

Jewish Studies Program

Fall Semester 2007

Michigan State University

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A Note From the Director

There is unease in Jewish life today. “Jews face a gathering storm,” former Canadian justice minister Irwin Cotler told a conference on the Jewish future this summer. The coming nuclear power of Iran, spreading Islamic radicalism, ongoing terror, the overstretch of American power, an increase in global anti-Semitism, growing illiberalism in the left, recycled fantasies about Jewish power – these are all contemporary realities. To better comprehend such matters will shape some of our events this year.

This fall, we will host **David Hirsh** of Goldsmith’s College, the University of London, who is an active leader of the anti-anti-Israel boycott movement in British labor. Hirsh worries that understandings about Israel as “a unique and radical evil” are becoming increasingly mainstream in Britain and Europe. We will also co-host **Yaakov Katz**, Chicago-born military affairs writer for the *Jerusalem Post*, who will speak on security issues in the Middle East after the second Lebanon War. Katz covers Iran, Syria, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Hezbollah, Hamas, and Israeli defense issues.

We will also host **Gideon Aronoff**, CEO of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, who will explore the progressive Jewish tradition on immigrants and refugees and talk about immigration reform and action efforts to aid refugees.

HIAS is the oldest agency in immigration and refugee resettlement in the U.S. and assists migrants and refugees throughout the world.

In addition, we will sponsor events jointly with others at MSU, including the Kresge Art Museum and MSU Library, the Hillel Student Center, the Department of Linguistics and Languages, James Madison College, and others. We will co-host the prize-winning film, *The Rape of Europa*, about Nazi Germany and stolen art during World War II, followed by a panel discussion; we will present two interesting recent Israeli films; and we will host a fall Jewish Studies-Hadassah Sunday brunch, with **Ilana Blumberg**. We are also offering a 300-level Hebrew course for the first time, thanks to Professor **Marc Bernstein**, and we are cooperating with Big Ten Jewish Studies programs in offering beginning Yiddish via video with Vera Szabo of the University of Michigan.

Our own faculty **Ilana Blumberg** will speak later in fall on her highly praised new memoir, *Houses of Study*, and **Marc Bernstein** will speak on his interesting study, *Stories of Joseph: Narrative Migration Between Judaism and Islam*.

During the spring, we look forward to hosting the third annual MSU Israel Film Festival under the leadership of **Ellen Rothfeld**, the second annual Michael and Elaine Serling Lecture on Modern Israel, and the 16th David and Sarah Rabin Lecture on the Holocaust. In partnership with the Symposium on Science, Reason, and Modern Democracy, we are exploring an invitation to former Israeli chief justice **Aharon Barak**, to offer the Serling Lecture. We are in discussions with **Elliot B. Caplan**, award-winning filmmaker and professor of media studies at University of Buffalo, to lecture and show his film-in-process, *Hidden Things: A Children’s Story*, about children and the Holocaust for the Rabin lecture. We anticipate a good and active academic year.

— Kenneth Waltzer, Director

16th Annual David and Sarah Rabin Lecture on the Holocaust
Thursday, April 10, 2008, 7:00 pm
Kellogg Center – Lincoln Room

Elliot B. Caplan, Filmmaker,
Professor-Media Studies, and Director,
The Center for the Moving Image,
University of Buffalo



Hidden Things: A Children’s Story

A film in association with the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture and Yad Vashem.

Emmy award-winning producer/director Elliot Caplan, known for his performance films of famous artists, will lecture and show excerpts of his film *Hidden Things*, which explores the experiences of children during the Holocaust by examining the objects – toys, pictures, family heirlooms – they carried.

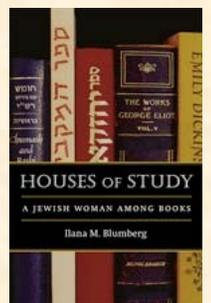
Jewish Studies-Hadassah Fall Brunch

Sunday, Oct. 28, 2007, 10:00 am -12:00
MSU University Club
\$20 ticket (\$15 per student)
Reservation (432-3493) and pay at the door

Featured Speaker: **Ilana M. Blumberg**

Jewish Women & the Life of the Mind

Ilana M. Blumberg will speak on Jewish women, Jewish books, and identity, and read from her memoir, *Houses of Study: A Jewish Woman Among Books*. Mary Gordon has offered this praise: “In its originality of approach, vigor and beauty of style, and fierce honesty in... exploring uncharted territories, this book is a great contribution to women’s studies, autobiography and memoir, and Jewish studies.”



The Boycott and the False Israel/South Africa Analogy

This summer, nearly 300 North American university presidents and chancellors spoke out against the proposed boycott of Israeli academics and institutions sponsored by the UK's University and College Union as a violation of academic values, among them MSU President Lou Anna K. Simon. "At issue is whether free intellectual exchange and scholarly activity should be casualties of political disagreements and whether the threat ... is an appropriate political tool," President Simon said.

Recently, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) condemned the university leaders on the basis that their statement "stifled debate in the academy" and called on U.S. faculty to replay the role they earlier embraced in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

The proposed boycott is misguided – not just because it violates academic ideals (it surely does) but also because it singles out and demonizes Israel, willfully mischaracterizes the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and misrepresents the role

of universities and academics in it. The conflict is complex, not a simple division between good and evil, and stands at the long juncture of two tragic narratives involving European genocide and Middle Eastern dispossession. The conflict is also compounded by growing Islamic fundamentalism and political disarray among Palestinians (the problem of a peace partner) as well as by Israel's obstinacy in sustaining occupation despite support by most Israelis for a two state solution. Israeli universities generally contain those who are most favorable to peace, and Israeli universities have pioneered in educating Israeli Arabs and in creating projects with Palestinian partners and universities.

Equally important, it is a false analogy that the conflict can be interpreted in terms of the history and social system of the former South Africa. In that example, a colonial settler minority controlled a majority, instituting and defending a racial system of control and discrimination, and the majority waged an anti-racist and predominantly non-violent struggle for national liberation and to create egalitarian institutions.

In the Israeli-Palestinian example, two peoples have been and are struggling for national liberation. In South Africa, the issue was the achievement of equal human rights in a common polity and society. In the Middle East, the issue has been dual national self-determination and the creation of a durable peace amidst continued violence in disputed territory.

Israel is not an apartheid state – minorities have access to rights and to institutions that defend rights; and universities and cultural institutions are anti-racist spaces where egalitarian values are taught and practiced.

The accusation that Israel is an apartheid state is an insidious tool, not an analytical one, and is used by those who seek to deny Jews a right to a national home by denying to Israel legitimacy as a nation in the world of nations. The boycott not merely violates academic values – it misrepresents reality. — Ken Waltzer



Upcoming Events:

Opposing The Boycott Movement

SPEAKER

David Hirsh, Professor of Sociology, Goldsmith College, University of London, "Opposing the Contemporary Anti-Israel Boycott Movement in British Labor." Monday, September 24 7:00 pm, 339 Case Hall



Film Event

Rape of Europa tells the epic story of the systematic theft, deliberate destruction, and miraculous survival of Europe's art treasures during the Third Reich. Co-hosted by the MSU Library & the Art Museum at MSU; panel discussion with Susan Bades, Director of the Art Museum at MSU, and Ken Waltzer, Director of Jewish Studies.

Thursday, October 25, 7:00 pm, MSU Library, 4th Floor



Israeli Security

SPEAKER

Yaakov Katz, the Jerusalem Post, "The Future of Israeli Security after the Lebanon War." Co-sponsored with MSU Hillel. Wednesday, October 17 7:00 pm, 339 Case



Israeli Film Showings



"Something Sweet" directed by Dan Turjeman Wednesday, September 19, 7:00 pm, 118 Psychology



"A Green Chariot," directed by Gilad Goldschmidt Monday, November 5, 7:00 pm, 108 Bessey Hall

Fall Book Presentations

Ilana Blumberg, Assistant Professor in James Madison College, will present on her memoir, *Houses of Study: A Jewish Woman among Books*. Thursday, Nov. 1, 4:45 to 6:00 pm, Honors College seminar room



Marc Bernstein, Assistant Professor of Hebrew and Israel Culture, will present on his book, *Stories of Joseph: Narrative Migrations between Judaism and Islam*. Thursday, Nov. 29, 4:45 to 6:00 pm Honors College seminar room



Progressive Tradition

SPEAKER

Gideon Aronoff, CEO-Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, "A Jewish View on American Immigration Reform and Assistance to Refugees." Thursday, November 8, 7:00 p.m., MSU Union Green Room





STUDY IN ISRAEL

“Everything about my Israel experience was fun and interesting – the classes, traveling, Israeli culture, and the people I met. The classes at Hebrew U. explored the complexity of Israeli politics, society, and history.”

Sarah Slonim—James Madison College, Social Relations

“The Israel summer program was everything I hoped for in a foreign educational experience. It gave me an in depth look to understand a complex situation... Living on Mount Scopus for a month gave us a unique perspective. From Mt. Scopus, we could look west to Jerusalem and the Israeli countryside, then turn around to the West Bank and the Judean desert. Viewing the settlements there gave us a real life view of one of the most pressing issues in the Middle East.”

Chip Evans—James Madison College, International Relations

“We had a diverse group, so [Dr. Aronoff] made sure that we visited places from all three religions and all different cultures... We worked hard while in class, but we learned a lot, and we had enough free time to experience Israel on our own.”

Alyssa Hazelwood—History, Mathematics, and Economics, Honors College

“When I first applied to study in Israel, I was eager to use the opportunity to boost my resume. I’m happy to say this was not the most important goal study abroad helped me to accomplish. Something more rewarding was my growth as an independent thinker. Our encounters in the Old City, the discussions we participated in at a democracy think tank, the trips we took to Tel Hai, the Knesset, and Rabin Square and the opinions we shared/argued about on a daily basis in the classroom, contributed.”

Erin Lake—James Madison College, Social Relations

“Israel is a complex society and I am eager to learn more. I am interested in taking another class or two about the Middle East and Israel at MSU.”

Brenda Wapner—Sociology

“The people were so friendly... We stayed in dorms at Hebrew U. in really nice private rooms. I and two other girls shared a suite and were lucky to have an Israeli suitemate, Shimritt, who gave us insights as to the attitudes of the average Israeli citizen, and who took us around the Old City.

Jamie Kettren, James Madison College-International Relations



MSU students at Masada (2007)



MSU Jewish Studies summer program, 2007

SUMMER STUDY ABROAD REPORT

By Professor Yael Aronoff

This summer, eleven students participated in the MSU Jewish Studies study abroad program at the Hebrew University/Rothberg International School in Jerusalem. The students took Professor David Mendelsson’s course on the history of modern Israel, and my course on Israeli society and politics. We worked hard in the classroom – but also took full advantage of opportunities only available “on the ground” in Israel. We had as guest speakers members of diverse social movements such as Gush Emunim and Peace Now, and we also heard directly from top academics and former Ambassadors on Israeli political culture, the peace process, and the experiences of Ethiopians, Yemenites, and Palestinians in Israel.

We also took advantage of events in and around Jerusalem. We attended a very candid and thought provoking panel by Dr. Shlomo Ben-Ami and Dr. Saeb Erekat, the chief Israeli

and Palestinian negotiators at the Camp David 2000 and Taba talks, and Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer, former U.S. Ambassador to Israel and to Egypt. We visited the Supreme Court and the Knesset, and the Israel Democracy Institute, a “think tank” which monitors the state of democracy and provides a forum for creative thinking on Israel’s challenges. Students put their learning into action during the last week of classes when, after extensive research on each political party, they staged a mock campaign and election.

With archeologist Danny Herman as our guide, we took several tours. In Jerusalem we visited sites holy to all three monotheistic religions and toured the remains of the old City of David from 1000 BCE. You literally feel the different layers of history that make Jerusalem such a fascinating and beautiful city. Our trip to the Judean desert included Masada, En Gedi (a beautiful oasis in the Judean mountains), the

Dead Sea and Qumran (where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered). On our way north we visited Jaffa, a beautiful city with winding alleys overlooking the Mediterranean, and Haifa, which is a model for harmonious mixing of Jewish and Palestinian Israelis, and the headquarters of the Baha’i faith.

After visiting a Druze village near Haifa, we visited Caesarea, an ocean-side Roman palace/administrative center. With Dr. Mendelsson, the students also visited a kibbutz, Yad Vashem, the Sea of Galilee, and Rabin Square in Tel Aviv. All this, in addition to snorkeling in Eilat, dancing and swimming in Tel Aviv, and exploring different neighborhoods and markets of Jerusalem, listening to jazz concerts, and attending events of the world-famous Jerusalem Film Festival made the summer a memorable and fun learning experience!



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Academic News

Yael Aronoff presented “From Warfare to Withdrawal: Explaining Ariel Sharon’s Changes and Their Limits,” at the Association for Israel Studies meeting in Israel in June. She has submitted “When Do Hawks Become Peacemakers? Comparing Two Israeli Prime Ministers” to *Political Psychology*. She led the Jewish Studies summer program to Israel in 2007.

Marc Bernstein discussed “Jewish-Muslim Relations: Myths and Realities” at Northwestern University’s conference on “The Changing Course of Islamic and Judaic Studies” in May, and he participated in the Society for Judeo-Arabic Studies in Cordoba, Spain in July. He has developed a third year level Hebrew course for MSU.

Ilana Blumberg’s book *Houses of Study: A Jewish Woman Among Books* was published in March 2007. She is giving readings at the Detroit Annual Jewish Book Fair and the Ann Arbor Jewish Book Fair in November. She will also present “Frequent Flyers: Gen-X Jewish Writers Between Israel and America” at the Modern Language Association meeting in December.

Kirsten Fermaglich was awarded tenure in spring 2007 and will be on sabbatical 2007-2008. She has helped organize a roundtable “Funny, You Don’t Look American: Integrating American Jewish History into the History of the United States,” which has been accepted for the Association for Jewish Studies conference in December.

Steve Gold has published chapter essays in several anthologies, notably “Post-Holocaust Jewish Migration: From Refugees to Transnationals” in *Sociology Confronts the Holocaust: Memories and Identities in Jewish Diasporas*. An article in *Dispora*, titled “From Nationality to Peoplehood: Adaptation and Identity Formation in the Israeli Diaspora,” is forthcoming.

Mary M. Juzwik has published *The Rhetoric of Teaching: Understanding the Dynamics of Holocaust Narratives in an English Classroom* to appear from Hampton Press.

Anna Norris is organizing two panels on “Women and War” at the Women in French Conference in Dallas in April 2008, and will present on self-hatred and Jewish identity in the writings of three French Jewish women writers.

Benjamin Pollock’s “Thought Going to School with Life? Fackenheim’s Last Philosophical Testament,” appeared in the *AJS Review* 31:1 in Spring 2007. This summer, he completed a book manuscript, *Know it All: Rosenzweig’s Star of Redemption and the Systematic Task of Philosophy*, which will be published in 2008 by Cambridge University Press.

Ellen Rothfeld visited Israel in summer 2007 to meet with filmmakers at Tel Aviv University and Beit Berl College. She also observed *Ulpan* (Hebrew immersion) classes at Tel Aviv University, gathering ideas about strategies for teaching Hebrew at MSU.

Keely Stauter-Halsted’s study of anti-Semitism and sex trafficking appeared in the *Austrian History Yearbook* (2007) as “‘A Generation of Monsters’: Jews, Prostitution, and Racial Purity in the 1892 L’viv White Slavery Trial.” She will present at the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies this fall on anti-Semitism and the eugenics movement in Poland.

Ken Waltzer presented “Kovno Boys: Survival at Auschwitz—Birkenau, Buchenwald, and Mauthausen,” at the 37th Holocaust Scholars Conference in spring. He prepared “Survivors, The Holocaust Museum, and the Bad Arolsen Archives” in summer 2007. He is working on *The Rescue of Children and Youth at Buchenwald*, and will be on a panel of Jewish Studies directors at the AJS meeting in Toronto in December.