

Jewish Studies at Michigan State University

Michigan State University's Jewish Studies Program focuses on the two centers of contemporary Jewish life, the United States and Israel. What was once central in Jewish life, Europe, has in the past century become increasingly peripheral; what were once peripheral, the U.S. and Israel, have become central. This great modern historical transformation, Jewish life in Europe, North America, and Israel, Judaism, modern Jewish thought, and Jewish creative expressions are our key concerns.

The program works with faculty in four colleges and eight departments at MSU to provide undergraduate courses and allied academic activities in Jewish civilization. Students have opportunities to study Hebrew, Jewish life in Europe, America and Israel, Judaism, Jewish thought, Jewish literature and culture, Jews and anti-semitism, the Holocaust, Israeli politics and society, American Jewry and Israeli Jewry in comparative perspective, and more. Faculty members are also available to work with students on special undergraduate research projects, senior theses, and independent studies.

The program also offers public events on Jewish themes with emphases on American Jewish life and culture, Israeli life and culture, *Yiddishkeit*, the Holocaust, Jewish contributions to film, the arts, music, and literature, modern Israel, the Israeli-Arab-Palestinian conflict, modern Jewish public affairs, and more. The Jewish Studies program sponsor MSU's annual Israeli film festival. Jewish Studies also sponsors study abroad during the academic year in Israel at three major Israeli universities, directs an MSU Jewish Studies summer program at Hebrew University's Rothberg International School, and administers scholarships, including the Julie and Ed Levy Jr. Scholarship, to assist students to study in Israel.

Our goals include increasing opportunities for students to become familiar with the history, religion, language, and culture of the Jewish people and enriching the cultural life of Michigan's Jewish communities. The curriculum includes up to 25 courses offered annually in eight departments and our intent is to expand these. Interested students may take 20 credits from among these to complete a "Specialization in Jewish Studies." We are currently working on a second track in the specialization focusing on Hebrew study and Israel Studies. Offerings also include topical seminars, short courses, and summer courses taught by MSU faculty and by visitors from the U.S., Israel, and elsewhere.

The program organizes MSU's annual Holocaust memorial, including the David and Sarah Rabin Holocaust lecture, community brunches, prominent speakers, colloquia, film showings, panel presentations, brown bags, performances, and exhibits. During 2003-04, a museum exhibit, "Uneasy Years: Michigan Jewry During Depression and War," documented active responses by Michigan Jews to Nazism and to the plight of Jews abroad. It was named one of the thirty best projects sponsored by the Michigan Council on the Humanities in the past thirty years. During 2004-05, the program sponsored a series of appearances by Israeli women film directors with their prize-winning films. A special event in April 2005 brought former children liberated by American soldiers at Buchenwald to share their experiences connected with the 60th anniversary of the

liberation of the camps. During 2005-06, the first MSU Israeli Film Festival was launched and the first Stanley and Selma Hollander Lecture on Jewish Arts and Music was given. During 2006-07, the inaugural annual Michael and Elaine Serling Lecture on Modern Israel was begun. Jewish Studies also participates annually as a sponsor in the Detroit Jewish Book Fair and runs an annual spring Michigan Teachers Holocaust Education Workshop that has provided professional development for over 250 teachers.

The Jewish Studies web site can be found at: <http://jisp.msu.edu>. Jewish Studies publishes an annual fall and spring newsletter that contains news about the program, information on events, and notices about faculty and student achievements. It includes a calendar of activities. A recent accomplishment of Jewish Studies was persuading MSU to reopen study abroad in Israel on a regular basis after several years of suspension.

History and Mission

The Jewish Studies Program (JSP) at MSU was created in 1992 with initial support for courses in the Hebrew language from the Max J. Fisher Community Foundation (Southfield, MI). It was built upon the commitment of a few existing faculty at MSU, courses that were already present in the curriculum, and a Jewish Studies Thematic that existed at MSU since the mid-1970s. Since its founding in 1992, the Program has expanded its curricular offerings and activities under four directors with strong support from the university, including the Offices of the President and the Provost and Offices of the Dean in the College of Arts and Letters and James Madison College and with help from numerous gifts and endowments. Two core positions were created and filled early – one in American Jewish History and Culture, sited in the Department of History, another in Hebrew Language and Literature, in the Department of Linguistics, Germanic, Slavic, African, and Asian Languages. More recently in 2005-06, two additional core positions in Israel Studies and in Judaism and Jewish Thought were added and recruited. The Michael and Elaine Serling and Friends Israel Studies position is supported primarily by a private endowment and is in James Madison College; the temporary position in Judaism and Jewish Thought is supported by Arts and Letters and is in Religious Studies.

The mission of the Jewish Studies Program is to provide an enriching university environment of academic learning about Jewish civilization, to attract young Jewish students from Michigan and the rest of the nation and offer them opportunities to develop critical knowledge and perspective on their Jewish heritage, including access to relevant study abroad in Israel and elsewhere, and, finally, to offer to all MSU students, Jews and non-Jews alike, opportunities to learn of the rich traditions, history, society, culture, and religious thought and practice of the Jewish people. Another aspect of the mission of the Jewish Studies Program is to support and highlight the contributions of Jewish Studies faculty at MSU to the scholarship of Jewish Studies and to develop a nationally recognized program which fits with the aspirations of a 21st century global university. Another is to contribute to and enhance knowledge of Jewish life in the university community, in mid-Michigan, and in the State of Michigan.

Jewish Studies now includes among its primary activities:

- a. Working with faculty and departments to provide undergraduate courses and conduct research in aspects of Jewish civilization, particularly modern Jewish experience, in Europe, the U.S., and Israel. A 20 credit undergraduate *Specialization in Jewish Studies* permits students to explore Jewish history, literature, society, and culture, learn Hebrew, and study Judaism. A second track will focus more intensively on Hebrew and Israel Studies.
- b. Supporting faculty professional development and achievement in Jewish Studies, including research and study travel, travel to professional meetings, and support for publication.
- c. Assisting students in taking advantage of opportunities for *Study in Israel, including Israel Studies*, and *Study of East European Jewry in Poland*.
- d. Providing leadership in Holocaust education in the curriculum and in outreach activities to the mid-Michigan and larger Michigan community, including the *MSU Annual Commemoration of the Holocaust* and the *MSU/Michigan Teachers Workshop on Holocaust Education*.
- e. Offering campus-based or public outreach programs on timely themes in Jewish civilization, in particular, modern Jewish experience. These include programs and exhibitions on American Jewish history, society, and culture, on Israeli society and culture, presentations of faculty work-in-progress, public lectures, short courses and presentations by visiting scholars, panel discussions, films, art exhibits, and musical performances.
- f. The Jewish Studies Program also works with other administrative units in providing services that advance MSU, including the Office of the President, Development, Government Relations, University Relations, and Admissions.

In August 2003, the *Detroit Jewish News* recognized that Michigan State University was experiencing a “Renaissance in Jewish Studies”; and in December 2004, Robert Sklar, editor of the *Detroit Jewish News*, identified President McPherson and President-designate Simon as “Jewish Studies champions.” [August 23, 2003; Dec. 24, 2004]

On January 19, 2006, President Lou Anna Simon visited the *Detroit Jewish News* and addressed the Board of Governors of the Metropolitan Detroit Jewish Federation. Robert Sklar wrote that MSU Jewish Studies “has real potential to be a national model,” and praised Simon’s

administrative leadership and vision in supporting Jewish Studies and making Jewish students feel welcome at MSU [Feb 16, 2006] On Oct. 17, 2006, President Simon again addressed the Jewish Federation at its Town Hall meeting about MSU, highlighted Jewish Studies, and+ explored and MSU's commitment to the State of Michigan.

Focus: Two Centers of Modern Jewish Experience

How is a renaissance of Jewish Studies being accomplished at MSU? *First, Jewish Studies at MSU offers a distinctive orientation.* A multi-disciplinary field, reaching into many subjects in the curriculum, Jewish Studies can be conceived in many ways. But at MSU, it focuses on the essentials of Jewish experience--language, religion, history, society, literature and the arts--emphasizing America and Israel, the two contemporary centers of modern Jewish life. In a sense, we reverse the order in Jewish Studies in many other universities, where American Jewish and Israeli experience is introduced at the end of the story. We make Jewish life in these linked but divergent societies and cultures the point of intellectual and curricular departure.

At the same time, though, we also look back—we look at the history of European Jewry especially, in its complexity, and we explore the development of two new centers of Jewish life before and after the Holocaust. We also look at ancient Judaism--in order to understand the origins and religious thought and practice of the Jewish people and to comprehend Jewish thought about Israel. But, at the center of our attention is the momentous transformation in Jewish life that occurred during the 20th century and the new societies and cultures Jews created in lands where they came to live. Today, more than 80% of the world's Jews live in the U.S. and Israel. Our research, teaching, and programming focuses on aspects of this transformation – on modernization, emancipation, ideological change, anti-semitism, migration, war and Holocaust, on changing group identity, and on nation building – as well as on the role of Judaism and Jewish thought in the long history of Jewish civilization.

Second, the Jewish Studies program acts as a model interdisciplinary program at MSU. The program includes core faculty who are formally assigned to the program, assisted in professional development and progress by the program, and expected to contribute roughly half their course assignments to the Jewish Studies specialization and, by their research and scholarship, to increase the visibility of the program. In addition, Jewish Studies attracts a range of additional affiliated faculty members who participate voluntarily, teach occasional courses or seminars, focus on Jewish subject matter in their research and scholarship, and are also eligible for modest support for research travel and professional development.

These core and affiliated faculty enrich and strengthen our learning community. In addition to the director and two former directors, plus four core faculty formally dedicated to American Jewish History and Culture, Hebrew Language and Literature, Israel Studies, and Judaism and Jewish Thought, the Program includes core and affiliated faculty who cover aspects of European Jewish History, Jews and Anti-Semitism, Jewish

Immigration, the Holocaust, American Jewish Lives, American Jewish Literature, Israeli Literature, Israeli Film, The Israel-Arab-Palestinian Conflict, Israeli Politics and Society, Diaspora Studies, Modern Orthodoxy, and Education. A list of core faculty (including former directors) and affiliated faculty is provided below.

The Undergraduate Jewish Studies Specialization

The Jewish Studies Specialization introduces undergraduates to the history, religion, culture, and civilization of the Jewish people. A student must complete a minimum of twenty (20) credits from the courses listed below which can be taken while fulfilling the requirements for a major in nearly any field at MSU. Currently, eight (8) of the credits may be in Hebrew; only second year Hebrew or more counts toward the specialization. Additional advanced credits in Hebrew may be counted as well based on review by the director. We are currently exploring adding advanced to beginning and intermediate Hebrew at MSU and developing a second track in the specialization focused on Hebrew and Israeli Studies. Certification of completion of the Jewish Studies Specialization after review is noted on each qualified student's academic transcript.

Arts and Letters

- AL 390 Modern Jewish Writing from a Global Perspective (3 credits)
- AL 491 Modern Jewish Literature (1 credit)

English

- ENG 344 Jewish American Literature (4 credits)

Hebrew

- HEB 101 Elementary Hebrew I (4 credits)
- HEB 102 Elementary Hebrew II (4 credits)
- HEB 201 Second Year Hebrew I (4 credits)
- HEB 202 Second Year Hebrew II (4 credits)
- HEB 301 Third Year Hebrew (3 credits) – currently in development
- HEB 290 Independent Study (1 to 8 credits)
- HEB 490 Independent Study (1 to 8 credits)
- LL 250C Topics in National Cinemas: Israeli Cinema (3)

History

- HST 201 Historical Methods and Skills*
- HST 281 Immigrants, Minorities, and Am. Pluralism* (4 credits)
- HST 317 American Jewish History (3 credits)
- HST 392 History of the Holocaust (3 credits)
- HST 411 European Jewish History (3 credits)
- HST 48x Special Topics Seminars (3 credits)*

Integrative Studies in Arts and Humanities (General Education)

- IAH 211C Area Studies & Multicultural Civilizations: The Americas (4 credits)
Focus on American Jewish Culture
- IAH 211D Area Studies & Multicultural Civilizations: Israeli Culture & Society (4)
- IAH 221A Great Ages: Ancient World–Focus Paganism, Judaism, & Christianity (4)

James Madison College

- MC 281 Immigrants, Minorities, and Am. Pluralism* (4 credits)
- MC 300 Collaborative Study: The Zionist Idea & Contemporary Israeli Voices (1)
- MC 324A Regional Politics, Cooperation, and Conflict in the Middle East (4 credits)
- MC 325 State and Society in Comparative Perspective* (4 credits)
- MC 387 Jews and Anti-Semitism (4 credits)
- MC 390 Modern Jewish Experience: Europe, America, and Israel (4 credits)
- MC 390 Israeli Politics and Society (4 credits)
- MC 492 Senior Seminar in International Relations*
- MC 498 Senior Seminar in Social Relations*

Religious Studies

- REL 310 Judaism (4 credits)
- REL 410 The Hebrew Bible (3 credits)
- REL 411 Modern Jewish Thought (3 credits)
- REL 418 Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Religions (3 credits)

Women's Studies

- WS 302 Jewish Women's Experiences and Writings (3 credits)

* when course includes appropriate Jewish Studies subject matter content

Study Abroad in Israel

Working with the MSU Office of International Studies and Programs, Jewish Studies provides assistance to students in arranging semester and year-long study in Israel via agreements with The Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv University, and Ben-Gurion University. In 1996 Jewish Studies also planned, and, in 1998, Jewish Studies inaugurated, a summer program with Hebrew University's Rothberg International School. The program includes MSU designed and approved courses, one taught by an MSU faculty, another course or courses that are reviewed and certified for MSU credit and are taught by Hebrew/Rothberg faculty. Coursework is bolstered by planned excursions and visits to museums and historical sites in Jerusalem and other places in Israel. The program went in 1998 and 2000, was suspended during the second *intifada*, and resumed in 2006 and 2007. Currently, the program is in the new Israel Studies Institute at the Rothberg School.

In November 2000, in response to the U.S. State Department's "warning" about travel in Israel and the Middle East, the University "suspended" MSU-sponsored programs in

Israel, until 2005-06. During 2004-05, Jewish Studies petitioned the MSU Risk and Security Committee to end the bar on financial aid and scholarship support to students studying independently in Israel, and MSU responded positively. Nine MSU students studied in Israel summer, 2005, eight with scholarship support. During 2005-06, Jewish Studies further petitioned to resume MSU faculty-led programming in Israel. The Risk Committee and Provost Office approved the resumption of faculty led programming (in fall 2005, permitting Jewish Studies to reopen its summer program in 2006. Nine students attended and two more attended the Hebrew Ulpan – all on scholarship. Unfortunately, after the eruption of war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, involving rocket and missile fire into northern Israel, the Provost acting prudentially cancelled the program and called students and the faculty leader home. Finally, 11 students are attending the summer program in summer 2007, 9 on scholarship, and two studied during the academic year in Israel during 2006-07 also on scholarship.

MSU Faculty Members Teaching Jewish Studies Courses or Participating in Program and Course Planning

CORE FACULTY

Yael Aronoff (James Madison College)

Michael and Elaine Serling and Friends Assistant Professor of Israel Studies

Ph.D. Columbia U., Political Science, International Relations, Comparative Politics

Marc Bernstein (Linguistics and Languages)

Assistant Professor of Hebrew and Israeli Culture

Ph.D., U. California at Berkeley, Near Eastern Studies

Kirsten Fermaglich (History)

Associate Professor, American Jewish History and Culture

Ph.D., New York University, History & Culture

Benjamin Pollock (Religious Studies)

Assistant Professor, Judaism and Jewish Thought

Ph.D., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jewish Thought

Ellen Rothfeld (Linguistics and Languages)

Instructor, Hebrew

Keely Stauter-Halsted (History)

Associate Professor, European and European Jewish History

Ph.D., University of Michigan, History

Kenneth Waltzer (Director-Jewish Studies, James Madison College)

Professor, Urban, Immigrant, and Jewish History, History of Anti-Semitism

Ph.D., Harvard University, History

Steven Weiland (College of Education)
Professor, Higher Education
Ph.D., University of Chicago, English

AFFILIATED FACULTY

Iana Blumberg (James Madison College)
Assistant Professor of Humanities and Culture
Ph.D., U. of Pennsylvania, English

Steve Gold (Sociology)
Professor, Sociology
Ph.D., U. of California-Berkeley, Sociology

Lynne Goldstein (Anthropology)
Professor, Anthropology
Ph.D., Northwestern University, Anthropology

Mary Juzwik (Education)
Assistant Professor, Teacher Education
Ph.D., U. of Wisconsin-Madison, English

Michael Koppisch (French, Classics, Italian)
Professor, French
Ph.D., Johns Hopkins University, French

Anna Norris (French, Classics, Italian)
Associate Professor, French
Ph.D., University of Virginia, French

George Peters (Linguistics and Languages)
Professor, German
Ph. D., Stanford University, German

Steve Rachman (English)
Professor, English and American Literature
Ph. D., Yale University, English

Avner Segal (Education)
Associate Professor, Teacher Education
Ph.D., U. of British Columbia, Education

Eli Yassif (University of Tel Aviv)
Professor, Hebrew Literature and Folklore
Ph. D., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Hebrew Literature