims of institutionalized racism and the inheritors of the legacy of the Atlantic slave trade. Once we know that Coleman has “passed” we can also see that the story that he uses this to comment on the song of “Jewish self-hatred” that was often foisted on him, especially in the wake of Portnoy’s Complaint, but earlier as well. Just as Roth was accused of hating himself, so Coleman’s misjudged gaffe in class, once his family back- ground is realized, could be similarly misinterpreted as “self-hatred.”

The final chapter on The Plot Against America (2005) examines how Roth’s alternative history of a fascist America in which Charles Lindbergh takes over as a terrifying anti-Semitic president who begins to relocate East Coast Jews to the Midwest is also an investigation of American racism: the Ku Klux Klan rears its ugly head, there are comparisons to the genocide of Native Americans, and perhaps most interestingly, Roth includes the story of Leo Frank, the Jewish man who was lynched for a supposed liaison with a gentle factory girl. This Frank story intensifies the ever-present but hidden anti-Semitism in his discussion of actual and imagined American anti-Semitism with its implicit comparison to anti-black racism. The choice of Lindbergh as the fascist presi- dent allows both of these to unfold be- cause, in Roth’s assessment, Lindbergh stands in for that doubled American—the apple pie smile that hides an anti-Semitic, racist, core.

Benjamin Lough on Harnessing International Service to “Repair the World”

Sixty-four percent of Jewish young adults recently identified “making the world a better place” as a defining feature of their Jewish identity. Accordingly, Jewish organizations often use volunteering and service initiatives to strengthen Jewish identity and to build Jewish community relations. They use service programs to explicitly harness the longstanding Jewish concept tikun olam, which calls on Jews to “repair the world.”

I arrived at the University of Illinois in the summer of 2012 with a commissiion from the American Jewish World Service (AJWS) and The Jewish Service Corps (AVODAH) to investigate the impact of historical Jew who was lynched almost in the place of the many, many more blacks who were lynched, largely for supposed “sex crimes.” Thus Roth is able to show his discussion of actual and imagined American anti-Semitism with its implicit comparison to anti-black racism. The

I studied that young Jews participating in international service experienced significant increases in their commitment to international social
justice, as well as their engagement with social justice-related causes. Relatedly, participation expanded young Jews’ “uni-
verse of obligation” to humanity, thereby reducing nationalistic and religion-specific allegiances. The vast majority of AJWS participants agreed that the experience led to transformative life changes, which challenged their previous assumptions about the world.

Perhaps as an unintended consequence of developing cosmopolitan mindsets, the study did not find an overall increase in the participants’ Jewish values and iden-
ty. These findings are similar to other studies of domestic service-learning pro-
grams, which reported a slight decrease in participants’ Jewish identity following participation. While the reason for this finding is unclear, open-ended com-
ments suggest that increased respect for denominational pluralism resulting from international placements may result in cognitive dissonance and diminish soli-
darity with a “universal” Jewish identity.

In combination with heightened com-
mittment to social justice, international service also inspired social justice
engagement and action. Returned volun-
teeers were more likely to engage in policy actions and public awareness campaigns, fundraising, and direct advocacy and communication with and decision makers. However, engagement appears to be directed toward global rather than local causes. In addition, young Jews were significantly more likely to plan to pursue a field of study related to international development or human rights following international service.

What is it about international service that leads to changes in participants’ commitment to social justice? Immersive exposure to an environment of poverty and marginalization is one possible explanation. Intensive volunteering in a foreign environment removes young Jews from their typical environments, activities, denominational boundaries, and conven-
tional ways of thinking. Service may also play a role. According to George Herbert
Mead’s theory of social roles, as people engage in human-helping roles they gain an enhanced ability to look at problems from multiple perspectives. In this sense, international service may be particu-
larly effective at encouraging empathic, perspective-taking learning that often precedes social action and advocacy.

Although findings from this study are instructive, not all Jewish international service programs are created or imple-
mented equally. Differences in outcomes are reflected in variations among programs. On the whole, participants in the World Partners Fellowship (10 months) ranked higher on many measures at post-test—particularly in comparison with Alternative Breaks (10 days), and to a lesser degree Volunteer Summer (3-4 months). This is likely a function of the duration of service, as well as differences in the professional development of par-
ticipants across the various programs.

On the whole, the survey of young Jews indicated that international Jewish
service programs appear to be effective at animating participants’ commitment to repair the world, with some programs achieving this mission more effectively than others. However, based on findings from this study and others, pluralistic Jewish service programs may need to modify their emphases and activities if they hope to increase Jewish identity and general participation in Jewish practices.

In contrast, culturally immersive experiences, such as AJWS’s International Service
Fellowship, appeared to have the most transformative impact. Among the participants in the study, over 90% noted a significant change in their perspectives toward is-
raeli and Palestinian citizens. These findings are consistent with other research, which suggests that increased respect for the perspectives of other communities
and cultural diversity is an important component of effective service-learning.

Perhaps as an unintended consequence, AJWS programs also served to
create or reinforce the boundaries that define a “true Jew.” AJWS participants reported that their experiences abroad led them to reevaluate their
affiliations and the extent to which they fit into the Jewish community. This re-
affiliation may have been a result ofAJWS participants’ exposure to an environ-
ment of poverty and marginalization, which forced them to confront the
complexity of identity in a globalized world.

The objective for the students was to observe and interview locals at various
sites, mostly in central Jerusalem. They would then write reflections and turn
those reflections into a major paper. I, however, had fewer constraints, which allowed me to have a plethora of ad-
ditional experiences beyond those of the students. We did a lot those first few days after our arrival, from climbing Masada to climbing the
Mount of Olives to exploring the Tomb of the Prophets with only
the light of a candle. It truly strained credulity that I was doing all of this and doing all of it in the Middle East. I am not sure how to
describe the feeling of immersion in a completely foreign environment, but it did not take long before I realized that I was
out of my element. I remember vividly the first day that I was told I could go
off on my own to central Jerusalem and, after some good time spent exploring,
managed to end up on the right bus to my

Last December, I had the amazing op-
portunity to visit Israel for the first time. In
October, Yore Kemel, perhaps best
known as our program’s Hebrew Lan-
guage instructor, asked me if I would be
interested in being the teaching assistant for
his Study Abroad course Immigra-
tion and Cultural Diversity in Israel. After
confirming with my wife—since the travel portion of the course mandated my being
gone for two full weeks—I responded with
an enthusiastic “yes.” Israel had been of
interest to me for the longest time, but the
earliest seeds having been planted after
attending a series of Otto Preminger’s
King of Kings and my father’s
Bar Mitzvah in Germany, an independent
consultant to the
Foundation for International
and Community Assistance in
Armenia and the Republic of
Georgia.

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Georgia.

I had read, watched and heard numerous things about Israel well before I boarded the plane that would take us there. The
Alan Dershowitz/Noam Chomsky debates,
Otto Preminger’s Exodus, Ridley Scott’s
Kingdom of Heaven, conversations at
work about some of Israel’s
domestic policies, and all of the readings
assigned in class served as a primer for the journey. I remained committed to
to keeping an open mind, suspending
expectations and maintaining my original
enthusiasm when first asked whether I
wanted to be a part of this undertaking.
In my conversations with friends and
family, there was always the question
of “what if” as it related to tensions between
Israelis and their Palestinian neighbors.
In fact, rocket fire from Gaza several weeks
prior to our departure threatened to derail the entire trip. But hostilities waned and we
continued as scheduled. I, Yore, and seven
teen students set out for the Holy Land.
hotel that evening. I did ask a gracious concierge sitting outside the King David Hotel how to get back to King George Street, but for the most part got around with minimal assistance.

One of the benefits of being a part of a trip such as this one was that I had in Yere a native Israeli and, as I would come to discover, a gifted tour guide. His knowledge of the place and its going on helped me to investigate my own questions deeper. Big questions like “Can Israel ever really fulfill its promise?” or “Why don’t more Jews from the United States move to Israel?” or especially “Will there be peace between Israel and Palestine?” So many questions and not always comforting answers, not to mention two competing historical narratives that constantly put a hitch in the giddy-up.

In spite of knowing that Israel is on the cutting edge of technological advancement, I still could not help feeling that I had stepped back in time. Observing a Bedouin herding sheep conjured biblical images. His dress, the rolling hills… the sheep. It was a life in contradistinction to the bombardment of central Jerusalem where the roar of bus engines continually threatened to annihilate conversation. Having had the benefit of several months passing in order to gain perspective on the experience, the words of Gerald O’Hara to his daughter Scarlett some-how seem appropriate: “Why, land is the only thing in the world worth working for, worth fighting for, worth dying for, because it’s the only thing that lasts.”

The father is obviously speaking of Tara, the fictional Georgian plantation in Gone with the Wind, but he may as well be speaking of Israel, a place that means so many different things to so many different people. For some it is a place where dreams come true, a place for Jews of the Diaspora to call home. I had an opportunity to listen to an immigrant’s arduous, but ultimately triumphant, journey from Ethiopia to Israel. And yet, for others, the country is a constant reminder of contradiction and injustice. There must be the cultivation of meaningful relationships between the peoples who inhabit the land in order for it to transcend mere rock and dirt. Ibrahim’s example is why I believe that there is great potential for something good to happen in Israel.

To account for all of my experiences would require more than my allotted space and risk the reader’s patience. In short, I was able to visit the Hebrew University, the Israel Museum, and Yad Vashem. I got my feet wet in the Dead Sea. I walked the streets of Jerusalem, visiting the Mahane Yehuda Market there and the Carmel Market in Tel Aviv true, a place for Jews of the Diaspora to call home. Afterwards, I was able to walk miles of beach and sparkling ocean uninterrupted. I saw where and, to an extent, how, Israel’s immigrant workers live. I navigated the maze that is the Old City and had freshly squeezed pomegranate juice and tasty baklava at a tiny café run by two brothers who had a penchant for Julio Iglesias—whose songs played not so quietly in the background—in the Muslim Quarter. I walked through an ultra-Orthodox neighborhood and heard Bob Dylan’s Hurricane blaring from a car and later would hear his Theme Time Radio Hour satellite radio program from an apartment window in Tel Aviv. Was this just coincidence? I even saw snow in Jerusalem that raked a Midwestern winter. I can honestly say of my adventure many thousands of miles away from home that it was fun, it was challenging, and it was eye opening. When I become poor company at home, our son likes to tell me, “Dad, you need to go to Israel.” I welcome the opportunity to return one day, maybe even to give certain foods another try (or not), but certainly to have the opportunity to continue to grow as an individual.

Craig M. Alexander is the Assistant to the Director of the Program in Jewish Culture and Society.
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