

Jewish Studies Program

Fall Semester 2011



Michigan State University

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Note from the Director

We are in a challenging time. The Palestinian Authority, in search of a method beyond the failed Oslo Process to achieve an independent Palestinian state, is now seeking a declaration of statehood from the UN. The United States has announced it will veto any effort at membership at the UN Security Council and has urged the Palestinians to return to negotiations. The UN General Assembly, however, is expected to provide a clear majority on behalf of granting the Palestinians a lesser UN status as an observer state, like the Vatican.

This will change nothing on the ground in Israel or Palestine, as a declaration of statehood by the PLO in 1988 changed nothing; but it will provide Palestinians with improved access to international institutions like the International Criminal Court and will stir higher Palestinian expectations that will not be fulfilled in the short run. Should Israel respond badly to anticipated West Bank civil demonstrations or act unilaterally to block the flow of tax revenues or annex settlement blocs, things could escalate into a serious conflagration.

Saab Erekat offers the most radical view of Palestinian aspirations. According to him, the PA is seeking full membership of a Palestinian state in the UN on the basis of the 1967 borders with Jerusalem as its capital. If granted, Palestine will then be a "state" occupied by another member state. Any

future final status negotiations will hence be only over a timetable for Israeli withdrawal. Mahmoud Abbas, however, suggests that the Palestinians might return to negotiations. Hence, the Palestinian gambit is either to sidestep negotiations and inevitable hard choices over borders, security matters, refugees, and Jerusalem or it is to restart negotiations but in a leveraged, more favorable situation.

Because our mission in Jewish Studies is to explore all aspects of Jewish life and civilization, especially in the two centers of contemporary Jewish life, and this task includes presenting the Jewish state and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in all their complexities, we anticipate an important and contentious period ahead and have scheduled several events accordingly.

On September 13, 2011, we will host Mideast experts **David Makovsky** (Ziegler Distinguished Fellow, Washington Institute) and **Gaith al-Omari** (Executive Director, American Task Force on Palestine) to explore "*Israeli-Palestinian Peace Prospects: What Comes Next?*" This is part of a national initiative supported by the Israel On-Campus Coalition and Real Partners, Real Peace to offer balanced discussions at this new juncture. The panel discussion sponsored by Jewish Studies and Hillel will be broadcast on a national streaming internet connection at WKAR and will be visible all fall at

<http://video.wkar.org/video/2130958621>. Other events are occurring at Brandeis, Case Western and Oberlin, and the U. of California-Berkeley and Stanford.

On October 25, 2011, we will host the first Michigan showing of a new documentary by **Allen Snitow** and **Deborah Kaufman**, called "*Between Two Worlds*," which explores the divisions among American Jewry over Israel that are redefining contemporary Jewish identity and politics. As in their previous film, "*Blacks and Jews*," Snitow and Kauffman offer a sensitive analysis of a complex topic and will visit to discuss their film. This is our Kessler lecture planned jointly with the MSU library.

Finally, on November 8, we will host as speaker for the Serling Modern Israel lecture **Gershom Gorenberg**, former winner of a National Jewish Book Award, whose new book *The Unmaking of Israel* appears that same day from HarperCollins. This American-born Israeli is the former associate editor of the Jerusalem Report and will speak on "*The Making/Unmaking of Israel*." Gorenberg argues Israel is distinctive among post-colonialist states as a functioning parliamentary democracy with civil rights for all. But the Israel built before 1967 is endangered since then by a new alliance of state, settlements, and synagogue that threatens Israeli democracy.

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Telling Family Stories: Jews, Genealogy, History Sunday, October 16

Jewish Studies-Hadassah Fall Brunch
"*Jewish Genealogy in the 21st Century*"
10:00 am-12:00 noon, MSU University Club



Sallyann Amdur Sack, Editor-*Avotaynu*, the Journal of Jewish Genealogy, and the leading Jewish genealogist in North America. Sallyann Amdur Sack will also speak to members of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Michigan at the West Bloomfield Public Library, 4600 Walnut Lake Road, West Bloomfield Township on Sunday afternoon Oct. 16, 2011 at 5:00 pm.

6th Annual Michael & Elaine Serling Lecture on Modern Israel - Tuesday, November 8



Author **Gershom Gorenberg** will deliver the Michael and Elaine Serling Modern Israel lecture, at 7:30 pm in Wonders Kiva, MSU. He will speak on: "*The Making/Unmaking of Israel*."

Gershom Gorenberg is the author of *The Unmaking of Israel* (2011), *The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements 1967-1977* (2006); and *The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount* (2000). He is American born (St Louis), California-educated (Santa Cruz), and an Orthodox Jew who made aliyah in 1977. He writes regularly for the *American Prospect* on Israel.

Note from the Director—Continued:

In addition to these Israel-focused events, we are proud that with leadership from **Kirsten Fernaglich** we have received a **Legacy Heritage Grant** from the Association of Jewish Studies to sponsor public programming this year on the theme of “*Telling Family Stories: Jews, Genealogy, and History.*” We will host the leading Jewish genealogist in North America, **Sallyann Sack**, who will speak twice on Sunday October 16 on “*Jewish Genealogy in the 21st Century*” – first at the Jewish Studies/Hadassah Fall Brunch in East Lansing, and then later that afternoon at the West Bloomfield Public Library. Also as part of this initiative, we will host the outstanding and well-known novelist, **Faye Moskowitz**, who will speak on “*Jewish Families in Fiction and Autobiography,*” on November 10, at Schuler’s Bookstore in the Eastwood Mall.

Last, but hardly least, our annual Yiddishkeit lecture will be delivered on October 19, by **Rebecca Margolis** from the University of Ottawa in Canada. Professor Margolis will speak on “*Passing Language and Culture Across Generations: The Example of Yiddish.*”

~Kenneth Waltzer, Director

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, September 13

“Israeli-Palestinian Peace Prospects: What Comes Next?”

Jewish Studies/Panel Discussion – Palestinian Declaration at the UN Israel on Campus Coalition and Real Partners-Real Peace. David Makovsky and Gaith al-Omari model how to discuss the prospects for Israeli Palestinian peace civilly, with respect.

7:30-9:00 pm, 145 Communication Arts & Sciences



Tuesday, September 20

“Business and Entrepreneurship in Israel”

Mark Davidoff leads a discussion based on his recent trip to Israel with a group of Michigan legislators to explore business links and opportunities. Davidoff will also help promote the new MSU Semester in Jerusalem Program. Representative Peter MacGregor, Rockford, MI, will speak as well.

7:00-8:30pm, 115 Eppley,
Eli Broad College



Sunday, October 16

Jewish Studies-Hadassah Fall Brunch - “*Jewish Genealogy in the 21st Century*” Sallyann Amdur Sack, Editor of *Avotaynu*, the Journal of Jewish Genealogy, will speak as part of the *Telling Family Stories Initiative: Jews, Genealogy, History.*

\$18 ticket (\$12 per student). Please RSVP by October 10, (432-3493) and pay at door.

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



Wednesday, October 19

Rebecca Margolis (U. of Ottawa) will give the annual Yiddishkeit lecture on her recent work, “*Passing Language and Culture Across the Generations: The Example of Yiddish.*”

7:00-8:30 pm, Green Room, MSU Union



Tuesday, October 25



Filmmakers **Alan Snitow** and **Deborah Kauffman** will bring their new film “*Between Two Worlds*” to be viewed and discussed at this year’s Kessler Film Lecture. Filmed in Israel and the U.S., the documentary explores the divisions among Jews that are redefining contemporary Jewish identity and politics.

7:00-8:30 pm, MSU Library, 4th Floor

Monday, November 7

Samuel Moyn, Professor of History at Columbia University will lead a round table discussion on his 2010 work *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History.*

1:00-2:30 pm, 304 International Center



Tuesday, November 8



Serling Modern Israel Lecture, given by **Gershom Gorenberg**, will examine “*The Making/Unmaking of Israel.*” Copies of his most recent work, *The Unmaking of Israel*, (HarperCollins) will be on sale.

7:30-9:00 pm, Wonders Kiva, MSU

Thursday, November 10

Faye Moskowitz, Professor of English at The George Washington University will speak on “*Jewish Families in Fiction and Autobiography*” as part of the *Telling Family Stories Initiative: Jews, Genealogy, History*

7:00 pm, Schuler’s Bookstore, Eastwood Mall, 3003 Preyde Blvd. Lansing



Thursday, November 17

Fall Semester Israeli Film Series: *Bruriah* (2008)



Bruriah and her husband, Rabbi Meir, lived in the second century, when the Rabbis declared that women are *light-minded*. *Bruriah* mocked their statement. Rabbi Meir then sent one of his students to seduce her.

The film explores the lives of a religious couple in Jerusalem in 2008.

7:00-9:00 pm, 147 Communication Arts Building

MSU Jewish Studies Summer Program in Israel, 2011

MSU Jewish Studies at Hebrew University's Rothberg School



Michigan State students have just returned from the 2011 MSU Jewish Studies Summer Abroad program at Hebrew University. Their unique educational experience included courses on “The Emergence of the State of Israel” and “Jerusalem’s Religions.”

My course explored Jewish, Christian, and Muslim accounts of the sacredness of Jerusalem. We sought to understand what it means for a particular spot on earth to be labeled “sacred,” and examined the political underpinnings and political ramifications of ancient and contemporary claims about Jerusalem’s sacredness.

Our first week of study brought Ancient Jerusalem to life through a number of site explorations. We visited the excavations of the City of David and examined the early religious significance of Solomon’s Temple as a place in which the Israelite God could “dwell.” We toured the extensive archeological remains of the Second Temple in the Old City. We embarked on a full-day excursion to the Dead Sea area, visiting Qumran and Masada, and discussing the diversity of Judaism that thrived during the late Second-Temple period.

Our second week focused on the different meanings of Jerusalem within early Christianity. We spent an extraordinary day touring

Christian sites in and around the Old City, beginning on Mt. Zion, following the Via Dolorosa, and then exploring the intricacies of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. We reflected upon the distinction in all three religious traditions – within Christianity in particular – between *actual* Jerusalem and a *heavenly* Jerusalem. We traveled to Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee, as well as the hill-top excavations of Tsippori.

During the third week, we studied the earliest Islamic traditions regarding Jerusalem’s sacredness, rooted in part in accounts of Muhammad’s Night Journey to “the distant mosque”. Our explorations took us to the Haram al-Sharif, home to the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque. We met with a local Muslim woman in the Muslim quarter of the Old City, who described her experiences growing up in Jerusalem, and shared her views about the city’s future.

The final week we focused on the complexities of contemporary Jerusalem. We visited the Israel Democracy Institute. We met the leaders of the Interfaith Encounter Association. Perhaps our most eye-opening experience came when we met with members of the Sheikh-Jarrah Solidarity Movement, which protests government policy regarding East Jerusalem. We were taken to view the partition wall that divides Abu Dis on the eastern outskirts of the city, and we met with the president of the Palestinian Youth Parliament. The leaders of the Solidarity movement presented an important perspective on the divisions and civil inequalities of contemporary Jerusalem, and suggested that only united political action between Israelis and Palestinians will bring about a healthier present-day reality.

In all, this was an extremely intense and valuable learning experience for our students, who did a fine job representing MSU abroad.

-Benjamin Pollock, Religious Studies

Student Views:

“I have returned from this study journey with a strong understanding of the three main monotheistic religions and the development of Israel, the Jewish homeland. I have been truly enriched by the excellent teachers, my peers who joined me on this learning expedition, and through the wonderful excursions.” **-Rachel Klisman**

“Studying abroad in Israel was one of the most educationally rewarding experiences of my life. Prior to the trip I was under the impression that Israel, Jerusalem in particular, was a place controlled by conflict..... But I found living in Jerusalem that this place ... is also a peaceful city.... Being able to sit down and hear the stories of people such as Nalah and the students in the interfaith groups made me realize that regardless of the side you are on, everyone wants the same thing....” **-Shannon Riley**

“The time I spent in Israel was honestly, by far, the most monumental and life-changing experience that I’ve ever had....”

“Our group went on a field experience trip to the Ecce Homo convent in the Christian Quarter, where we met and had a round table discussion with a Palestinian Muslim woman ... This meeting with this woman was probably the highlight of my trip. She was so insightful and brilliant and such a lovely woman....”

“I would not change my experience in Israel for anything. I have grown so much and gained so much from my academic and personal experiences. In honesty, this trip has changed me for the better as a student and a person and I hope to return. I plan ... to return to Israel and further my education. It has enhanced my interest in pursuing an academic track in conflict resolution, governance and security studies.”

-Helena Bentley

“From the Mount of Olives, I could see the two cities – the divine city and the real city -- spread out in front of me. To the west stood the Haram al-Shariff and below it the Kotel. Just further out stood the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with its distinct grey domes. Within my gaze were arguably the three most holy places in the city: perhaps the world.”

“And yet it wasn’t those holy sites that caught my attention. Instead it was the poverty in east Jerusalem and the lack of equitable infrastructure. Here, on the oldest cemetery in the world, the two Jerusalems seemed to clash.”

“I don’t know what the solution is. Perhaps it’s better integration, better unification or even better cooperation. What I do know is that the status-quo cannot remain. In this region, it never has and it undoubtedly never will....” **-Jake Satin**

“...the people of Jerusalem are entrenched in their differences .. [so] that [little or] no positive political change or compromise will be pursued. The Muslim woman we spoke with, for example, had such positive and peaceful views on how people should interact with each other, yet refused to pay any attention to politics. The inter-faith group we spoke with had the same manner of side-stepping the critical issue of politics. Perhaps because I come from America, where the mentality is if you don’t like something you should take action to change it, I am more optimistic about the prospect of peace. I truly believe that in order to solve the problem you must be part of the solution. “

-Hannah Wilson



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Academic News

Yael Aronoff presented "*Asymmetric Conflict: New Dilemmas of Protracted Warfare*," at the Association for Israel Studies Annual Meeting, Waltham, MA, in June 2011. Yael is now the book review editor for *Israel Studies Review*. During this summer, Professor Aronoff spoke to the Institute for Retired Professionals, in Detroit, on "*Israeli Foreign Policy in a Changing Middle East*;" she also briefed the Board of the Metropolitan Jewish Federation on "*Israel in a Changing Middle East*."

Marc Bernstein presented "*Qissat Moshe Rabenu ve-sha'are gan eden ve-gehinom: An Early-20th Century Judeo-Arabic Yemenite Adaptation of Moses' Ascension to the Seven Heavens and His Visit to Gehenna and the Garden of Eden*" at the Society for Judaeo-Arabic Studies in Cambridge, England. He also presented "*On the Revival of Hebrew: Linguistic and Ideological Tensions in 'The Sermon' by Hayim Hazaz*" at the National Association of Professors of Hebrew meeting at College Park MD. In spring, he moderated "*Is Reality Overrated: A Talk With Etgar Keret*" during Keret's visit to MSU.

Ilana Blumberg achieved tenure and promotion to Associate Professor this past spring in James Madison College at MSU. This summer she completed a book manuscript *Victorian Sacrifice: Ethics and Economics in Mid- 19th Century Novels*. Professor Blumberg will lecture at the University of Michigan this fall on "*Women and the Bible*."

Kirsten Fermaglich co-organized the MSU-CIC Midcareer Faculty Workshop on Race and Ethnicity in the United States at MSU this summer. She presented a paper on name-changing and anti-semitism at the conference and also at the National Museum for American Jewish History in Philadelphia in June. This fall, Kirsten is directing a Legacy Heritage grant to Jewish Studies from the Association for Jewish Studies called "*Telling Family Stories*," a yearlong programming initiative on Jews, genealogy, and history. A chapter she wrote on "*American Jewish Name Changing After the Holocaust, 1939-57*" will appear in *Challenging the Myth of Silence*, eds. David Cesarani and Eric Sundquist, this fall.

Chris Frilingos has completed a paper on "*More Than Meets the Eye: Josephus and the Trauma of the Roman Triumph*," for a special theme issue of the journal *The History of Religions*. Jewish Studies specialist and Religious Studies major Sean Spivak worked with Professor Frilingos in his research.

Steve Gold published "*Israeli Jewish Immigrants*" in *Multicultural America: An Encyclopedia of the Newest Americans* edited by Ron Bayor, Santa Barbara,

CA: Greenwood Press, 2011, pp. 1149-1187. His article, "*Sebastião Salgado and Visual Sociology*," has appeared in a special issue of *Sociological Forum* 26:2 (June, 2011), pp. 418-423.

Anna Norris' essay: "*The Shoah in Contemporary Women's Filmmaking: Revisiting Personal Memories and Collective History in A Birch Tree Meadow and The Round Up*" will be published in *Studies in French Cinema*. This fall, Professor Norris will present "*Cinema and the Holocaust: Can One Represent the Shoah in a Comedy?*" at the International Colloquium on Transgressions at the Centre Interdisciplinaire d'Étude des Littératures at the Université de Marseille-Aix-en-Provence in France.

George Peters will present at the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG) and the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) in Denver CO in November 2011 on "*Reading Jewish Berlin Today*." In a presentation accompanied by images of sites associated with the Jews in Berlin, Peters will ask what possible meanings can be read today from the visual evidence of the complex history of Jews and Judaism in Germany's capitol.

Benjamin Pollock presented his current research in three different contexts this summer: a paper on "*System and Metalogic: Franz Rosenzweig's Debt to Hans Ehrenberg*," at a conference in Zurich; a paper entitled "*What Makes a Good Witness? Rosenzweig's Argument /per miraculum/*" at a workshop on Post-Kantian Jewish Philosophy in Toronto; and a paper "*To Infinity and Beyond: Cohen and Rosenzweig on Comportment towards Redemption*" at a Tikvah Workshop on Messianism at Princeton University. Benjamin will speak at Boston University in October on "*World-Denial and World Redemption: Rosenzweig's Early Marcionism*". His article, "*On the Road to Marcionism: Franz Rosenzweig's Early Theology*" will appear in *Jewish Quarterly Review* in Winter 2012.

Kenneth Waltzer presented "*Rescue of Children and Youths at Buchenwald*" at the 10th Annual Martin and Doris Rosen Symposium on the Holocaust at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC in July 2011 and at the 14th International Association of Yiddish Clubs Conference in Detroit in August. He also began work on an imagined history based on a true story about a family in Sokolowka, near Brody, in Eastern Galicia (Poland) between the wars. Reuven Dachs, a former Austrian imperial cavalry officer, was a general merchant and farmer whom his Ukrainian neighbors called, "*The Vicar of the Jews*." Nonetheless, the neighbors killed him and others on the first day of the Nazi invasion in June 1941.