



THE GEORGE L. MOSSE / LAURENCE A. WEINSTEIN  
**CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



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## Director's Report



Tony Michels, Director  
Photo: Snitow-Kaufman Productions

### On the cover:

Bluma and Bella Epstein, whose family is among those featured at the Tenement Museum in New York City. The museum's president, Annie Polland, is a CJS alumna. For more on Polland and the museum, see pp. 8–9. *Tenement Museum Collection*

Newsletter Editor:  
Gwen Walker

## It's Good to Be Back

I write this at the end of the academic year, our first year back in person since the Covid outbreak in the spring semester of 2020. It was good to be in the classroom, face-to-face with students, who were eager to resume their studies in the normal way. The highlight of the year, for me, was the field trip to New York City that CJS organized with the African American Studies Department. You can read about it on the next page of this newsletter, so I won't go into details here. Suffice it to say that the trip not only marked CJS's return to normality, but also underscored the University of Wisconsin–Madison's longstanding commitment to public engagement.

A shining example of the Wisconsin Idea, the university's mission to educate the general public, is Dr. Annie Polland (BA '95), who was among the first students at the UW to receive a certificate in Jewish Studies. Annie is president of the Tenement Museum, one of the most innovative and celebrated museums in the country. As a scholar and educator, she has brought the history and culture of Jews to countless people, including the students on our recent field trip. She discusses her formative years at the UW on page 8. To learn more about the Wisconsin Idea, I invite you to read our profile of Professor Chad Goldberg (page 7), who has recently published a book on the subject.

As always, the end of the spring semester brings with it a farewell to our graduating seniors, who will take their knowledge of Jewish civilization into the world as they embark on new paths. I am very pleased CJS was able to play an important role in their intellectual development and help support some of them financially along the way. All of us at CJS say to them, *kol ha-kavod*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "Tony Michels".

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

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# CJS Partners with Department of African American Studies on Field Trip to New York City

This year the Center for Jewish Studies and the Department of African American Studies embarked on a joint initiative to encourage cross-disciplinary study of African Americans and Jews. The initiative will consist of two main components: field trips to cities that are historically and culturally significant for both populations, and scholarships for undergraduates taking courses in both Jewish Studies and African American Studies.

Launching the initiative in early April, the two programs took a diverse group of twelve students to New York to learn about life in Harlem and the Lower East Side. Led by CJS Director Tony Michels and African American Studies Chair Ethelene Whitmire, the trip left a deep impression on the students who attended. For most, it was their first time in New York City.

"People on our trip were so curious and passionate about cultures other than their own," remarks Yaakov Segal, a sophomore double-majoring in Jewish Studies and Political Science. At a group dinner one evening, Yaakov sat across from senior Ayan Hassan, who is Muslim, and the two ended up in a far-ranging conversation about their religious beliefs and identities. They discovered many points of overlap, from ideas about morality to their respective decisions to wear a kippah and hijab.

For Ayan, a Legal Studies major who grew up in the Milwaukee area, highlights of the trip included the Eldridge Steet Synagogue, where she noted similarities to mosques. She also enjoyed the Tenement Museum, whose president, CJS alumna Annie Polland (BA '95), offered the group a preview of an exhibit that will recreate the apartment where an African American couple once lived.



For freshman Axell Boomer, who plans to major in History, "following Professor Michels through the streets of the Lower East Side brought the content of his course 'The American Jewish Experience' to life." Among other sights, Axell was impressed by the building where the *Forward* newspaper had its beginnings. "Observing the *Forverts* building towering over the neighborhood demonstrated the influence and impact of the Yiddish paper," explains Axell. The trip also reinforced lessons of African American history. "Walking on the grounds of New York's Municipal Slave Market," Axell says, "revealed the trade's proximity to Wall Street."

Rachel Hale, a sophomore pursuing a certificate in Jewish Studies, says she enjoyed "talking with new students I met on the trip about our different backgrounds, activism, and aspects of Jewish and Black identity (and just having fun together)."

Other high points included a dinner at Melba's Restaurant in Harlem with Letters and Science Dean Eric Wilcots and UW alumni such as Jerry Shereshevsky (BA '68), who later remarked that he "adored meeting some of the students and getting a whiff of the amazing time they're having in Madison." The following evening, the students were treated to dinner by Edward Grossman (BA '70) in Greenwich Village. Crucial support for the field trip was also provided by Julie and Peter Weil (BA '70, JD '74) and Michael Berkowitz (PhD '89).

Michels began to formulate the initiative two years ago in conversations with Professor Whitmire and CJS supporters such as Victor Temkin (BA '57, LLB '60), who shared his excitement about the idea. We intend this to be the first in a series of such trips in the years ahead.

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Above: CJS Director Tony Michels leads a walking tour of the Lower East Side.

Left: Zykia Brumfield, Wanwa Omot, Beck Keller, and Sophia Abrams in Harlem.



# CLASS OF 2022

Congratulations to Our Jewish Studies Majors and Certificate Students!



## Jordan Resnick

### Double Major in Jewish Studies and Political Science

Even before committing to a college, I knew that I wanted to pursue Jewish Studies. In high school, I was actively involved in Jewish leadership organizations and programs. Despite finding immense fulfillment within Jewish leadership, I was craving a formal Jewish education. I wanted to study the Jewish people, the history of Judaism, and Jewish practices and traditions, so that I could develop a greater understanding of how Jews fit into the modern world. Not only did I find answers to my questions within the Jewish Studies program at the UW, but I have also become a more open-minded person who thinks critically and holistically.

My favorite Jewish Studies course was "The American Jewish Experience: From Shtetl to Suburb" with Professor Tony Michels. I've always been curious about the origins of American Jewry and the culture that American Jews have cultivated. This class explored the initial Jewish immigration to America and the developments that followed, such as Jews in media, literature, theater, comedy, and more. As an American Jew, I found it exceptionally interesting to explore the origins of American Jewish life.

Upon graduation, I will be moving to New York City and eventually applying to law school. I am currently looking for human resources roles within tech companies to gain experience. I am excited about this new chapter of my life and look forward to what it will bring.



## Azariah Horowitz

### Major in French, Certificate in Jewish Studies

After high school I lived in Israel for a few months, and when I came back to Wisconsin I wanted to continue learning Hebrew. I kept going with it because I had fun taking Hebrew classes at UW with Judith Sone, and I learned a lot. After graduation I'm going to teach in the Milwaukee Public Schools System, hopefully at the French Immersion School.

## Charles Rutman

### Major in Kinesiology, Certificates in Jewish Studies and Athletic Healthcare

I have always been involved with some sort of religious or cultural aspect of Judaism and wanted to continue that experience through my formal education. My favorite course in Jewish Studies was "Yiddish Song and the Jewish Experience." This course highlights Jewish culture from mostly European areas through song, showing how that culture has evolved and how Jews have experienced historical events. In the future I am hoping to attend PT school and become a physical therapist. Ideally, I can further my Jewish education as well.



## **Aly Orvis**

**Double Major in Political Science and International Studies,  
Certificates in Jewish Studies, Middle East Studies, and French**

One of my professors once made an observation during class that I think about every once in a while. She said that she can tell more about a student based on their certificates than their majors, because certificates align more with what students are passionate about. I have found that the Jewish Studies component of my education at the University of Wisconsin has been the most fulfilling and most enjoyable to me.

Growing up, I always enjoyed learning about Judaism and my culture and history. When I came to college, I found a sense of familiarity and comfort in the Jewish Studies classes I took. Judith Sone, who teaches Hebrew, was my favorite teacher. She helped me build confidence not only in Hebrew but also in myself. My favorite course was "Hebrew Literature from the Bible to the Present" with Professor Marina Zilbergerts. She always had very interesting interpretations of the texts we read and encouraged us to talk through our own interpretations.

My favorite reading from a Jewish Studies course was Dan Pagis's "Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway-Car," a short six-line poem about the Holocaust written from the perspective of Eve. Though it is a short piece, Pagis is able to ask complex and emotional questions about human nature through making connections between Cain and Abel as brothers and Nazis and Jews as humans.

Next year, I will be attending law school studying human rights law. Eventually, I want to work in nonprofit civil peace-building surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. My academic work in the Jewish Studies program has influenced those plans, as well as my development both professionally and personally.



## **Maya Parks**

**Major in Theatre and Drama, Certificate in Jewish Studies**

Attending Jewish overnight camp and interning at Hillel prompted me to pursue a certificate in Jewish Studies. My favorite Jewish Studies class was "Jewish Humor" with Professor Sunny Yudkoff, because it allowed me to use my knowledge of both theatre and Jewish Studies and dive deeper into both. After graduating I will work as the Teen Engagement Coordinator for JCC Chicago.



# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

## CJS Affiliate Chad Alan Goldberg Reflects on the Wisconsin Idea



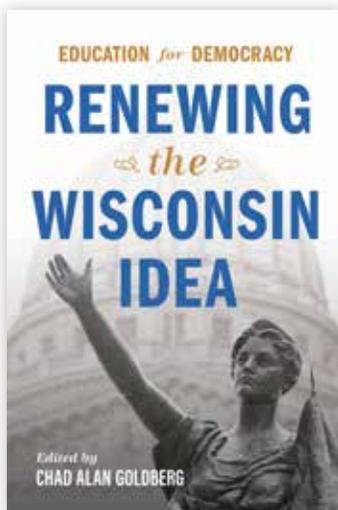
For well over a century, the UW has aspired to a principle known as the “Wisconsin Idea”: the belief that the university has a responsibility not only to educate its student body, but also to serve the general public. In a recent, award-winning book edited by Chad Alan Goldberg, Professor of Sociology and an affiliate in the Center for Jewish Studies, Goldberg and others articulate the importance of the Wisconsin Idea in shaping the university’s mission over time. As Goldberg describes in his introduction to the volume, the Wisconsin Idea, broadly defined, entails a commitment to challenge conventional wisdom, test controversial ideas, advance democracy, and invest in the common good. This emphasis on the civic value of higher education, he argues, offers “a compelling countervision to the utilitarian and business-centered notions of higher education” that often prevail today.

*Education for Democracy: Renewing the Wisconsin Idea* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2020) includes essays by a wide range of UW faculty, staff, and alumni who analyze or exemplify the Wisconsin Idea. According to J. David Hoeveler, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History at the UW-Milwaukee, the concept can be traced back to John Bascom, UW president from 1874 to 1887. And yet, as Goldberg explains, the Wisconsin Idea must be reinterpreted and renewed with each successive generation. The volume thus showcases some living examples of the Wisconsin Idea, such as the UW’s Odyssey Project, conceived by Wisconsin Public Radio host Jean Feraca and English Professor Emily Auerbach, which offers humanities courses to adults from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Goldberg’s volume also identifies some of the tensions

embedded in the Wisconsin Idea. Political Science Professor Katherine Cramer (B.A. '94), for instance, contributes an essay exploring difficult questions about academic elitism and the need to communicate more meaningfully with the public today.

*Education for Democracy* is an extension of Goldberg’s interests in social theory, comparative-historical sociology, and political sociology. These interests intersect with Jewish studies in the form of his 2017 monograph *Modernity and the Jews in Western Social Thought* (University of Chicago Press), which received the American Sociological Association’s Distinguished Scholarly Book Award in the History of Sociology and the Midwest Sociological Society’s Distinguished Book Award. In this book, Goldberg shows how prominent social thinkers in France, Germany, and the United States have invoked real or purported differences between Jews and gentiles to reflect on their own wider societies. Carrying some of these themes into his teaching, Goldberg has also developed an undergraduate course in Modern Jewish Thought.

This year Goldberg has made several new contributions to Jewish studies. In November, he presented a paper on Horace Kallen at the UW–Madison’s Institute for Research in the Humanities. Kallen, who taught philosophy at the University of Wisconsin from 1911 to 1918, was active in the American Zionist movement and is best known today for his 1915 essay “Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot: A Study of American Nationality.” In Goldberg’s paper, he argues that Kallen’s cultural pluralism was one variant of a worldwide project of Jewish intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to integrate Jews into a wider civil and political order without relinquishing Jewish ethnicity or nationality. Goldberg also participated in a session on antisemitism at the annual meeting of the Association for Jewish Studies in Chicago in December.



Above: Chad Goldberg in Jerusalem

Left: Goldberg’s edited volume *Education for Democracy: Renewing the Wisconsin Idea*, winner of the Midwest Independent Publishing Association’s 2021 Anthology Book Award

# ALUMNI NEWS

## CJS Alumna Makes History Accessible at the Tenement Museum

When Annie Polland (BA '95) began to take Jewish Studies courses in the early 1990s, she had no specific career path in mind. A native of Milwaukee, Polland was simply following her interests when she declared a Jewish Studies certificate on top of her double major in Hebrew and Semitic Studies and Political Science. One of the Center's first graduates, Polland now serves as the president of New York City's Tenement Museum, helping to bring the history of the Lower East Side to life for thousands of visitors each year. In ways that Polland could not have anticipated during her college years, her education at the UW provided the foundations for her current work as a historian of New York's vibrant Jewish community.

To earn her Jewish Studies certificate at the UW, Polland took a wide range of courses in Jewish history, literature, and culture. From Professor Gilead Morahg, who taught Israeli fiction, she gained a deeper understanding of Jewish literature within its historical context. From David Sorkin's course Modern Jewish History, she came to appreciate the value of studying history through a dual lens: at once national and distinctly Jewish. In Hebrew courses with instructors such as Bilha Mirkin and Haya Yuchtman, Polland improved her language skills thanks to the energy and expertise these teachers brought to their classrooms.

As she approached graduation in 1995, Polland recalls, "I knew I wasn't done learning." Walking up Bascom Hill one day, she realized that she wanted to attend graduate school. Following lines of interest encouraged in her courses at the UW, she decided to pursue a doctorate in Jewish history at Columbia University.

During Polland's second year at Columbia, she got a job giving walking tours and discovered that she loved talking about the built environment and fielding questions from the public.



As she led groups past many of the places that figured into her historical research, the Lower East Side seemed to her "like a stage set for the ideas in my dissertation to play out." City blocks that had been revitalized by a recent wave of immigrants from China were animated by "the same dynamic that would have infused Hester Street" in past decades.

Unlike many graduate students, Polland did not see herself becoming a professor. She also had no interest in leaving New York. After receiving her Ph.D., she gravitated toward public history, finding ways to connect this work to her research interests. As Vice President of Education at the Museum at Eldridge Street from 2004 to 2009, she wrote a history of the famous Eldridge Street Synagogue, *Landmark of the Spirit*. Later, as the Tenement Museum's Executive Vice President for Programs and Education, she co-authored an award-winning book, *The Emerging Metropolis: New York Jews in the Age of Immigration*.

After serving for several years as Executive Director of the American Jewish Historical Society, Polland returned to the Tenement Museum in 2021 to become its president. With exhibits that recreate the homes of working-class tenants



Polland speaks with visitors about the recreated apartment of the Saez Velez family, who immigrated from Puerto Rico and lived at 103 Orchard Street in the 1960s-1970s.



Left: The Rogarshevskys, a Jewish family from Lithuania who lived at 97 Orchard Street in the 1910s. *Tenement Museum Collection*

Below: Recreated kitchen of the Rogarshevsky family

from the late nineteenth century to the 1970s, the museum makes the history of ordinary people accessible. Tours of its two buildings feature the recreated apartments of residents from various ethnic groups, including Jewish families such as the Rogarshevskys, who lived at 97 Orchard Street in the 1910s, and the Epsteins, Holocaust survivors who lived at 103 Orchard Street in the 1950s. The latter building also features the homes of a Puerto Rican family and a Chinese family. In addition to building tours and neighborhood walking tours, the Tenement Museum offers a website ([www.tenement.org](http://www.tenement.org)) with virtual tours, digital exhibits, lesson plans, and a wealth of information about life on the Lower East Side.

Polland enjoys the collaboration involved in this work and its capacity to reach a wide audience. Prior to the pandemic, attendance peaked at 275,000 onsite visitors per year. In 2022, she expects about 120,000 onsite visitors and 226,000 virtually. This year Polland is especially excited about a new exhibit that will reveal another layer of Lower East Side history: an apartment once occupied by Joseph and Rachel Moore, a Black family that lived in the area in the 1860s-1870s.

"Going to Madison was one of the best things that happened to me," Polland reflects. Fortunately for CJS, she has maintained her connection with the university. In April, Polland welcomed a group of UW students to the Tenement Museum as part of a field trip led by CJS Director Tony Michels and Professor Ethelene Whitmire, Chair of the Department of African American Studies. (See p. 3 for details.) This July, she will participate in our annual Greenfield Summer Institute, where she will give a lecture on Yiddish cookbooks and what they reveal about the changing expectations of Jewish mothers.

Looking back on her college years, Polland recalls Madison as "a place where learning was honored and respected." Through her work at the Tenement Museum and beyond, she remains committed to education as a lifelong process.



# 2021-22 SCHOLARSHIP AND AWARDS

Thanks to our generous donors, we were pleased to offer the following awards to recognize excellence and support research in Jewish Studies at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

## **Andy Bachman Award for Study and Research of Jews and Social Justice**

Alex Scheepens

## **Robert and Lynn Berman Scholarship**

Ethell Gershengorin  
Shai Goldfarb-Cohen  
Jacqueline Krass

## **Rachel Feldhay Brenner Award for Research and Study of the Holocaust**

Alex Scheepens

## **Michael Kaplan Graduate Research Award in Jewish Civilization**

Ethell Gershengorin

## **Ida and Isaac Lipton Certificate Award**

Aly Orvis

## **Lipton Scholarship for Domestic Study**

Jacqueline Krass  
Ethell Gershengorin  
Nina Walter

## **Lipton Essay Award**

Alex Scheepens  
Ri Turner

## **Charles and Gayle Mazursky Award**

Marko Kljajić

## **Richard D. Sincere and Debra L. Sincere Israel Studies Scholarship**

Rachel Rosen  
Chagai Weiss

## **David Sorkin Graduate Research Award in Modern Jewish History**

Ethell Gershengorin  
Ri Turner

## **Menachem Mansoor Award for Excellence in Hebrew**

Maya Benhamo

## **Robert and Beverly Natelson Family Scholarship in Jewish Studies**

Alex Scheepens

## **Marjorie and Harry Tobias Major/Certificate Award**

Savannah Lipinski

## **Laurence and Frances Weinstein Undergraduate Award for Outstanding Academic Achievement in Hebrew**

Itamar Shifrin

We also congratulate **Alex Scheepens** on receiving the Paul J. Schrag Writing Prize, which is given by the Department of History for the best essay in German-Jewish history.

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“ I am extremely glad that I decided to pursue a Jewish Studies certificate at the University of Wisconsin. The academic work I have done in analyzing texts and politics, as well as finding confidence in my Hebrew and myself, have helped solidify my future plans to focus on human rights law and work within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

—Aly Orvis, Class of 2022, winner of the Ida and Isaac Lipton Certificate Award

# LECTURES AND EVENTS

CJS was pleased to sponsor the following events in 2021–2022

## Screening of *The Ancient Law* with Live Musical Accompaniment

Alicia Svigals (violinist) and Donald Sosin (pianist)

*Sponsored by the Center for Russia, East Europe, and Central Asia; co-sponsored by CJS and the Mayrent Institute for Yiddish Culture.*



The Kutler Lectures

## "Women's Things: The Art of the Jewish Family" and "Rethinking Jews and Race: A Multiracial Jewish Family

in Early America"

Laura Leibman (Reed College)

*Co-sponsored by the Department of Gender and Women's Studies and the Department of History*

## "The German-Jewish Diaspora and Its Cross-Pacific Experience: From China to the United States"

Weijia Li (UW-Madison)

*Sponsored by the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies; co-sponsored by CJS*

## "A World Within Worlds: Tsvey Brider in Concert"

Anthony Russell (vocalist) and Dmitri Gaskin (multi-instrumentalist)

*Co-sponsored by the Department of African American Studies, the Mayrent Institute for Yiddish Culture, the School of Music, and the Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic+*

## "Post-Holocaust Hebrew and Polish Poetry"

Shoshana Ronen (University of Warsaw)

Lecture in honor of Rachel Feldhay Brenner z"l

*Co-sponsored by the Middle East Studies Program, the Center for Russia, East Europe, and Central Asia, and the Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic+*



## "Science and Secularization in a Jewish Key"

Rabbi Matthew Kaufman, Ph.D. (Congregation Kehillat Israel)

*Co-sponsored by the Religious Studies Program and the Department of Philosophy*

## "Covid in Context: Health Culture among Yiddish & Pennsylvania Dutch Speakers"

Zackary Sholem Berger (Johns Hopkins University), Heather Munro (Anthropologist), Mark Loudon (UW-Madison), and Cara Rock-Singer (UW-Madison)

*Sponsored by the Mayrent Institute for Yiddish Culture; co-sponsored by CJS*



## "Blood Libel: On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth"

Magda Teter (Fordham University)

*Sponsored by the George L. Mosse*

*Program in History and CJS, with thanks to the Wiseman Fund*

## "Birobidzhan and Yiddish Contemporary Art"

Yevgeniy Fiks (Moscow-born, New York-based artist)

*Sponsored by the Mayrent Institute for Yiddish Culture*

## "On Translating Yiddish: New Ventures in the American Yiddish Press"

A panel discussion with Madeleine (Mindl) Cohen (National Yiddish Book Center), Jordan Finkin (Naydus Press), and Jessica Kirzane (*In geveb: A Journal of Yiddish Studies*)

*Sponsored by the Mayrent Institute for Yiddish Culture*

## "Yiddish-Ukrainian Translation"

Oksana Shcherba (Kyiv)

*Sponsored by the Mayrent Institute for Yiddish Culture*

## Conney Conference: The Jewish Arts in an Expanded Field

*Sponsored by the Conney Project on the Jewish Arts*



Weinstein/Minkoff Lecture in Israel Studies

## "Palestine as Possibility: Polish Jews and the Yishuv as Fact in the 1930s"

Kenneth Moss

(University of Chicago)

*Co-sponsored by the Department of History, Middle East Studies, and the Center for Russia, East Europe, and Central Asia*



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