

Jewish Studies Program

Fall Semester 2010



Michigan State University

College of Arts & Letters
301 Linton Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824-1044
Telephone: 517-432-3493
Fax: 517-355-4507
Web: www.jsp.msu.edu
E-mail: jewishst@msu.edu

Kenneth Waltzer, Director
Michael Serling, Chair, Advisory Board
Milo Woodard, Administrative Assistant

Note from the Director

We look forward to an active year in Jewish Studies. We are in a challenging moment in the evolution of our Jewish Studies Program at MSU. MSU General Fund support for the program and its activities has been diminishing. We are currently running more and more on private funds.

We are also in a challenging time in Michigan and in Michigan Jewish history. We stand at the front end of a long term structural economic decline in the state, affecting the university. At the same time, Michigan Jewry, our primary donor support base, is shrinking.

Simultaneously, there is, more than ever, the need for capable and balanced academic analysis and discussion about modern Jewish life and issues in the university. There is a renaissance of Jewish Studies in universities nationally. Many universities have created or grown vital new programs or strengthened old ones, even despite the times. We at MSU seek to hold our own in this impressive and creative company.

There is also, sad to say, a renaissance in anti-semitism globally. Intellectual and social currents are increasingly prominent in intellectual life that seek to distort or deny the history of the Jews in the 20th century, to relativize and diminish the Holocaust and question the legitimacy of a Jewish state in the Middle East. Once again, Jews are seen as a mythic transnational

political force manipulating governments, dominating media and shaping policy.

MSU Jewish Studies thus seeks in doing its work to take up all these challenges – to be a nationally recognized and vital program exploring Jewish life, history, and culture creatively, supporting excellent faculty scholarship, offering timely courses and an undergraduate academic specialization, and mentoring students who will contribute to scholarship and the community. We seek also to be a source of thoughtful analysis and consideration of the complex contributions of the Jews and Jewish civilization to our globalizing world and of balanced analysis on Jewish-related public issues.

It is a pleasure to note that our faculty continue to win awards reflecting national and local recognition. **Benjamin Pollock's** *Franz Rosenzweig and the Systematic Task of Philosophy*, published by Cambridge University Press, has been awarded the Salo Baron Prize for best first book in Jewish Studies. **Ilana Blumberg** was awarded the MSU Teacher-Scholar Award in 2010 and **Yael Aronoff** and **Eric Aronoff** are each nominated for the award in 2010.

It is also a pleasure to note the active schedule of events we have planned for the coming year. We have programmed around the theme of diversity in the Jewish diaspora and are also continuing our

emphasis on exploration of the two centers of Jewish life in the post-Holocaust Jewish world, Israel and North America.

Cooperating with MSU Global Studies, we will host the leading Jewish Studies scholar in China in November, Dr. **Xu Xin**, of Nanjing University to speak about Jewish life in China and explore Jewish Studies in China. We will also present that month Rabbi **Mark Glickman** to speak about "*The Cairo Genizah*," one of the greatest treasure troves of medieval Jewish manuscripts found in modern times. Yiddishkeit scholar **Anita Norich** from the U. of Michigan will speak in October on "*Yiddish and American Jewish Culture during the Holocaust*." And the Michael and Elaine Serling Lecture on Modern Israel will be presented by Professor **Robert O. Freedman** of Johns Hopkins U., speaking on "*From Bush to Obama: Changing Patterns of U.S. Policy in the Middle East*."

In spring we will show the new film, "*The Klezmatics: on Holy Ground*" in February as well as host the 6th annual Israeli Film Festival in March. And we will welcome famed Israeli writer **Etger Keret** for a special evening March 29 to be open to the wider mid-Michigan community at the Hannah Community Center in East Lansing.

- Continued on page 2.

5th Annual Michael & Elaine Serling Lecture on Modern Israel - Thursday, November 4



Dr. Robert O. Freedman of Johns Hopkins University will deliver the **Michael and Elaine Serling Modern Israel lecture**, on Thursday, November 4, 2010 at 7:00 pm in James Madison College, 334a-b Case Hall. He will speak on: "*From Bush to Obama: Changing Patterns in US Policy Toward the Middle East*." Freedman is the Peggy Meyerhoff Pearlstone Professor of Political Science Emeritus at Baltimore Hebrew University.

Special Guest Speaker: Dr. Xu, Xin Wednesday - Thursday, November 10 - 11



Dr. Xu Xin, head of the Glazer Judaic Studies Center at Nanjing University, will speak about "*Jewish Experience in China*" and about "*Jewish Studies in China*," Wednesday, November 10, 2010, 12:00 - 1:30 p.m., Room 321 Linton Hall and Thursday, November 11, 7 - 8:30 p.m., in Room 118 Psychology Building. This event is co-sponsored by Global Studies in the Arts and Humanities.

Note from the Director—Continued:

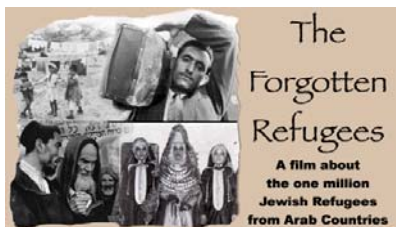
Our Daniel and Sarah Rabin Holocaust lecture will be delivered in April, 2011 by Professor **Alon Confino** of the University of Virginia, speaking on “*The Holocaust as Culture*,” exploring the German fantasy of a world devoid of Jews. We are also working with the special envoy and head of the Office for Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism in President Obama’s Executive Office, **Hannah Rosenthal**, for a visit to campus.

This summer, MSU Jewish Studies worked with the Office of Study Abroad to seek a grant to start an MSU Spring Semester Program at Hebrew University. As a result, MSU was awarded one of eight MASA Israel grants to expand study abroad in Israel. As you will see, MSU Jewish Studies has sent over one hundred students to study in Israel the past five years and sponsored 35 students in Israel this past summer, with most winning Julie and Ed Levy Jr. Scholarships for Study in Israel. Now, we hope to be part of a larger effort to send more students and from more places in the university and perhaps from other Big Ten universities for academic semester study commencing in spring 2012.

~Kenneth Waltzer, Director

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, October 13



“*The Forgotten Refugees*,” Michael Grynszpan, Director. The Kessler Film Lecture and Panel, MSU Library, Wed., Oct. 13, 2010, 7:00, MSU Library. This film focuses on the exodus of more

than a million Jews from Arab countries in North Africa and the Middle East during the 1950s-1960s. There will be a panel discussion with Jewish Studies faculty members Yael Aronoff, Safoi Babana-Hampton, and Kenneth Waltzer.

7:00 pm 4th Floor, MSU Library

Sunday, October 17

Jewish Studies-Hadassah Fall Brunch - “*A New Era in Jewish History?*”

Kenneth Waltzer, Director of Jewish Studies, will explore the surprising renaissance of anti-Semitism in the world in the recent period — including the new anti-Semitism that focuses on the Jewish state — and ask whether we are possibly entering a new era in Jewish history.

\$18 ticket (\$12 per student).

Please RSVP by October 11, (432-3493) and pay at door.

10:00 am-12:00 pm, MSU University Club (Ballroom)



Thursday, October 21

Anita Norich (U. of Michigan) will give the annual Yiddishkeit lecture on her recent study of Yiddish and American Jewish Culture during the 1930s and 1940s. Professor Norich’s *Discovering Exile* (2009) analyzes American Yiddish culture and its develop-



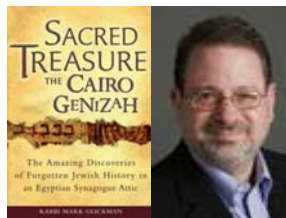
ment during the era of the Holocaust.

7:00 - 9:00 pm, 2nd Floor Honors College Lounge, Eustace-Cole Hall.

Monday, November 1

Rabbi Mark Glickman will speak about “*The Cairo Genizah*” one of the great treasure troves of Jewish medieval manuscripts to be discovered in modern times.

7:00 pm in Room 118 Psychology Building



Thursday, November 4

Dr. Robert O. Freedman of Johns Hopkins University will deliver the Michael and Elaine Serling Modern Israel lecture on: “*From Bush to Obama: Changing Patterns in U.S. Policy Toward the Middle East.*”

7:00 - 9:00 pm, James Madison College, 334a/b Case Hall



Wednesday - Thursday, November 10-11

Dr. Xu Xin, the leading Jewish Studies scholar in China, head of the Glazer Judaic Studies Center at Nanjing University, will speak about “*Jewish Experience in China*” on Thursday, November 11, 7:00 pm, 118 Psychology Building. He will also lead a faculty-student seminar on Wednesday, November 10, “*Jewish Studies in China*,” 12 - 1:30 pm, Dean’s Conference Room, 321 Linton Hall



Tuesday, November 16

Israeli Film Presentation: *Ladino: 500 Years Young* (2006)

This documentary follows the rise of internationally acclaimed Ladino singer Yasmin Levy. While developing her career, she rediscovers her late father, a revered Ladino singer who dedicated his life to recording and documenting old Ladino songs. Director: Rina Papis.

52 minutes. Hebrew, Ladino and Spanish, with English subtitles. Co-sponsored by the Department of Linguistics and Languages and the Lester & Jewell Morris Hillel Jewish Student Center. **FREE**

7:00-8:30 p.m., 147 Communication Arts and Sciences



MSU Jewish Studies Summer Programs in Israel, 2010

MSU Jewish Studies at Hebrew University's Rothberg School



Based at Hebrew University in the summer Israel Studies Institute of the Rothberg International School, our program with 20 MSU students combined interaction with Israeli scholars, activists, and citizens, and also intensive classroom study of Israeli history and Israeli politics. A key feature this summer was capitalizing on the many NGO's, academic think tanks, and other opportunities provided to a program that is sited in Jerusalem. Students also toured the Old City, saw the High Court and the Knesset in session, visited Yad Vashem, and wandered in the Israel Museum.

At the Israel Democracy Institute, students heard multiple viewpoints from Israeli scholars about the dilemmas involved in trying to maintain strong democratic values and protect human rights while effectively fighting terror. They heard arguments by Peace Now members critical of settlements and by a settler supporting settlements. At the same time, the students experienced the high drama that is daily life in Israel and Jerusalem, as – for example – tens of thousands of demonstrators converged on the Prime Minister's house to join Gilad Shalit's parents in demanding action to free their captive son.

During our four week program, we visited the Peres Center for Peace in Jaffa, and learned about many collaborative projects between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians. We heard Israeli public intellectual Gadi Taub talk about

Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. We also spoke with Robi Nathanson, Director of MACRO, a Tel Aviv think tank working on economic compensation plans for Palestinian refugees and for Jewish settlers in a future peace agreement. A key highlight was meeting with Israeli and Palestinian representatives of the Parents Circle (Israeli and Palestinian parents who have lost children to the conflict and who have given hundreds of talks at Israeli and Palestinian schools this past year combating negative stereotypes and promoting dialogue).

In their two classes, the students studied the development of Israel as a modern state and contemporary Israeli politics. They also explored Israeli political culture, conducted group research projects on Israeli parties, and did a simulated election. They created party platforms, debated Israeli domestic and foreign policy, and -- after the election -- tried to form a coalition government. They had fun and learned a lot about Israeli parties and Israel's parliamentary system in the process.

The program also included experiences in different regions of Israel. We spent a wonderful day in the South, starting with sunrise over Masada, and including hiking and swimming in Ein Gedi and the Dead Sea and a trip to Sderot. The head of security in Sderot showed us the different kinds of rockets that have hit the town. We also headed to the North and toured Casearia, had lunch with a Druze family in a Druze village, visited the Haifa Technion, where we learned about water desalinization projects and high tech innovation (including some projects Michigan is funding), and visited Tsfat. Our colleague David Mendelsson at Hebrew University said our students distinguished themselves in the Israel Studies Institute.

Yael Aronoff, James Madison College

Nature, Culture and Environmental Sustainability in Israel

The Green Israel study abroad program June 10-27, 2010 was an intellectual and physical adventure for everyone. The goal was for 15 students attending from several colleges at MSU to learn about and experience through a variety of hands-on activities as well as academic studies the role of nature and the environment in Israeli culture.

The group spent several days with faculty of Hebrew University and members of environmental NGOs learning about environmental issues of great concern, most notably water resource issues. We also examined how the current conflict impacts environmental issues in East and West Jerusalem, and learned of joint Israeli-Palestinian efforts to address shared environmental concerns.

We traveled to the Dead Sea and Ein Gedi, where we spent time with geologist, former head of the Field School, and member of Kibbutz En Gedi, Eli Raz. Dr. Raz introduced us to the ancient archeological history and unique flora and fauna of En Gedi, which form the context for current debates about nature preservation, development and resource distribution in the area. Dr. Raz is also an expert on the growing crisis facing the Dead Sea, and led us on a fascinating (and hair-raising) tour of the sinkhole fields that threaten the region as a result of the dropping water levels.

We then traveled south into the Arava Valley. We visited Eilat, where we learned about threats to, and efforts to protect, the coral reefs. We then spent several days living at the ecovillage Kibbutz Lotan, where we experienced that community's unique experiments with sustainable living, including organic gardening, alternative building techniques, grey water reclamation, and use of solar energy.

Students continued their desert experience by spending two days in Sde Boker, where they met with faculty of the Jacob Blaustein Institute for Desert Research. Students learned about modern experiments in desert agriculture (and aquaculture!) at the Institute and the Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael (KKL) Ashalim Research Station.

We completed our studies in the Upper Galilee where, with faculty in Environmental Science at Tel Chai College, and also members of the KKL, we learned about and worked on several projects. Students tended trails and fences in the national park in Tel Dan; they helped researchers conduct soil tests in the Biriya forest, assisting in reforestation strategies; and they learned about (and got muddy helping with) wetlands restoration in the Hula Nature Reserve.

Eric Aronoff, Residential College in the Arts and Humanities





College of Arts & Letters
301 Linton Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824-1044

Phone: 517-432-3493
Fax: 517-355-4507
Email: jewishst@msu.edu
www.jsp.msu.edu

MSU is an affirmative-action,
equal-opportunity institution.

Non Profit Org
US Postage
PAID
East Lansing, MI
Permit #21

Academic News

Eric Aronoff has recently joined Jewish Studies as an affiliated faculty member. He served as faculty leader of the successful MSU Nature, Culture, and Natural Resource/Environmental Sustainability in a Green Israel Program during summer 2010, with 15 students.

Yael Aronoff presented "Benjamin Netanyahu: Battling the World" at the Association for Israel Studies Annual Meeting in Toronto during May, 2010. She was faculty leader of the dynamic MSU Jewish Studies Summer Program at Hebrew University's Rothberg School summer 2010, with 20 students; and her essay "From Warfare to Withdrawal: The Legacy of Ariel Sharon," appeared in *Israel Studies* 15:2 (Summer 2010). Professor Aronoff will speak on "Negotiating the Negotiations," about the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks at Temple Israel, Sept. 20, 2010.

Marc Bernstein has returned from sabbatical at the University of California-San Diego during 2009-10. He is now a core faculty member in the Muslim Studies Program as well as in Jewish Studies at MSU. He presented on "The Story of Our Master Moses: Judeo-Arabic Minority Discourse" (in Hebrew) at the international conference of the Center for the Study of Jewish Languages and Literatures, at Hebrew University, in June, with support from the Special Foreign Travel Fund in MSU International Studies and Programs.

Kirsten Fermaglich was on maternity leave during spring 2010. She presented a paper on name-changing during World War II at the Organization for American Historians in Washington DC in April and chaired a panel on Jewish women in second-wave American feminism at the Biennial Scholars Conference in American Jewish History at the Center for Jewish History in New York in June.

Chris Frilingos' essay on "Early Christianity and the Discourse of Empire" appears on the academic web site, [Religion Compass](http://www.blackwell-compass.com/subject/religion/) | <http://www.blackwell-compass.com/subject/religion/>. Professor Frilingos was faculty adviser for JS specialist Shaun Spivak as part of the Undergraduate Research Initiative sponsored by Arts and Letters this past spring.

Steve Gold's book, *The Store in the Hood: A Century of Ethnic Business and Conflict* will appear this fall. He organized a session on "Immigration and

Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation" at the American Sociological Association meeting in Atlanta in August 2010.

David Mendelsson, who teaches in the MSU Jewish Studies' summer program at Hebrew University's Rothberg School, where he directs Israel Studies, has been named a Schusterman Visiting Professor of Israel Studies at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion/Los Angeles and at the University of Southern California for 2010-2011.

Anna Norris has an essay on Franco-Russian writer and Holocaust victim Irene Nemirovsky on Jewish self hatred in *Women in French Studies* (Spring 2010): "Guerre et identité juive: Irène Némirovsky et la haine de soi." Professor Norris will present a paper "Marceline Loridan-Ivens's film Birkenau, Birch Meadow: a Journey of Remembrance" on Holocaust survivor and film maker Marceline Loridan Ivens at the conference on filmmaking in France 2000-2010, the Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies at the University of London, UK, in December, 2010.

Benjamin Pollock's "Franz Rosenzweig's 'Oldest System-Program'" will appear this fall in *New German Critique*. In May, 2010, Benjamin presented "To Infinity and Beyond: Cohen and Rosenzweig on Compartment towards Redemption," at the Princeton University Tikvah Project on Jewish Thought. Professor Pollock is writing a book that retells the story of Franz Rosenzweig's near-conversion to Christianity and his return to Judaism. His first book on Franz Rosenzweig recently was awarded the Salo Baron Prize in Jewish Studies.

Kenneth Waltzer spoke on "The Rescue of Children and Youths at Buchenwald" at the Holocaust Centre in Melbourne, Australia, in March and at the Rosen Holocaust Symposium at Appalachian State in North Carolina in July 2010. He will speak at the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan November 9th. He was also a special guest at the 65th year liberation commemoration at Buchenwald in Germany in April where he worked with New York-based Bigfoot Productions on a forthcoming feature documentary film about *Kinderblock 66*. He will present "Schooling in a Concentration Camp" at the Association for Jewish Studies meeting in Boston in December.