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# CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN—MADISON



George L. Mosse / Laurence A. Weinstein  
Center for Jewish Studies  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN—MADISON

VOLUME 19, NO.1/SPRING 2018

# DIRECTOR'S REPORT

## A sense of accomplishment



Tony Michels,  
Director

Photo: Snitow-Kaufman  
Productions

ON THE COVER: The North Park Street pedestrian overpass bridge that links Bascom Hill, at left, and the Mosse Humanities Building, at right, at the University of Wisconsin—Madison is pictured during a sunny spring day on May 4, 2017. In the background is Library Mall. (Photo by Jeff Miller/UW-Madison)

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:  
Judith Sone

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Chad S. A. Gibbs

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Judith Sone  
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Dear Friends:  
The school year is coming to an end, the snow is finally (finally!) starting to melt, and we at the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies feel a sense of accomplishment.

A few highlights from the past nine months. In November, CJS held a successful conference on the beloved Yiddish writer, Sholem Aleichem, in honor of his 100th yortzeit—probably the largest such event in the United States. In February, the annual Tobias Lecture presented the fascinating story of the great medieval scholar, Rabbi Moses ben Nachman (Nachmanides), and his disputations with the Catholic Church. And, just last week, we heard an intriguing talk on Sigmund Freud and science, the latest in an esteemed series on German Jewish history, made possible by Fran and Sally Schrag. What do Sholem Aleichem, Freud, and Nachmanides have in common? From CJS' perspective, these towering figures belong to the varied civilization we have dedicated ourselves to studying and teaching.

CJS functions as a three-way partnership between faculty, students, and members of the larger community. We encounter one another in classrooms, in public forums, in face-to-face conversations. The results cannot always be measured. Does everything need to be measured, quantified? Learning for its own sake is a proud Jewish tradition, and it's one worth honoring. Still, there are gratifying moments when Jewish learning assumes tangible form. This year, for the first time in CJS' history, a number of our students came together to publish a journal of undergraduate scholarship, aptly named *Avukah* (Torch). With a little support from CJS and much hard work by *Avukah's* editors, the journal appeared last month. Each article is impressive and together they signal the potential of Jewish Studies and its ability to expand and deepen the knowledge and practical skills of our students. CJS will continue to support such student initiatives with the help of our loyal alumni. The newly established Andy Bachman Support Fund for Jews and Social Justice is another way CJS will assist future generations of students who wish to learn about the world around them. *Toyreh iz di besteh skhoyreh* goes the Yiddish expression. Learning is the best kind of merchandise. The following pages provide a window onto what we had on offer this academic year.

Tony Michels, Director  
Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies  
George L. Mosse Professor of American Jewish History



CJS Board Member Jessica Goldstein, NPR Director of Events & Strategic Initiatives, with Director Tony Michels at NPR Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

**H**aya Yuchtman, a teacher of Modern Hebrew for over 30 years at UW-Madison, plans to retire at the end of the spring semester. Yuchtman, who has been at UW-Madison since 1987, is truly a legend on campus and in the Madison community, having taught generations of students, sometimes in the same family. Together with her colleague Bilha Mirkin, Haya started teaching first and second year Hebrew when she arrived in Madison with her husband and two children. The two collaborated on creating new, exciting curricula and teaching materials for their classes, which were very popular. Yuchtman contributed to the success of one of the finest modern Hebrew programs in the country, and her colleagues and students are having a hard time imagining first and second year Hebrew courses without her at the helm.

Yuchtman guided students from the most basic knowledge of the *alef bet* to intermediate proficiency in reading, comprehension, writing, and speaking—no simple task. An equally important goal for her was teaching about Israeli culture. The highlight of her work was when she succeeded in engendering a love of the Hebrew language in students and led them to continue learning Hebrew for another semester. “Many of my students had majors that had nothing to do with Hebrew,” explains Yuchtman. “They had to work very hard in my class, but many did that. That gave me a lot of satisfaction.”

Both current and past students are saddened when they hear the news of Yuchtman’s upcoming retirement, and

share stories of a caring, supportive, and encouraging professor, an “incredible educator,” who came to class happy to teach each day, and helped them through times when they struggled with the language. She was a favorite professor for many students who had her class four times a week, often for two years in a row, and her students are thankful, wishing her the best. Katelyn Metcalfe was inspired by Yuchtman to pursue a certificate in Jewish Studies and “will remember what she taught me and carry it with me through life.”



Maddie Pine, Haya Yuchtman, Serena Steinfeld, Julia Birnberg

True to the observation of her students, Yuchtman indeed loved every class she taught. She is retiring with mixed feelings, but feels ready to spend more time with family, especially with her grandchildren who live in Boston and London. She will be missed, but we hope her legacy will live on in a thriving modern Hebrew program at the Mosse/Weinstein Centre for Jewish Studies. — Judith Sone

### SPRING 2018 FACULTY ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Professor Steven Nadler** named director of the Institute for Research in the Humanities

**Professor Scott Straus** named winner of the Grawemeyer Award for Ideas Improving World Order

**Professor Chad Goldberg's** new book *Modernity and the Jews in Western Social Thought* named a National Jewish Book Award Finalist

**Professor Mark L. Loudon** named the Alfred L. Shoemaker, J. William Frey, and Don Yoder Professor of German Linguistics

**Dr. Tal Elmaliach**—currently a postdoctoral fellow at Ben Gurion University—named to a tenure-track position in Humanities at the University of Haifa

# STUDENT NEWS

## Congratulations to the Class of 2018!

### MEET CLASS OF 2018 JEWISH STUDIES MAJOR CARLY COHEN



Carly Cohen

According to her senior thesis professor, Sunny Yudkoff, **CARLY COHEN** doesn't just read; she thinks along with a text, she asks thoughtful questions, and she chooses her words judiciously. Carly's senior project was focused on the Holocaust, a topic she has been passionate about studying for a long time. Together with Professor Yudkoff, Carly studied articles, poetry, books, newspapers, and movies and produced a thesis titled, "The Intensification of Adolph Hitler's Rhetoric during the 1900s." According to both Prof. Yudkoff and Carly, this work was truly a collaboration, and both student and professor learned a great deal from one another. Carly was thrilled that she was able to pick a professor with whom she had connected over her four years in the program and to study with a strong, influential female professor who was "the most brilliant person I had ever talked to." Their study partnership made Carly feel that she wasn't just another student, but a unique person making a difference in her own education.

A double major in Jewish Studies and Management and Human Resources, it seems unimaginable that Carly would also find the time to be a house fellow at one of the largest dorms on campus and teach Hebrew school at a Temple Beth El. Carly truly managed to excel at all of her endeavors and to manage her crazy schedule gracefully and professionally. Carly has already landed a job here in Madison, as the HR coordinator at Illumina. She plans to stay active in the Madison Jewish community and hopes to volunteer with Jewish Social Services.

When she looks back on her Jewish Studies experience, Carly views her Hebrew classes during freshman and sophomore year as highlights. A native of Milwaukee, Carly studied Hebrew all the way through school. Continuing with Hebrew felt very natural and turned out to be a way to build a community when she first got to college. If she could leave a message for future students, Carly would tell them that they shouldn't feel like it's a waste of time to take a Hebrew language class or explore Jewish Studies. She would tell them not to be afraid of the time crunch (to degree), because at the end of the day it's most important to learn who you are and where you are going.

#### FALL 2017 COURSES

Modern Hebrew 101, 201, 301, 401  
American Jewish Experience from Shtetl to Suburb  
Modern Jewish History  
Representing the Holocaust in Poland  
Dead Yiddish Poets Society  
Russia and the Jews: Literature, Culture, and Religion  
Jewish Law, Business and Ethics  
Jerusalem, Holy City of Conflict and Desire  
Yiddish Song and the Jewish Experience  
Yiddish Literature and Culture in Europe  
King David in History and Tradition  
Israeli Fiction in Translation  
Testimonies and Cultural Expressions of the Holocaust  
The Soviet Jewish Experience  
Biblical Texts, Poetry  
Anti-Semitism in European Culture  
Jewish Intellectuals and Politics in the 20th Century

#### SPRING 2018 COURSES

Modern Hebrew 102, 202, 302, 402  
Representing the Holocaust in Poland  
Religion and Sexuality  
History of the Holocaust  
Jewish Composers: Early Modern to Modern  
Yiddish Literature and Culture in America  
Modern Jewish Literature  
Jerusalem, Holy City of Conflict and Desire  
Holocaust: Testimony and Expressions  
Struggling with God in Literature  
Jewish Philosophy from Antiquity to the 17th Century  
Biblical Archaeology  
Biblical Texts, Poetry  
Intellectual Origins of Israel  
Israeli Politics and Society  
Research Colloquium for Majors  
Independent Research for Majors

### MEET CLASS OF 2018 JEWISH STUDIES CERTIFICATE STUDENTS



Adam Slavick

**ADAM SLAVICK** is a Microbiology major with a certificate in Jewish Studies, who is very happy that he gained a more well-rounded education, beyond his Microbiology courses. Adam's Jewish Studies courses, with a highlight being Professor Bitzan's courses on the Holocaust, helped him to feel

knowledgeable, to speak Hebrew to his Israeli born mother, and to have serious conversations about Jewish history with his father. Adam feels that his Jewish Studies and Hebrew courses will also help with his next steps, since he plans to apply to medical school in May and will be applying to two medical schools in Israel.

**MADDIE PINE** is an Electrical Engineering major, who studied abroad at Tel Aviv University and, upon her return, decided to pursue a Jewish Studies certificate. Studying Hebrew has been a highlight for Maddie, who loves the language and hopes to be fluent one day. Maddie will be graduating in December, so her post-graduation plans are not yet finalized, but she knows she would like to be living and working in Israel.



Maddie Pine

**BETH YUDELMAN** is a Sociology major with a certificate in Jewish Studies. Beth is loving the course she is taking this semester, "Jerusalem: City of Conflict and Desire," with Professor Brenner. She feels up to date on current events in the Middle East, and has gained a new appreciation for the complexity of Jerusalem. Beth plans to move home and apply for jobs and already has several opportunities on the horizon.



Riley Shoemaker

**RILEY SHOEMAKER** is a History major with a certificate in Jewish Studies. Riley's four semesters of Hebrew language with Haya Yuchtman stood out above and beyond all of his Jewish Studies courses, though he also loved Prof. Michels's course and Prof. Brenner's course. As a History major, Riley finds the rich history of

the Jews to be endlessly interesting, and taking Jewish Studies courses helped him to connect to the Jewish

community on campus. Riley hopes to be accepted into the Peace Corps and then start a career in public service as either a teacher or a political activist.

**ARIELA RIVKIN** is a double major in Russian Language and Comparative Literature with a certificate in Jewish Studies. In Professor Paretzkaya's class, "Soviet Jewish Experience," Ariela was able to delve deep into historical and sociological research related to her father's experience as a Jew in the Soviet



Ariela Rivkin

Union and a refusenik. When she was in student council last spring during the BDS months on campus, she was able to recall what she had learned in Professor Shelef's course on Israeli Politics and Society and to navigate conversations about Israel with fellow student council members. When, during those months, she became the target of antisemitic jokes and threats on campus, she felt that "without the class on theories of antisemitism taught by Professor Bitzan, I would have struggled to find my place as a Jew on campus." Ariela will be attending Boston University School of Law in the fall.



Molly Kazan

**MOLLY KAZAN** is a Psychology major, who is completing a certificate in Criminal Justice alongside her certificate in Jewish Studies. Professor Brenner's "Testimonies and Cultural Expressions of the Holocaust" was one of Molly's favorite courses at the university.

Molly decided to pursue a certificate when she studied abroad at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and while her plans for after graduation are still in progress, she knows she will carry her Jewish Studies education with her wherever she goes. She looks forward to finding a meaningful career that fuses her passions for social justice, Jewish continuity, and community life.

**REBECCA SCHWARTZ** is an International Studies major with a certificate in Jewish Studies and a certificate in Criminal Justice.



Rebecca Schwartz

# OUTREACH & EVENTS

## LECTURES, EVENTS, AND CO-SPONSORSHIPS, SPRING-SUMMER 2018

### February 14 – CJS Luncheon Seminar

"The Jew as Arsonist: State Discourses and Institutional Othering in Wisconsin, 1900-1940"

Victor Jew

### February 26 – The Tobias Lecture

"Graphic Differences: Interpreting a Medieval Theological Debate through Comics"

Nina Caputo

### March 7 – CJS BrownBag Lecture

"Witnessing the Holocaust and the Afterlife of Language"

Harriet Murav

### March 8 – Co-Sponsor Event

"Archive of Violence: Neighbors, Strangers, and Creatures in Itzik Kipnis's Mothers and Days"

Harriet Murav

### March 16 – Co-Sponsor Event

"Modernism in the Shtetl: David Bergelson's Descent"

Harriet Murav

### March 14 – Co-Sponsor Event

"Roundtable on Journal Publications for Graduate Students"

Kathryn Sanchez, Hans Adler, and Harriet Murav

### March 19

"Jewish Languages, Past and Present"

Aaron Rubin

### April 2 – Co-Sponsor Event

"The Palestinianization of American Jewish Anti-Zionism, 1942-1977"

Geoffrey Levin

### April 11 – The Paul J. Schrag Lecture

"Two Vultures? Freud's Psychoanalysis between 'Jewish Science' and Humanism"

Scott Spector

### April 25-26

Spring Board of Visitors Meeting

### May 11

Graduation Awards & Celebration

### July 8-12

The Nineteenth Annual Greenfield Summer Institute

"Jews and Entertainment"

## CONFERENCE ROUNDUP: "THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF SHOLEM ALEICHEM"

Our recent conference "The Highs and Lows of Sholem Aleichem: Yiddish Literature and the Pursuit of Popular Writing" was the flagship event of Fall 2017 programming at the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies. Bringing together scholars and authors from across the US, the conference included presentations that explored Sholem Aleichem's humor, his fiction, and his role in the creation of contemporary Jewish American folk culture. Professors of anthropology, literature, and Jewish Studies grappled with a variety of challenges, from how to assess the legacy of Sholem Aleichem's work to where his writing should fit in the Jewish American literary canon. They posed such questions as: Did Sholem Aleichem write for the masses? Was he highbrow, middlebrow, or lowbrow? And, what's at stake in making these distinctions?

Like Sholem Aleichem's own readership, the audience in attendance at the conference was large and varied. And, like Sholem Aleichem's own work, news of the conference also reached the Yiddish publishing world in New York. Two articles on this event appeared in the Yiddish-language *Daily Forward*, including a piece by University of Michigan-Ann Arbor professor Mikhail Krutikov. We wish to thank all those who helped make this conference a tremendous success. — Chad S.A. Gibbs

## INAUGURAL ISSUE OF AVUKAH PUBLISHED IN SPRING 2018

The inaugural issue of *Avukah*, the undergraduate journal of Jewish Studies at UW-Madison, was published in Spring 2018! Over the course of the Spring 2018 semester, the editorial board collaborated in the publication of a journal that highlights their peers' work in the field of Jewish Studies. "Avukah" is the Hebrew word for "torch." The board finds this term fitting, given their journal's mission: to bring light to those topics – historical, religious, political, social, or cultural – related to Judaism, Jews, and Jewishness. The 2018 Editorial Board includes Hilary Miller (Editor-in-Chief), Jordan Crane, Ally Dweck, Lily Gray, Hannah Paley, Riley Shoemaker, and Hannah Widmaier, with design services by Caitlin Griffin. *Avukah* can be found on the CJS website at <https://jewishstudies.wisc.edu/avukah/>.

## DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY LAUNCHES NEW PROGRAM IN JEWISH HISTORY

The Department of History has launched a new Program in Jewish History (PJH). This program will formalize the training of graduate students in the cultural, intellectual, political, and social history of the Jews, working in close cooperation with the George L. Mosse Program in History and the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies. Professor Amos Bitzan states that the main aim of the new program is "to provide a consistent institutional framework for graduate students concentrating in the field," and hopes "having the PJH as an option will also make the possibilities for studying

Jewish history at UW more visible to prospective applicants to the doctoral program in History." The PJH further intends "to make broad interdisciplinary exposure to Jewish Studies part of training Jewish history graduate students by designating a distributive minor in the field. This will be of particular interest to students wishing to enrich their course work with studies in literature, religion, philosophy, sociology, and political science, among others." More information on the PJH can be found at <https://history.wisc.edu/fields-programs-and-working-groups/program-in-jewish-history/>. — Chad S.A. Gibbs

## NEW SCHOLARSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT: THE ANDY BACHMAN SUPPORT FUND FOR JEWS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

We are excited to announce the creation of the Andy Bachman Support Fund for Jews and Social Justice through the generous gift of Rabbi Andy Bachman (alum '87).

The Andy Bachman Support Fund for Jews and Social Justice is awarded to a student (with preference given to an undergraduate) pursuing any academic project, work, or research with a connection to the study of Jewish identity and its relationship to social justice issues.

## JEWISH STUDIES GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION AT UW-MADISON

The Jewish Studies Graduate Student Association at UW-Madison (JSGSA) was re-activated this Spring semester! The JSGSA will sponsor academic, social, and professional development opportunities, including a Jewish Studies reading group, brown bag luncheons with visiting scholars, and coffee hours. The students aim to enhance the intellectual community among Jewish Studies scholars and those in related disciplines on the UW-Madison campus. Officers for 2018 are Erin Faigin, president, Joe Banin, treasurer, and Chad S.A. Gibbs, secretary. More information on the JSGSA and activities can be found at <https://jewishstudies.wisc.edu/students/jewish-studies-graduate-student-association/>.

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