

# Jewish Studies Program

Spring Semester 2010



Michigan State University

College of Arts & Letters  
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*Kenneth Waltzer, Director*  
*Michael Serling, Chair, Advisory Board*  
*Milo Woodard, Administrative Assistant*

## Note from the Director: A Decade of Change

We are at the beginning of a new decade in the new century. It is appropriate to take note of several changes in Jewish life and circumstances in the previous decade.

In global perspective, Israel passed the United States as the largest center of Jewish demographic concentration. Israel and the U.S. continue to be the two key centers of contemporary Jewish life, with above 80% of world Jewry.

In Israel, right wing aspirations for a Greater Israel died. Real possibilities for a two state solution also became shaky. The Oslo peace process went kaput. Some progress was made briefly, with Israeli prime ministers, Fatah, and American presidents talking about a two-state solution, the division of Jerusalem, and land swaps around the '67 borders. Yet the reality is that any renewed peace process must confront the growing isolation between Israel and the Palestinians, the continued growth of settlements by Israelis, the radical disunity among the Palestinians, and the spreading Islamicization of the conflict.

Israel continues a marvel of economic development, foreign high tech investment, and home-grown research inventiveness. Israeli soccer, tennis, wrestling, and paragliding competes with the world. Israel is also a society in which divisions deepen and harden, inequality widens, schools fail, and gaps between the

secular, the ultra-religious, most Arab citizens, and Bedouins continue to grow.

In Europe and the Middle East, anti-Semitism is undergoing a renaissance. Sixty-five years after the end of World War II and the liberation of the camps, anti-semitism is on the rise and must be watched and monitored as a contemporary public issue.

As in the past, anti-semitism sometimes comes from the right, but it also now comes from parts of the left, merging with anti-Zionism. Anti-racists now speak racist lines while decrying alleged Jewish and Israeli racism. The rhetoric of inversion is widespread – Jews/Israelis are not victims; they stand accused as Nazis, colonizers, or backers of apartheid.

In the U. S., in contrast with Europe and the Middle East, anti-Semitism continues on the decline. Levels of anti-Semitism are at the lowest recorded amounts in the postwar – although recent shootings in Seattle and at the Holocaust Museum underwrite continued community vigilance. Recent writings by former President Carter and scholars Mearsheimer and Walt leave the community standing accused of excessive influence and power, and there is rising criticisms of Israel, the latent boycott movement, and more on American campuses.

In the U.S. and Israel, there is a renaissance of Jewish culture -- veteran Jewish writers continue to write (e.g., Philip Roth, Amos Oz, David Grossman, and others), while new ones

make novel appearances (e.g., Michael Chabon, Dara Horn). The Jewish *Forward* splendidly covers American Jewish cultural life (and will soon announce a cooperative venture with *Haaretz* in Israel) while the *Tablet* highlights exciting new developments in print, film, the arts, music, and other media.

In Europe, Jewish intellectuals fight back against the rising tide of the new anti-semitism, and in England, France, and Germany contribute importantly to the discussion of liberal tolerance and cosmopolitanism amidst a growing Muslim presence.

In all of this, global Jewish life enters a new era. We are long after the great migration, which brought millions from Eastern Europe to America and elsewhere, populating immigrant ghettos and secondary areas of settlement. We are long after the Holocaust which dried up the wells of continued migration and diminished the presence of Jews in Europe.

In this new century, we face reality where we are, in the two key centers and a few additional diaspora pockets, and we face it either as minorities in multicultural majority states and societies or as a majority in a Jewish state and society in a tough neighborhood. These are matters we think about in Jewish Studies and concerning which we provide our students opportunities to study

~ Kenneth Waltzer, Director

### 18th Annual David & Sarah Rabin Lecture on the Holocaust

Monday, April 19

Dr. Omer Bartov

John P. Birkelund Distinguished Professor of European History at Brown University

*"Genocide in a Multiethnic Town: Event, Origins, Aftermath"*

7:00-9:00 pm, Kellogg Center, Lincoln Room

Prof. Bartov advocates a new direction in Holocaust scholarship, going beyond the traditional German-Jewish binary to reconstruct history in Eastern Europe in its local and regional contexts. In this lecture, Professor Bartov will explore the Holocaust in Buczacz, a town of Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians in Eastern Galicia.

This year, we begin a partnership with the Holocaust Memorial Center in Farmington Hills, where the same lecture will be given Tuesday, April 20, kicking off a series around the theme *"New Directions in Study of the Holocaust."*



### 4th Annual Michael & Elaine Serling Lecture on Modern Israel

Monday, March 1

Dr. Derek J. Penslar

Samuel Zacks Professor of Jewish History at the U. of Toronto

*"Israeli History: Between Myth and Counter-Myth"*

7:00-9:00 p.m., Club Spartan Room, 3rd Floor Case Hall



Dr. Penslar will also speak at a Faculty-Student Brown Bag Seminar earlier in the day, on

*"The Jewish Soldier in Jewish Memory"*

12:00-1:30 pm, 321 Linton Hall  
(bagels served)

## Upcoming Events

### Wednesday, February 10

Faculty-Student Brown Bag Seminar

#### Benjamin Pollock

Asst Prof., Religious Studies, MSU

**"Soul and World: Rethinking Franz Rosenzweig's Conversion."**

12:00-1:30 pm, 321 Linton Hall

(bagels served)



### Wednesday, February 17

Stanley & Selma Hollander Lecture on Jewish Music and Art

#### Dr. Naomi Feuchtwanger-Sarig

Department of Art History, Tel Aviv U.

Project Coordinator, Jewish Art and

Visual Culture Research Project, Gold-

stein-Goren Diaspora Research Center,

Tel Aviv U., and Visiting Fellow,

Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, U.

of Michigan

**"Re-Inventing Jewish Identity: Modern Jewish Art"**

7:00 to 8:30 pm in Kresge Art

Museum; cosponsored by the

Department of Art & Art History

and the Kresge Museum



Photo credit: D.C. Goings

### Monday, March 1

Faculty-Student Brown Bag Seminar

#### Dr. Derek, J. Penslar

Samuel Zacks Professor of Jewish

History at the U. of Toronto

**"The Jewish Soldier in Jewish Memory"**

12:00-1:30 pm, 321 Linton Hall

(bagels served)



### Monday, March 1

The Fourth Annual Michael & Elaine Serling Lecture on Modern Israel

#### Dr. Derek J. Penslar

Samuel Zacks Professor of Jewish

History at the U. of Toronto

**"Israeli History: Between Myth and Counter-Myth"**

7:00-9:00 p.m., Club Spartan room, 3rd Floor Case Hall

### Tuesday, March 16

Faculty-Student Brown Bag Seminar

#### Keren McGinity

Mandell L. Berman Post-Doctoral

Research Fellow-Frankel Center for

Judaic Studies, U. Michigan.

**"Men Who Married 'Out': Jewish Intermarriage in A Sub-community"**

12:00-1:30 pm, 321 Linton Hall

(bagels served)

Co-sponsored by the MSU Center for

Gender in Global Context



### Sunday & Monday, March 21-22

Fifth Annual MSU Israeli Film Festival

147 Communications Arts & Sciences

Sunday

1:00 pm. "Menachem and Fred" Free

3:00 "Zefira - Queen of Sheinkin Street" Free

4:00 "Srugim" (2 25-min. episodes) Free

5:30 Catered Meal by Woody's

6:30 "It All Begins at Sea" Adults \$5, Seniors \$3, Students free.

Monday

7:00 "Lemon Tree" Free

See Film Festival insert for more details.



### Wednesday, March 24

Faculty-Staff Brown Bag Seminar

#### Chris Frilingos

Assoc. Prof., Religious Studies, MSU

**"Josephus and the Trauma of the Roman Triumph"**

12:00-1:30 pm, 321 Linton Hall

(bagels served)



### Monday April 19

18th Annual David & Sarah Rabin Lecture on the Holocaust

#### Omer Bartov

Birkelund Distinguished Professor of European History at Brown University

**"Genocide in a Multiethnic Town: Event, Origins, Aftermath"**

7:00 pm, Kellogg Center, Lincoln Room

This lecture will be repeated at the Holocaust Memorial Center located in Farmington Hills on Tuesday, April 20.



### "Yoo Hoo Mrs. Goldberg" East Lansing Film Society

The East Lansing Film

Society is showing the documentary,

**"Yoo Hoo Mrs. Goldberg."**

Friday, Saturday, Sunday, February

12,13,14 at 7pm & 9:15pm, Wells Hall,

MSU campus and on Tuesday, Wednes-

day, February 16, 17, 7:30pm at the East

Lansing Hannah Community Center, 819

Abbot Road at Burcham,

East Lansing.

From Aviva Kempner, maker of *The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg*,

comes this humorous and eye-opening story of television pioneer

Gertrude Berg. She was the creator, principal writer, and star of *The*

*Goldbergs*, a popular radio show for 17 years, which became television's

very first character-driven domestic sitcom in 1949. Berg received the

first Best Actress Emmy in history, and paved the way for women in the

entertainment industry. The film Includes interviews with Supreme

Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, actor Ed Asner, producers Norman

Lear (*All in the Family*) and Gary David Goldberg (*Family Ties*), and

NPR correspondent Susan Stamberg.



## Updates from Jewish Studies Specialists

In fall 2009, I interned at the US Embassy in Tel Aviv for the Commercial Service, a division of the Department of Commerce and International Trade Administration. This helps American businesses export to and do business in Israel.

Every day offered a new challenge. A delegation of Michigan businesses and local government officials visited. I accompanied the President of Lawrence Technological University to meetings with Israeli university presidents. At the 2009 Israel Gateway International Trade Conference, I represented the United States.

In addition, I completed an important project for Investment in America, which is the primary US mechanism to manage foreign investment promotion. I worked with the director to create a database based on contact with international trade representatives in each state. This informs prospective investors about foreign investment incentives. It will be published on the Investment in America website and all Commercial Service websites.

I also attended joint meetings between the Commercial Service and the State Department and events sponsored by the Israel-America Chamber of Commerce.

Having a Levy Scholarship for Students Studying in Israel made this internship possible. The internship was vital part of my dual academic program in James Madison College (International Relations) and in the Eli Broad College of Business (Finance). I also have specializations in Jewish Studies and in International Business.

Because of my study abroad experience in Jewish Studies at Hebrew University in Summer 2008, I knew I wanted to return to Israel and pursue a career involving the economic relationship between the US and Israel. These two academic experiences have developed my passion for Israel. I am very grateful for the Jewish Studies Program and Levy Endowment for helping me to pursue these opportunities.

**Marissa Tons**



My summer at *The Jerusalem Post* in Jerusalem was a priceless experience I will never forget. Being an international relations and journalism major with a Jewish studies specialization, the job of reporting intern at the most widely read English publication in the Middle East was something I had long dreamed about but never really thought was attainable. I got a taste of where I could be headed with my career, but most people don't start out where they want to end up. I got to do that at *The Jerusalem Post*.

The best thing about the internship was I got to cover issues and events that really matter to me. I have focused all my studies in James Madison College on the Middle East, specifically Israel. I truly believe that if we can solve the problems in the Middle East that peace will be much easier to obtain. That is why it was so easy to bury myself in my work and to fall in love with this internship. I want to cover Middle Eastern affairs and I couldn't believe I had the opportunity to do it at such a young age, even if it was brief.

I felt a greater sense of responsibility on this job than any other because people all over the world read *The Jerusalem Post* and the issues and events the newspaper covers are important. I reported on a poll commissioned by *The Jerusalem Post* that revealed Israelis do not agree with Palestinian sovereignty, which was an important discovery about Israeli public opinion during intense talks between Israel and the United States. Many blogs and other news sources picked up the story and it became very clear that the job I had and what I did affected a lot of people.

There is no doubt in my mind that I am now a much better journalist after my field experience at *The Jerusalem Post*, an experience that wouldn't have been possible without the funding I received from the Levy Scholarship for Student Leaders Studying in Israel and the Slade Scholarship. Much of the learning occurred in areas other than the daily grind of journalism, and I think my biggest leap came with becoming more independent. I struggled to adjust to Israel, but not when I was on the job. If I was told to be some place at some time, I would get there no matter what and I would have the story in well before deadline. I got a lot of confidence through this independence and felt a great amount of gratitude for my editors who were so comfortable with sending me out on assignment like a real reporter.

**Zack Colman**



## MSU Study Abroad Opportunities in Israel Summer 2010

### 2010 MSU Jewish Studies Summer Program at Hebrew University in Jerusalem

This program at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem offers students the opportunity to earn eight credits in the arts and humanities or social sciences while living and studying in Jerusalem. This program is designed for students interested in learning first-hand about the history, society, and culture of Israel. The program is 5 weeks (June 27-July 27, 2010) and the deadline is March 1, 2010. For more information contact Dr. Yael Aronoff, 2010 Program Director at 517-884-1275 or E-mail: aronoffy@msu.edu.



### Nature, Culture and Environmental/Natural Resource Sustainability in a Green Israel

This study abroad program is designed to take advantage of experiential/service learning opportunities in Israel focused on sustainable development and environmental stewardship. Students will learn about environmental policy, natural resource management, and more broadly examine the intersection of culture, politics and the environment in the Israeli context. The Summer 2010 program will be June 10-27, 2010. The deadline is March 1, 2010. For more information contact Dr. Eric Aronoff (2010 Program Leader) at 517-884-1320 or e-mail aronoffe@msu.edu.





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## Academic News

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**Yael Aronoff** will be presenting a paper on "Benjamin Netanyahu: Battling the World" at the Association for Israel Studies Conference in Toronto in May 2010.

**Marc Bernstein** is on sabbatical leave 2009-10 at UC-San Diego. He will present a paper on the Judeo-Arabic "Story of Our Master Moses" as a model of minority discourse at the Fourth International Conference of the Center for the Study of Jewish Languages and Literatures, in June, 2010 at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

**Chaya Gordon-Bland** has joined Jewish Studies as an affiliated faculty member. In September, she presented on "Tipping the Scales of Sympathy: Shylock takes Manhattan" at the British Shakespeare Association's international conference in London. For MSU's Department of Theatre she directed the U.S. premiere of Joanna McClelland Glass' *Palmer Park* at MSU in October. She will attend a teacher training conference on the Michael Chekhov acting technique at the National University of Ireland in Galway in January.

**Ilana Blumberg** was nominated by James Madison College and will receive the MSU Teacher-Scholar Award in February. Her work teaching creative writing at Bar-Ilan University in Israel was covered by a feature story in *The Jerusalem Report*, "Nurturing the Creative Spark," November 23, 2009.

**Kirsten Fermaglich** published "Mel Brooks' The Producers: Tracing American Jewish Culture Through Comedy, 1967-2007" in *American Studies* last semester. She also presented a paper on name changing-"Becoming Someone Else: Jewish Name-changing, Employment and Class Mobility in Mid-Twentieth Century New York City" at the "Our Daily Work/Our Daily Lives" seminar on campus in November. She is on maternity leave during Spring 2010.

**Chris Frilingos's** article, "It Moves Me to Wonder": Narrating Violence and Religion under the Roman Empire," will appear in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 77 (2009) 825-852.

**Steve Gold** (with Rona Hart) published "Transnational Ties During a Time of Crisis: Israeli Emigration, 2000 to 2004," in *International Migration* (2009).

**Mary Juzwik's** book, *The Rhetoric of Teaching: Understanding the Dynamics of Holocaust Narratives in an English Classroom*, appeared this fall: (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2009).

**Michael Koppisch's** essay, "Buchenwald, Books, and the Identity of the Intellectual in the Works of Jorge Semprun," appeared in *Papers on Language and Literature*, 45:4 (Fall 2009).

**Benjamin Pollock** presented a paper at the University of Toronto in October, entitled "Soul and World: Rethinking Rosenzweig's Conversions," and then presented at the AJS annual conference in LA in December on "The Best Path to Marcionism': Rosenzweig's Conversions Reconsidered." During 2009-10, Benjamin will attend three research workshops as part of a working group on "Messianism" at Princeton University's "Tikvah Project on Jewish Thought." Benjamin's first book, *Franz Rosenzweig and the Systematic Task of Philosophy*, appeared in March 2009 from Cambridge U. Press.

**Ellen Rothfeld** has been supported by the College of Arts and Letters to participate in its Teaching Commons. This group meets through the academic year, and focuses on "the interplay between improving educational quality and inclusion efforts in a complex, globally connected world."

**Keely Stauter-Halsted** is currently serving as the interim director of the Department of History at Michigan State University,.

**Ken Waltzer** chaired a panel on "Working with Survivor Testimonies" and delivered a paper on "The Lived History of KZ Schlieben: A Buchenwald *Aussenlager*" at the Association for Jewish Studies in LA in December. He also headed a panel entitled "Inversions: The Radical Critique of Israel," on the new anti-semitism, which has been requested for publication in *Israel Studies* in 2010. Ken has received an invitation to lecture in Australia in March connected with his work on Buchenwald and will be attending the 65th liberation ceremonies at Buchenwald in April.

**Eli Yassif's** book, *Safed as Myth: Reality and Fantasy in 16th Century Safed*, to be published in 2010, has been awarded the highest Israeli prize, the Bahat Prize, for an academic book. Eli wrote the book in large chunks teaching in Jewish Studies at MSU during successive summers.