

Jewish Studies Program

Spring Semester 2014



Michigan State University

College of Arts & Letters
C-730 Wells Hall
619 Red Cedar Road
East Lansing, MI 48824
Telephone: 517-432-3493
Fax: 517-355-4507
Web: jsp.msu.edu
E-mail: jewishst@msu.edu

Kenneth Waltzer, Director
Michael Serling, Chair, Advisory Board
Bill Bilstad, Newsletter Editor

Note from the Director

We look forward to a great spring in 2014. Major events include a concert by Israeli-American jazz bassist **Omer Avital** at the Wharton Center, a special visit by outstanding Israeli writer, **Savyon Liebrecht**, on writing about social and political issues in Israel, and MSU's 9th Annual Israeli Film Festival. The semester will close with a brief residency by **Wendy Lower**, the John K. Roth Professor of History at Claremont McKenna College, who will deliver the annual Rabin Lecture on "*Gender and Genocide: German Women in the Nazi Killing Field*" and also a panel discussion, with **Henry Greenspan** of UM, on "*Testimonies in the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide.*"

I want in this final edition of the Jewish Studies Newsletter during my directorship (2004–14) to express my thanks to many people for their support for Jewish Studies and their critical contributions to building the program. As director during the 1990s, **Steve Weiland** played a crucial role conceiving and leading a vital new university initiative, giving it academic gravitas and winning broad community support. As long-term president of our Board of Advisors, **Michael Serling** has buoyed up our spirits, exerted profound leadership in development activities, and tutored us well by his untiring example and great generosity how to widen and deepen support for Jewish Studies in Michigan.

I want also to thank past President **Peter MacPherson** and then Provost (now President) **Lou Ann K. Simon**, for strongly backing Jewish

Studies. They knew from the outset that aspirations for a good university, a global university, should include having a good Jewish Studies program. I want also to acknowledge the important support provided, first by Dean **John Eadie**, then Dean **Wendy Wilkins**, and most recently by Dean **Karin Wurst**, in Arts and Letters, and the special support from Dean **Sherman Garnett** in James Madison College. I want also to thank **Bridget Paff** who has been our development liaison. Thanks also to **Barry Gross**, who first got it started.

Together, we have built something important that will be lasting at Michigan State University. Not too long ago, there was no Jewish Studies Program, no regular Hebrew instruction, no serious study of Jewish life and culture (save a few isolated courses), no study abroad opportunities in Israel, and no Israeli films shown on campus.

Today, students can specialize in (and soon minor in) Jewish Studies while pursuing many different majors. About 150 students have studied in Israel in the years we have been able to go, often with significant scholarship support. We currently sponsor many courses and opportunities for students to critically study Jewish life and history, Judaism, Hebrew language, and Jewish literature and public affairs. We also host visiting Israeli scholars.

Students have many opportunities to better understand the transformation in Jewish history from Europe to two new centers (North America and Israel), and as well to encounter some of the diversities and com-

plexities in Jewish life around the globe.

That we have been able to do all this in a land grant public university where once faculty taught Sunday-school lessons and prepared students for Christian missions abroad is a special pleasure. Building Jewish Studies has been one of many efforts by differing folks at making MSU more multicultural, diverse, and welcoming, and at creating a global university better connected with world.

The key builders of Jewish Studies, of course, have been the new faculty hired since the late 1990s, who have built a following and achieved tenure by their singular accomplishments. **Kirsten Fermaglich** in History, **Marc Bernstein** in Languages and Linguistics, **Yael Aronoff**, the **Serling Associate Professor of Israel Studies** in James Madison College, and **Benjamin Pollock** in Religious Studies have helped create a "there" in Jewish Studies; **Ellen Rothfeld** has regularly taught first-year Hebrew and coordinated the Israeli film festival. Special thanks also to **Eric Aronoff**, **Safai Babana Hampton**, **Ilana Blumberg**, **Chris Frilingos**, **Lynn Goldstein**, **Steve Gold**, **Michael Kaplowitz**, **Michael Koppisch**, **Anna Norris**, **George Peters**, **Margo Valles**, and others who have developed new courses, led new study abroad opportunities, enriched our offerings, and contributed to our intellectual community.

Let me close by stating that MSU's Jewish Studies Program stands forthrightly against misguided efforts in some quarters to press an
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Stanley and Selma Hollander Jewish Music and Art Event Omer Avital

Wednesday, February 12, 7:30 pm
Wharton Center, Pasant Theatre



Israeli musician **Omer Avital** has been identified as "a leading force in a hybrid that synthesizes American jazz with Israeli, Yemeni, Moroccan, and other Arab styles into something genuinely new and vital" and "an active force on the world music scene." Tickets are available from the Wharton Center ticket office. This concert is co-sponsored by the College of Music and the Jewish Studies Program.

David and Sarah Rabin Lecture

"Gender and Genocide: German Women and the Nazi Killing Fields"

Thursday, April 9, 7:00 pm
Lincoln Room, Kellogg Center, MSU

Wendy Lower, the John K. Professor of History at Claremont McKenna College, is also a historical consultant for the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. Her recent book, *Hitler's Furies: German Women and the Nazi Killing Fields*, is nominated for the National Book Award. This lecture has made possible by a special gift from the Michael Brill Fund for Holocaust Education.



Recent and Upcoming Events

Sunday, January 26

Film *"To Take A Wife"* (2004)

Directors: Ronit and Shlomi Elkabat

Eliyahu wants to preserve customs of traditional Morocco but his wife Vivian wants to live a new life in modern Israel of the 1970s. Vivian's brothers gather to persuade her not to divorce her husband. **David Mendelsson** of Hebrew University will discuss the film connected with his course, *"New Jews, New Israelis."*

7:00 pm, 339 Case Hall



Wednesday, February 12

Hollander Jewish Music and Art Event

Omer Avital

Co-sponsored with the College of Music and the Jazz Program. Avital's latest CD, *"Suite of the East,"* was voted one of best recordings of 2012 and the top jazz recording in France. Of Moroccan and Yemeni background, Israeli musician Omer Avital has been experimenting with the motifs, themes, sounds, and rhythms of Yemenite, Moroccan, and other Middle East music combined with the structures and practices of American jazz. Tickets are available at the Wharton Center ticket office.



7:30 pm, Wharton Center, Pasant Theatre

Monday, February 17

Yiddishkeit Lecture

"The Most Jewish City in the Soviet Union: Minsk Before the Holocaust"

Elissa Bemporad, Queens College, CUNY The Jerry and William Ungar Assistant Professor in East European Jewish History at Queens College CUNY, Elissa Bemporad will speak about her studies of Soviet Jews in inter-war Minsk. Co-sponsored by James Madison College.



6:30–8:00 pm, James Madison Library, Case Hall, 3rd Floor

Tuesday, March 18

"Between the Private and the Collective: Writing Fiction about Social and Political Issues in Israel"

Savyon Liebrecht, Israeli writer/playwright

Born in West Germany in 1948 to Holocaust survivor parents, Liebrecht grew up in Israel. One of Israeli's top writers, her writing focuses on the milieu of survivors, women and gender, and Jewish-Arab individual relations in Israel. Her books include *Apples from the Desert: Selected Stories* (2000), *A Man and a Woman and a Man: A Novel* (2003), *A Good Place for the Night: Stories* (2006), and *The Women My Father Knew: A Novel* (2010).



7:00 pm, Wells Hall B-342

Thursday, March 20

"And They Shall Become One Flesh: The History of Traditional Jewish Sexual Guidance"

Evyatar Marienberg, UNC Chapel Hill

This religious studies professor, who is a Visiting Fellow at the UM Frankel Center, will speak on the traditional Jewish guidance about marital sexuality. This is a joint event co-sponsored by MSU's Religious Studies Department and the Jewish Studies Program.

4:00–6:00 pm, Wells Hall B-122



Sunday–Monday, March 23–24

9th Annual Israeli Film Festival

The films this year will include:

Hunting Elephants (2013)

by director Reshef Levi;

Prime Ministers: The Pioneers (2013)

by director Richard Trank; and

Fill the Void (2012)

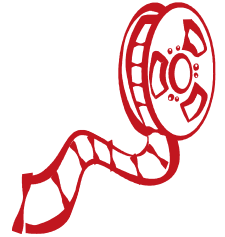
by director Ramah Burshtein.

Two episodes of the popular TV sitcom

Arab Labor will also be shown.

Catered on Sunday by **Woody's Oasis Mediterranean Deli**; meal tickets for sale at door. Event is coordinated by **Ellen Rothfeld**. See the insert for more details.

147 Comm Arts Building



Wednesday, April 9

"Using Testimonies in the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide"

Wendy Lower, Henry Greenspan, and Ken Waltzer

The John K. Roth Professor of History at Claremont McKenna College, **Wendy Lower**, along with **Henry Greenspan** (University of Michigan) and **Ken Waltzer**, will talk about the use of testimonies as evidence and as constructed narratives in the study of the Nazi Holocaust and recent genocides.



12:00–1:30 pm, Case Hall, Club Spartan, 3rd Floor

Wednesday, April 9

22nd David and Sarah Rabin Lecture of the Holocaust

"Gender and Genocide: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields"

Wendy Lower, Claremont McKenna College

A finalist for the National Book Award for her recent book *Hitler's Furies*, **Wendy Lower** will speak on the roles of German women in the Nazi Holocaust. The Rabin Lecture is made possible this year by the Rabin Fund and also by a gift from the Michael Brill Fund for Holocaust Education. The Rabin Lecture is co-sponsored by the Department of History, James Madison College, German Studies, the Center for Gender in a Global Context, and the Peace and Justice Studies Program.



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

JSP SUMMER PROGRAM AT HEBREW U. June 27 – July 31, 2014



Professor **Marc Bernstein** leads MSU's Jewish Studies Summer Program at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 2014, which offers students the opportunity to earn eight credits in the arts and humanities or social sciences. The program is designed for students interested in learning first-hand about the history, society, and culture of Israel, with special focus this summer on Jerusalem. The program is sponsored by Jewish Studies and the College of Arts & Letters, James Madison College, and the College of Social Science, in cooperation with the Rothberg International School at Hebrew University; it is arranged through the MSU Office of Study Abroad (OSA).

Courses:

"Emergence of Modern State of Israel"

(IAH 211D / MC 290) – Prof. David Mendelsson

"Jerusalem: A Cultural and Historical Geography"

(ISS 330B/ MC 390) – Prof. Marc Bernstein

Credits: Eight (8)

Requirements: 2.5 GPA; minimum sophomore status

Program Fee: \$3,700.00 – scholarships available

Application Deadline: **March 1, 2014**

For further information, contact Professor Marc Bernstein at: msb@msu.edu.

"I can truthfully say that my study abroad trip to Israel via the MSU Jewish Studies Summer Program at Hebrew University was the single most incredible experience of my life.... Studying abroad in Israel transformed the way I thought about many critical issues on both a regional and global scale, and I am extremely grateful that I will be able to bring my broadened understandings back to the rest of my undergraduate education and to my life and my career!"

~Amanda Kruzell

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academic boycott against Israeli academic institutions or scholars. We stand for academic freedom for Israeli scholars and American scholars working with Israeli institutions, and we do not recognize the caricatured "Israel" in the boycott movement's politicized discourse. We also express our pride at President **Lou Anna K. Simon's** role in shaping the strong anti-boycott position by the Association of American Universities, where she is on the executive committee. Taking that stand touched off a wave of university presidential statements across the country.

I like to think as I begin my last semester as director that I'll be stepping away from a program where people have done and will continue doing good work, faculty feel supported and prized for teaching and scholarship, students have new opportunities to learn and explore, and many actually go on in pursuits related to what they've studied, and MSU is enriched as a consequence.

Thanks, everyone.

~**Ken Waltzer**, Professor and Director

SCHUSTERMAN VISITING FELLOW AT MSU 2013-2014



Schusterman Visiting Israeli Fellow **Chen Bram** taught two Jewish Studies courses in James Madison College this past fall. A highly original course was one on Jewish-Muslim relations. Students learned about Jewish-Muslim relations in their historical, geographical, and interreligious complexity—separate and apart from the contemporary Israeli-Arab-Jewish-Muslim conflict in the Middle East. The course ranged over multiple historical periods and introduced students to relations in North Africa, in the Caucasus, and in Asia as well as in the Middle East. Professor Bram also taught about multicultural Israel, exploring the complex divisions and tensions among multiple cultures that inform contemporary Israeli society. Professor Bram was somewhat startled by the brittle categories students think about Israel in, especially compared with the reality of being in Israel as a lived experience.

In spring 2014, Professor Bram will be teaching a course in field methods in James Madison College that helps students fulfill the college's methods requirement.

"New Jews, New Israelis" David Mendelsson

David Mendelsson, award-winning teacher-scholar from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, will teach **"New Jews, New Israelis: Contemporary Israeli Voices."** This course, co-taught with **Ken Waltzer**, will meet in the evenings from 7:00–9:00 pm in 339 Case Hall, Tuesday–Thursday (January 21–23) and then Sunday–Thursday, (January 26–30). A course syllabus and reading packet will be distributed to all students.



The course asks: What has happened to the vision of the new Hebrew man or woman in a Jewish state in Israel? How has massive immigration from around the world, the end of the socialist and collectivist ethos, the upsurge of ultra-Orthodoxy and Orthodoxy, and the enduring Arab-Palestinian-Israeli conflict shaped new Israeli identities? How can we understand the ongoing conflicts inside Israel, with all its diversity, how they function, how they intersect and even overlap, and how they are managed?

The course is fully subscribed at thirty students, and is now closed. On Sunday, January 26, the course will be opened to all interested people to attend the film showing of **"To Take a Wife."**



Jewish Studies has lost a committed member of our Board of Advisors, **Art Langer**, an MSU alumnus, who died recently in Arizona after attending the Rose Bowl. Our sympathies to his wife, Gail Langer: we will miss Art and appreciate having had the chance to know and work with him.



College of Arts & Letters
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619 Red Cedar Road
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Phone: 517-432-3493
Fax: 517-355-4507
Email: jewishst@msu.edu
jsp.msu.edu

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Academic News

Yael Aronoff's book *The Political Psychology of Israeli Prime Ministers* will be published by Cambridge University Press in spring 2014. Professor Aronoff will speak on Israel at the World Affairs Council of Western Michigan as part of the 2014 Great Decisions event in February. Her essay review of Kurtzer, et. al., *The Peace Puzzle: America's Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace 1989-2011*, and Kurtzer (ed.) *Pathways to Peace: America and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* appears in *Israel Studies Review* (Spring 2014).

Ilana Blumberg is back from a year sabbatical in Israel. She will present on "Ethical Responses to the Surreal in Holocaust Memoirs" in March at the 2014 International Narrative Conference at MIT.

Chen Bram, our Schusterman Visiting Israeli Fellow, in November presented "Back to the Caucasus: Inter-group Intimacy and (post) Soviet Legacy" at the American Anthropology Association in Chicago and "Inter-Group Intimacy, Informality and Post-Soviet Legacies: Jewish-Muslim and Jewish-Christian Relations in Central Eurasia" at the Conference on Informal Practices and Structures in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Fribourg, Switzerland.

Kirsten Fermaglich is on leave with a HARP grant for spring 2014. She presented "I Changed My Name: Name-Changing and Jewish Identity in the Years after World War II," at the 45th Association of Jewish Studies meeting in Boston in December 2013. She will co-chair two panels: "Beyond 'Beyond the Feminine Mystique': Rethinking Mid-Twentieth Century Women's Activism and Agency" for the Organization of American Historians in Atlanta in April; and "The Global and Local Legacies of Betty Friedan's 'Feminine Mystique'" at the Berkshires Conference of Women Historians in Toronto in May.

Steve Fraiberg will present "Outsmarting the Nation, Together: Tracing the Reconstruction of National Identity in the Israeli Men's Magazine *Blazer*" at the Rhetoric Society of America in San Antonio, Texas, in May.

Steve Gold has published "Reflections on Ethnographic Childhoods" in Tamara Mose Brown and Joanna Dreby (eds.) *Family and Work in Everyday Ethnography*, 2013, and "Israelis and Israeli Americans, 1940-Present" in Elliot Barkan (ed.) *Immigrants in American History: Arrival, Adaptation and Integration*, Vol. 3,

2013. He also wrote "Contextual and Family Determinants of Immigrant Women's Self-Employment: The Case of Vietnamese, Russian-Speaking Jews, and Israelis" forthcoming in the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 2014.

Deborah Margolis will help plan and staff the 2nd Annual Testimonies Workshop at the University of Michigan-Flint, which will focus on Holocaust and recent Rwanda testimonies. The workshop runs July 14–18, 2014.

Anna Norris presents in January a paper on pacifism and feminism at the WWI anniversary commemoration conference organized by the Université de Paris-Créteil, the Université de Paris-Marne-la Vallée, and the German Institute in Paris.

George Peters presented on "Teaching Heine Today" at the German Studies Association in Denver in October. Professor Peters is researching Heine's German-Jewish novel, *The Rabbi of Bacherach*.

Benjamin Pollock is on leave with a HARP grant for spring 2014. Benjamin will talk on Emil Fackenheim and post-Holocaust philosophy at Indiana University in February and on "Philosophy's Inquisitor: Rosenzweig's Philo between Judaism and Christianity" at Yale in March. Benjamin's new book, *Franz Rosenzweig's Conversions: World Denial and World Redemption* will appear in summer 2014.

Kenneth Waltzer will present "The Maurerschule at Auschwitz" at the Future of Testimonies III Conference sponsored by Western Galilee College, Ghetto Fighters House, and Yad Vashem near Haifa, Israel, on March 25–27, 2014. Ken will speak to the new Holocaust graduate program at Haifa on his work on Buchenwald. He will also present "Using the Red Cross International Tracing Service Collection to Research the Rescue of Children Inside a Nazi Camp" at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies Conference on the ITS Collections and Holocaust Scholarship in May 2014. Ken co-leads the 2nd Annual Testimonies Workshop at UM-Flint in July 2014.

Steve Weiland presented "Jewish Autobiography, Then and Now," a paper situating recent Jewish-American autobiography in the debate about the origins and development of Jewish autobiography in the ancient world and Europe, at the Midwest Jewish Studies Association in Chicago in October 2013.