ISRAEL AT 70:
COMPLEXITY, CHALLENGE, AND CREATIVITY

September 16-17, 2018 at the Kellogg Center at Michigan State University
To commemorate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel and reflect on that history, The Michael and Elaine Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel is proud to sponsor its largest academic conference ever: "Israel at 70: Complexity, Challenge, and Creativity" on September 16-17, 2018, at the Kellogg Center. The conference brings together 40 internationally-recognized scholars from more than 7 universities and academic institutions in Israel and over 10 U.S. universities to discuss Israeli society, culture, politics, and foreign policy, as well as agricultural, biomedical, water, environmental, and business innovation. The conference includes entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, and members of non-governmental organizations and think tanks, including the Brookings Institution and the Institute for National Security Studies affiliated with Tel Aviv University.

After 70 years, Israel has many accomplishments to celebrate as well as many challenges to overcome. This conference highlights some of these challenges and accomplishments. It also inaugurates a multi-million-dollar naming gift from Michael and Elaine Serling that will provide a new endowment in “Modern Israel” in Jewish Studies. It will serve as a catalyst, stimulating activities that join MSU faculty and Israeli colleagues in several fields, including the humanities, social sciences, business entrepreneurship, medical science, and engineering, as they initiate new collaborative projects. It will also contribute to research, study abroad, and internship opportunities in Israel for undergraduate and graduate students and provide support for visiting Israeli scholars. With this gift the Jewish Studies Program has changed its name to the Michael and Elaine Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel.

A featured keynote speaker at the conference is Gilead Sher, who heads the Center for Applied Negotiations and is a senior researcher at the Tel Aviv Institute for National Security Studies (INSS). Sher was PM Chief of Staff and Policy Coordinator to former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, and in 1999-2001 he served as the Israeli Chief and co-Chief negotiator at the Camp David peace summit and the Taba peace talks. Another keynote speaker is Oded Shoseyov, an expert in nanobiotechnology who has authored or co-authored more than 160 scientific publications and is the inventor or co-inventor of 45 patents. Others include Naomi Chazan, Professor Emerita of Political Science at the Hebrew University, who has served three terms as a Member of the Knesset on behalf of the Meretz Party, has authored eight books on comparative politics, served as President of the New Israel Fund between 2009-2012 and is among the founders of the International Women’s Commission for an Israel-Palestinian Peace; political scientist and poet Saliba Sarsar, who is Associate Vice President of Monmouth College, on the Board of Directors of the American Task Force on Palestine, and edited Palestine and the Quest for Peace and co-edited Principles and Pragmatism: Key Documents from the American Task Force on Palestine, among other publications. Another prominent speaker is Donna Robinson Divine, the Morningstar Family Professor of Jewish Studies and Professor of Government Emerita at Smith College, who has written several books and is currently President of the Association for Israel Studies.

Enjoy these two days, packed full of intellectually stimulating presentations and discussions on cutting edge issues, as well as with chances to interact with participants and one another over meals.

—Yael Aronoff
Director, The Michael and Elaine Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel
Michael and Elaine Serling and Friends Chair in Israel Studies
ABOUT THE MICHAEL AND ELAINE SERLING INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH STUDIES AND MODERN ISRAEL AT MSU

The Michael and Elaine Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel at Michigan State University engages in the interdisciplinary study of the history, cultures, language(s), identities, and religion of the Jewish people. While our program encompasses the historical and geographic breadth of Jewish experiences, our particular strengths are in five key areas: American Jewish history, culture, and literature; European Jewish History and Holocaust Studies; Hebrew; Israel Studies; and Judaism.

A hallmark of our institute is the close interaction of faculty, students and community members. The Institute offers a 20-credit undergraduate minor in Jewish Studies that allows students to explore, in interdisciplinary and flexible ways, Jewish history, culture, and identity, to learn Hebrew, and to study Judaism. Students work closely with faculty mentors, who provide guidance both on academic development and professional opportunities. Our students have opportunities to engage in substantive research projects in class or as guided independent studies as well as senior theses and participation in faculty-led study abroad programs in Israel. Students present their research at the annual Jewish Studies Undergraduate Research Conference. These curricular components are enhanced by our many co-curricular lectures and films designed to enhance classroom experiences and research. The result is a collegial, supportive community of students and faculty who form lasting relationships.

The Michael and Elaine Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel also supports the scholarly work of its faculty at MSU, developing a nationally recognized program that fits with the aspirations of a 21st-century global university. We have five core Michael and Elaine Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel faculty and over 25 affiliated faculty from ten departments and colleges across the university. The institute contributes to and enhances knowledge of Jewish life in the university community, mid-Michigan, and the State of Michigan.

The number of students and community members involved in our institute steadily increases, as our activities become more plentiful and diverse. The Institute had a record number of minors (48) in 2017-2018, and near-record numbers of students taking one of our 30 Jewish Studies-approved classes -- 675 total. In the summer of 2017 we had 37 students participating in three different study abroad programs to Israel, and supported the first graduate study abroad. During that same year we sponsored 25 lectures and films which almost 1,000 students, faculty, and community members attended; we co-sponsored another eight lectures and films attended by 400 people. We also successfully organized our second annual Jewish Studies Undergraduate Research conference. In addition, we launched our first team-taught class, which was an honors freshman seminar focused on using Holocaust testimonials. This seminar is currently being taught again at full capacity.
CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Sunday, September 16, 2018—Lincoln Room, Kellogg, 8:15-8:40am Registration

8:45-10:15 a.m. ORIGIN STORIES: A ROUNDTABLE ON LITERATURE, CINEMA, AND PEDAGOGY
Moderator: Eric Arono, Michigan State University
• Rachel Harris, University of Illinois - Warriors, Witches, Whores: Women in Israeli Cinema
• Ilana Blumberg, Bar Ilan University - Literary Pedagogy for Teaching Diverse Students
• Marc Bernstein, Michigan State University - The Denial of Despair: Kletzkers in Israel

10:25-11:55 a.m. ROUNDTABLE: REFLECTIONS ON ISRAELI SOCIETY, NATIONALISM, DEMOCRACY, AND SECURITY
Moderator: Myron Arono, Emeritus, Rutgers University
• Donna Robinson Divine, Smith College - #Israel at 70: Blessing or Curse?
• Naomi Chazan, Hebrew University - Israel at 70: Gender, Society, and Democracy
• Nadav Shelef, University of Wisconsin - Israel at 70: Transformations in Israeli Nationalism
• Yael Arono, Michigan State University - Israel's Changing Security Environment

12:10-1:30 p.m. LUNCH IN BIG 10 C FOR PRE-REGISTERED ATTENDEES
➡ Welcoming brief remarks by Provost June Youatt, Dean of the College of Arts and Letters Chris Long, Dean of James Madison College Sherman Garnett, Jewish Studies Program Director Yael Arono, and Michael and Elaine Serling
➡ Keynote by Oded Shoseyov, Nature’s Gift: Materials for the Future

1:40-2:55 p.m. PANEL: U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONS
Chair: Yael Arono, Michigan State University
• Robert Freedman, Johns Hopkins University - US-Israel Relations 1948-2018
• Scott Lasensky, INSS Tel Aviv University - The Peace Puzzle: Can America Still Be Effective at Arab-Israeli Peacemaking?
• Tamara Cofman Wittes, Brookings Institution - Shared Values: Democratic Challenges and the US-Israel Relationship

3:05-4:20 p.m. PANEL: BOUNDARIES OF ISRAEL CRITICISM
Chair: Benjamin Lorch, Michigan State University
• Amy Elman, Kalamazoo College - Pinkwashing Antisemitism
• Ken Waltzer, Michigan State University - When Anti-Zionism Becomes Antisemitism: Insights from American Campuses
• Yore Kedem, Michigan State University - Boundaries of Israel Criticism: Understanding Yeshayahu Leibovich

4:30-6:10 p.m. ROUNDTABLE: LESSONS AND PROSPECTS FOR ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE
Moderator: Gilead Sher, INSS Tel Aviv University
• Saliba Sarsar, Monmouth University - Uncommon Pairs: The Making of Unique Peacebuilding Leaders in Israel/Palestine
• Alan Dowty, Notre Dame University - Israelis and Palestinians: Has the Gap Narrowed?
• Miriam Elman, Syracuse University - Negotiating Jerusalem: Visions for Dividing & Sharing a Contested City
• Ilan Peleg, Lafayette College - Narratives of Victimization & Victimhood Among Israelis & Palestinians: A 70-Year Saga
• Yuval Benziman, Hebrew University - Normalization with Arab States and Israeli-Palestinian Peace

6:25-7:25 p.m. DINNER IN Big 10 C FOR FOR PRE-REGISTERED ATTENDEES (Sing-along led by Alon Tall and Bill Slott towards the end of the meal)

7:30 p.m. KEYNOTE LECTURE
➡ Gilead Sher - The Israeli-Palestinians Negotiations: Prospects for a Two-State Reality
CONFERENCE SCHEDULE CONTINUED

Monday, September 17, 2018—Red Cedar Room, Kellogg, 8:15-8:50am
Registration

9:00-10:30 a.m. PANEL: ISRAELI ENVIRONMENTAL INNOVATION AND ITS USE AS A FOREIGN POLICY TOOL
Chair: Michael Kaplowtiz, Michigan State University
• Giora Rytwo, Tel Hai College and MIGAL Research Institute - Coping with Water Crises: New Cleantech Water Technologies
• Micha Guy, Ben Gurion University - Agriculture at the Ramat Negev Country: Survival and the Introduction of New Crops
• Itay Fishhendler, Hebrew University - Natural Resources as Foreign Policy Tool: A Legitimate Israeli Policy?

10:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m. ROUNDTABLE: ISRAELI BIOTECHNOLOGY AND MEDICAL INNOVATION
Moderator: Erik Shapiro, Michigan State University
• Assaf Gilad, Michigan State University - Science in Israel: Evolution and Evaluation of Dynamic Patterns
• Amnon Bar Shir, Weizmann Institute - “Multicolor” Sensors: Beyond “Black & White” MRI
• Galit Pelled, Michigan State University - From Fish Navigation to Neuromodulation
• Benny Hochner, Hebrew University - Why Can Octopuses Help Us Build New Types of Robots?
• Drorith Celnikier-Hochner, Hadassah Mount Scopus Medical Center - Hadassah for Everyone, Everywhere

1:00-2:00 p.m. LUNCH IN BIG 10 C FOR PRE-REGISTERED ATTENDEES

2:05-3:30 p.m. PANEL: ISRAEL'S REMARKABLE AGRICULTURAL EXPERIENCE: YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW
Chair: Ronald Hendrick, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Michigan State University
• Alon Tal, Serling Visiting Israeli Scholar, MSU and Tel Aviv University - Israeli Agricultural Policy and Yields: What a Long Strange Trip It’s Been
• Bill Slott, Columnist, Times of Israel - Israel's Grand Socialist Agrarian Experiment: The Evolution of Israel's Kibbutzim
• Dr. Shoshan Haran, Founder, Fair Planet Seeds - How Israel's Agritech Innovations Are Affecting Africa

3:45-5:45 p.m. ROUNDTABLE: THE 70-YEAR-OLD STARTUP THAT SETS THE GLOBAL DIRECTION IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP
Moderator: Neil Kane, Michigan State University
• Tsahy Shapsa, Israeli entrepreneur, Co-Founder of Cloudlock, Inc.
• Parag Amin, Founder of Indian iCreate
• Hanan Hassan, Israeli entrepreneur, she codes;
• Doron York, Chairman of City Side Ventures
• Harry Yuklea, Serling Visiting Israeli Scholar at MSU, Israel Innovation Authority

6:00-7:30 p.m. Closing Dinner for Conference Participants Only
PARAG AMIN

Parag Amin, an inventor and entrepreneur, is involved in the fields of technology, finance, real-estate, retail and hospitality. Mr. Amin is widely regarded as a visionary in the field of information technology, and was a member of the EMMY Award-winning team that pioneered development of Direct to Home digital satellite broadcasting for PRIMESTAR in 1995. He is a frequent advisor on IT issues and strategy to private enterprises and governmental entities both in the United States and abroad. Mr. Amin is the Chief Mentor and founding member of iCreate, a world-class Centre of Excellence for Entrepreneurship and Technology.

ERIC ARONOFF

Eric Aronoff is Associate Professor of Literature and Culture in the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities at Michigan State University. He received a Ph.D. in English from Rutgers University. Dr. Aronoff’s research interests include nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American literature, and theories of culture, race, and nation. Dr. Aronoff’s book, Composing Cultures: Modernism, American Literary Studies, and the Problem of Culture was published in 2013. He has led the Nature, Culture, and Environmental Issues in a Green Israel study abroad program three times.

MYRON ARONOFF

Myron J. Aronoff is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Political Science, Anthropology, and Jewish Studies from Rutgers University. He received a Ph.D. in social anthropology from Manchester University and a Ph.D. in political science from U.C.L.A. Dr. Aronoff is the author of numerous books on the political anthropology of development towns, the Israeli Labor Party, and Israeli political polarization. He most recently co-authored Anthropology and Political Science: A Convergent Approach. Dr. Aronoff was the founding president of the Association of Israel Studies and the first recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award in Israel Studies from the Association of Israel Studies and the Israel Institute.

YAELE ARONOFF

Yael Aronoff is the Director of The Michael and Elaine Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel, the Michael and Elaine Serling and Friends Chair in Israel Studies at Michigan State University, and she is Associate Professor of Political Science in James Madison College. Dr. Aronoff received her Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University. She is a recipient of the MSU 2011 Teacher-Scholar Award and the 2015 MSU John K. Hudzik Emerging Leader in Advancing International Studies and Programs Award. Dr. Aronoff’s book, The Political Psychology of Israeli Prime Ministers: When Hard-Liners Opt for Peace, was published in 2014. Her current book project is The Dilemmas of Asymmetric Conflicts: Navigating Deterrence and Democratic Constraints. She has served on the Board of Directors of the Association of Israel Studies for the past nine years. Dr. Aronoff led the MSU Jewish Studies Study Abroad Program at the Hebrew University in Israel in 2007, 2010, 2013, and 2017.

AMNON BAR-SHIR

Dr. Amnon Bar-Shir was born and raised on Kibbutz Ramat HaKovesh, north of Tel Aviv, in Israel. He completed his Ph.D. in Chemistry at Tel Aviv University in 2009. Dr. Bar-Shir worked as a postdoctoral fellow at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, Maryland, before joining the Department of Organic Chemistry at the Weizmann Institute in August 2014. Dr. Bar-Shir seeks to create new kinds of biosensors that allow scientists to tag molecules and track their pathways through live cells and intact subjects. He has won several awards and is a member of the International Society for Magnetic Resonance in Medicine, the World Molecular Imaging Society, and the European Society of Molecular Imaging.
YUVAL BENZIMAN

Yuval Benziman is Senior Faculty-Lecturer in the Conflict Research Management and Resolution Program, Hebrew University, Israel. He has lectured at many universities, including University of Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv University, University of Maryland, Ben-Gurion University, Michigan State University, and the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy, Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya. Dr. Benziman received his Ph.D. from Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He has written extensively on the representations of the Arab-Israeli conflict in fictional texts. Dr. Benziman was a Serling Visiting Israeli Scholar at Michigan State 2015-2016.

MARC BERNSTEIN

Marc S. Bernstein is Associate Professor of Jewish Studies and Muslim Studies and Coordinator of the Hebrew Program at Michigan State University, and is appointed in the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages. He received his Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from UC-Berkeley. His primary research interests are Hebrew and Israeli culture and the intersection of Jewish and Islamic civilizations. Dr. Bernstein is the author of Stories of Joseph: Narrative Migrations Between Judaism and Islam. He directed the MSU Jewish Studies Summer Program at Hebrew University in 2008, 2009, and 2014.

ILANA BLUMBERG

Ilana Blumberg is Director of the Shandy Rudoff Graduate Program in Creative Writing and Senior Lecturer in the Department of English at Bar Ilan University in Ramat Gan, Israel. Before moving to Israel, she taught for nine years at James Madison College at Michigan State. She received MSU’s Teacher-Scholar Award in 2010 and is the author of prizewinning memoirs, Houses of Study: a Jewish Woman among Books and Open Your Hand: Teaching as a Jew, Teaching as an American; as well as Victorian Sacrifice: Ethics and Economics in Mid-Century Novels.

NAOMI CHAZAN

Naomi Chazan is Professor Emerita of Political Science at the Hebrew University. Born in Jerusalem, Dr. Chazan holds a Ph.D. from Hebrew University. She served three terms as a Member of the Knesset on behalf of the Meretz Party, has authored and edited eight books on comparative politics, served as President of the New Israel Fund between 2009-2012 and is among the founders of the International Women's Commission for an Israel-Palestinian Peace.

ALAN DOWTY

Alan Dowty is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Notre Dame. In 1963-1975 he was on the faculty of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, during which time he served as Executive Director of the Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations and Chair of the Department of International Relations. In 2005-2007 he was President of the Association for Israel Studies. Among his publications are texts on Israeli society and politics (The Jewish State: A Century Later) and on the Arab-Israel conflict (Israel/Palestine). In 2017 he was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award in Israel Studies by the Israel Institute and the Association for Israel Studies.

R. AMY ELMAN

R. Amy Elman is Professor of Political Science and the William Weber Chair of Social Science at Kalamazoo College in Michigan. She has received numerous awards for her scholarship including two Fulbright grants, a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and a grant from the Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism at Hebrew University. Dr. Elman has worked on behalf of women’s rights and against antisemitism domestically and within Europe for over three decades. She has published four books and her most recent one, The European Union, Antisemitism and the Politics of Denial, explores the conditions that precipitated the EU’s efforts to stem antisemitism and their consequences.
Miriam Elman is an associate professor of political science and the inaugural Robert D. McClure Professor of Teaching Excellence at the Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs, Syracuse University. At the Maxwell School, she is a research director in the Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC). Dr. Elman received her Ph.D. in political science from Columbia University. She is the editor and co-editor of five books and the author and co-author of over 65 journal articles, book chapters and government reports on topics related to international and national security, conflict studies and conflict resolution, religion and politics, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Her latest collaborative book projects are *Democracy and Conflict Resolution: The Dilemmas of Israel’s Peacemaking* and *Jerusalem: Conflict and Cooperation in a Contested City*.

Itay Fishhendler heads the Environmental and Planning Program at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research interests focus on environmental conflict resolution, natural resources governance, and decision-making under conditions of political and environmental uncertainties. He is a leading scholar on transboundary water institutions and Middle Eastern water policy, and has published over 35 articles in leading public policy, conflict resolution, peace studies, geography, ecological economics, and environmental journals. Dr. Fishhendler is now engaged in research related to the politics of energy infrastructure and energy diplomacy, including energy sanctions.

Robert Freedman is Peggy Meyerhoff Pearlstone Professor of Political Science emeritus at Baltimore Hebrew University, and is currently Visiting Professor of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University where he teaches courses on the Arab-Israeli Conflict and on Russian Foreign Policy. Dr. Freedman received his Ph.D. from Columbia University in the field of International Relations. He participated, as the American representative, in three conferences in Europe with European political leaders and scholars who dealt with the problem of improving US-European cooperation in the Middle East. Dr. Freedman is the author of seven books on Soviet and Russian foreign policy. He has also been a commentator on National Public Radio, the Voice of America, the BBC and Moscow Radio on Russian policy in the Middle East. Dr. Freedman is currently completing a book on Russian foreign policy toward the Middle East under Putin.

Assaf Gilad is a Professor of Biomedical Engineering and Radiology and Chief of the Division of Synthetic Biology and Regenerative Medicine in the Institute for Quantitative Health Science and Engineering, Michigan State University. The overarching theme of his research program harnesses the intersection of radiology and molecular biology to develop new in vivo imaging technologies that can be used to tackle fundamental biological questions. Specifically, he works to develop novel genetically encoded and nanoparticles biosensors for both MRI detection and neuromodulation. Dr. Gilad received a Ph.D. in Biology from the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel. He spent three years conducting postdoctoral research in the Department of Radiology at Johns Hopkins University, then joined the Radiology department as a faculty member.

Micha Guy received his Ph.D. in Plant Biology from Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He did his post-doctoral research here at Michigan State University with Professor H. Kende at the MSU-DOE Plant Research Laboratory. He continued to work as a researcher at The Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Dr. Guy’s main research interests are plant membrane transport and adaptation of plants to stress conditions, with emphasis on oxidative stress.
SHOSHAN HARAN
Shoshan Haran was born in Kibbutz Be’eri in the Israeli Negev and received her Ph.D. in plant science from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She was awarded a Fulbright Grant for a postdoc position at Rutgers University and for nearly two decades served as a senior expert in the seed industry. Dr. Haran managed large-scale international projects for leading seed companies, initiated and led multinational research and development collaborations, managed Intellectual Property portfolios, and served as a board member of national and multinational companies. Dr. Haran is the founder of Fair Planet, an Israeli nonprofit organization, which helps smallholder farmers in developing countries to exit the cycle of poverty through access to the best seeds in the world.

RACHEL HARRIS
Rachel S. Harris is Associate Professor of Israeli Literature and Culture at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She is the author of An Ideological Death: Suicide in Israeli Literature (2014) and Warriors, Witches, Whores: Women in Israeli Cinema (2017). She is co-editor of Narratives of Dissent: War in Contemporary Israeli Arts and Culture (2011) and Casting a Giant Shadow: Transnationalism in Israeli Cinema (forthcoming). Dr. Harris has also edited the pedagogical book Teaching the Arab Israeli Conflict in the College Classroom (2019) and special issues of several journals in Jewish Studies, including JOJI, Shofar and Nashim. Dr. Harris is the co-Chair of the AJS Women’s Caucus and the book review editor for JOJI.

RONALD HENDRICK
Ronald Hendrick is the Dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Michigan State University. Dr. Hendrick earned his doctoral degree from MSU in forestry and forest ecology and was a National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow in the Institute of Arctic Biology at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. His research has focused on forest ecosystem productivity and element cycling, especially below ground, and various aspects of ecosystem restoration and reclamation. Dr. Hendrick’s teaching experience includes leading a number of study abroad programs in the South Pacific, including New Zealand, Australia, Fiji and Antarctica.

HANAN HENDAR HASSAN
Hanna Hendar Hassan studies Biomedical Engineering at the Technion in Israel, and is the North Area Manager of she codes:, a community of women in technology, created to achieve an equal number of female and male software developers in Israel. Its members include women who want to learn software development in order to make a career shift into high-tech, developers who want to advance their skills and network with other women in high-tech, and high school students who are learning to program. She is the area manager for the North Valley Region (all of the Arab and Druze branches of the company) and formerly served as a manager at the Technion Branch.

BENNY HOCHNER
Benny Hochner received his Ph.D. in Neurobiology from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and did his postdoctoral training with Prof. Eric Kandel (Nobel Laureate for Medicine, 2000) at Columbia University. Currently, he is a Professor (Emeritus) of Neurobiology at the Department of Neurobiology at the Hebrew University Silberman Institute of Life Sciences. Dr. Hochner is the Principal Investigator of the Octopus Research Group. He has been involved in octopus arms motor control research as inspiration for robotics since 1994. In parallel, Dr. Hochner studies the neurobiology of learning and memory of octopuses and other cephalopods because they are the most advanced demonstration of independent evolution of complex behavior in invertebrates.
DRORITH HOCHNER-CELNIKIER

Drorith Hochner-Celnikier, born in Jerusalem, studied Medicine at the Faculty of Medicine-Hebrew University. She has spent almost her entire career at Hadassah University Hospital, Mount Scopus. Since 2010, Dr. Hochner-Celnikier has been the head of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department at Hadassah-Mount Scopus campus. She has served on many committees of the Ministry of Health, and she has served as Vice Chair of the Israeli Family Planning Association-Executive Committee. Dr. Hochner-Celnikier’s research interests focus on clinical obstetrics as well as basic and clinical research on the placenta, pelvic floor, postpartum depression, labor induction, and menopause. She has published over 120 articles in leading journals including The Lancet, Molecular Psychiatry, and the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology.

NEIL KANE

Neil Kane is a leading authority on technology commercialization, entrepreneurship and innovation and is Director of the Entrepreneurship Program at MSU. He is the former co-Executive Director of the Illinois Technology Enterprise Center at Argonne National Laboratory and was Entrepreneur in Residence at the University of Illinois and Northern Illinois University. He has been the CEO of startup companies in areas as diverse as consumer packaged goods, toys, nanotechnology, Internet marketplaces, medical diagnostics and energy storage. Neil holds an MBA from The University of Chicago. Named a 2007 Technology Pioneer by the World Economic Forum, he twice attended their annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland. He has been recognized for Outstanding Entrepreneurship by the National Science Foundation.

MICHAEL KAPLOWITZ

Michael D. Kaplowitz is a professor of environmental law and policy. He received a J.D. from Duke University, received an M.A. in Latin American Studies, Environmental Policy, and International Economics from Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and a Ph.D. in Resource Development and Resource Economics from Michigan State University. Dr. Kaplowitz authored/edited Property Rights, Economics, and the Environment (Routledge Press) and has published peer-reviewed articles on nonmarket valuation of ecosystems, law and economics, wetlands, ecosystem services and watershed management, and research methods. He started the Green Israel study abroad program.

YORE KEDEM

Yore Kedem is Assistant Professor of Hebrew in the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages. He received his Ph.D. in Secondary and Continuing Education from the University of Illinois. Dr. Kedem’s primary research interests are experiential and aesthetic education, with emphasis on application in music, language, and study abroad. At Michigan State, Dr. Kedem teaches Hebrew at all levels, emphasizing practical and applicable learning. He also offers an inquiry-based course on immigration as a global issue from local perspectives for the Center for Integrative Studies in the Arts and Humanities. Yore Kedem has led the MSU Jewish Studies Study Abroad Program to the Hebrew University in 2016 and 2018, and will do so in 2019.

SCOTT LASENSKY

Scott Lasensky served as a Senior Policy Advisor on Israel, the Middle East and Jewish affairs in the Obama Administration from 2011-2017, based in Washington and Israel. He represented U.N. Ambassadors Susan E. Rice and Samantha J. Power in the interagency policymaking process, including participation in the Deputies Committee and other U.S. government and U.N. diplomatic processes. Dr. Lasensky is currently a Visiting Fellow at Israel’s Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) and an advisor to American philanthropists and community organizations. He received his Ph.D. from Brandeis University, Dr. Lasensky co-authored the book The Peace Puzzle: America’s Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace and Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace: American Leadership in the Middle East.
BENJAMIN LORCH
Benjamin Lorch teaches public affairs and political philosophy at James Madison College. He received his Ph.D. in political theory from Boston College. Dr. Lorch’s research focuses on classical and medieval political thought, particularly on the relation between philosophy and religion, and he has published articles on Plato and Xenophon in peer-reviewed political science journals. Dr. Lorch also conducts research in Jewish thought. He has delivered public lectures at MSU on Jewish political thinkers including Gershom Scholem and Maimonides, and most recently he published an article on Maimonides’ Guide of the Perplexed, “Maimonides on Prophecy and the Moral Law” in Interpretation: a Journal of Political Philosophy.

ILAN PELEG
Ilan Peleg is the author or editor of eleven books, including a political biography of Menachem Begin, Democratizing the Hegemonic State (a comparison of majority-minority relations in 14 countries), Israel’s Palestinians: The Conflict Within (with Dov Waxman), Human Rights in the West Bank & Gaza (1995, Choice Prize), an edited book on Israeli binationalism, a book on censorship, two edited volumes on corruption in the world, and more. He is the Charles A. Dana Professor of Government and Law at Lafayette College and Scholar at Washington’s Middle East Institute. Dr. Peleg has served as President of the Association for Israel Studies, and he is the founding editor-in-chief of the Association’s scholarly journal.

GALIT PELLED
Galit Pelled received her Ph.D. in Neuroscience from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and completed her post-doctoral fellowship at the National Institutes of Health. She recently moved from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore to direct the Neuroengineering division at the Institute of Quantitative Health and Sciences (IQ) at Michigan State University. Dr. Pelled’s expertise focuses on system neuroscience and neuroengineering. Her lab develops and readily adopts state-of-the-art multimodal experimental approaches. Dr. Pelled’s research capitalizes on advances in molecular biology, neuroimaging, neurostimulation and neuromodulation tools to develop innovative diagnostic and therapeutic technologies for neurological and cognitive disorders.

DONNA ROBINSON DIVINE
Donna Robinson Divine is the Morningstar Family Professor of Jewish Studies and Professor of Government, Emerita at Smith College, where she taught a variety of courses on Middle East Politics. Her books include Women Living Change: Cross-Cultural Perspectives; Essays from the Smith College Research Project on Women and Social Change; Politics and Society in Ottoman Palestine: The Arab Struggle for Survival and Power; Postcolonial Theory and The Arab-Israeli Conflict; and Exiled in the Homeland: Zionism and the Return to Mandate Palestine. She was named the Katharine Asher Engel lecturer at Smith College for the 2012-2013 academic year in recognition of her scholarly achievements, and she was also designated as Smith’s Honored Professor for the excellence of her teaching. Dr. Robinson Divine is currently serving as President of the Association for Israel Studies and as an Affiliate Professor at Israel’s University of Haifa.

GIORA RYTWO
Giora Rytwo is a Professor in Environmental Sciences at Tel Hai College and MIGAL Research Institute in Israel. His research and academic teaching focuses on several aspects of Environmental Physical Chemistry, including theoretical thermodynamic and kinetic aspects, developing of analytical techniques, and emphasis on applied remediation approaches. In the last 20 years, most of Dr. Rytwo’s research deals with water treatment technologies. He has submitted 25 patents and has brought three of his developments to market.
SALIBA SARSAR

Saliba Sarsar, born and raised in Jerusalem, is Professor of Political Science and Associate Vice President at Monmouth University, where he teaches courses on the Middle East and International Relations. He earned his doctoral degree from Rutgers University in Political Science, with specialization in International Relations and Middle Eastern affairs. Dr. Sarsar’s research, teaching, and writing interests focus on the Middle East, Palestinian-Israeli affairs, Jerusalem, and peace-building. He is the author of Jerusalem: The Home in Our Hearts; editor of Palestine and the Quest for Peace and of What Jerusalem Means to Us: Christian Perspectives and Reflections. Among Sarsar’s awards are the Award of Academic Excellence from the American Task Force on Palestine, the Humanitarian Award from the National Conference for Community and Justice, and the Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation Award.

ERIK SHAPIRO

Erik Shapiro is Associate Chair of Research and an associate professor in the Department of Radiology at Michigan State University. His Molecular and Cellular Imaging Laboratory (MCIL) develops and uses magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and x-ray computed tomography (CT) for molecular and cellular imaging of biological phenomena, regenerative medicine, and early detection of disease. Dr. Shapiro graduated from State University of New York at Binghamton with a degree in chemistry, and holds a master’s degree and Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Pennsylvania. He conducted his post-doctoral work in molecular imaging at the National Institutes of Health.

TSAHY SHAPSA

Tsahy Shapsa co-founded CloudLock, Inc, where he built its whole Go-to-market operations, serving as VP of Sales and Marketing and VP of Business Development. The company was acquired by Cisco for $293M in 2016. Prior to co-founding Cloudlock, Tsahy’s 20-year career included various business and technology management roles with companies such as Sun Microsystems and NetApp. Mr. Shapsa is passionate about entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs and serves on the board of directors and advisory boards of multiple start-up companies, as well as being an investor.

NADAV SHELEF

Nadav Shelef received his Ph.D. in political science from the University of California Berkeley in 2005. He is currently an Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where he serves as the Harvey M. Meyerhoff Professor of Israel Studies. Dr. Shelef teaches and studies nationalism, religion and politics, Israeli politics and society, and Middle East politics. His current projects focus on understanding how homelands change and the conditions under which religious parties moderate their positions.

GILEAD SHER

Gilead Sher heads the Center for Applied Negotiations and is a senior researcher at the Tel Aviv Institute for National Security Studies (INSS). He was PM Chief of Staff and Policy Coordinator to former Prime Minister Ehud Barak. In 1999-2001 he served as the Israeli Chief and co-Chief negotiator at the Camp David peace summit and the Taba peace talks. He co-chairs the NGO Blue White Future and chairs Sapir Academic College, the largest public college in Israel. In Fall 2016, Mr. Sher was Lecturer on Law at Harvard Law School. He authored The Israel-Palestinian Peace Negotiations, 1999-2001 within Reach and coedited Negotiating in Times of Conflict and Spoilers and Coping with Spoilers in Israeli Peacemaking. Attorney Sher is a senior partner in Gilead Sher & Co. law offices.
ODED SHOSEYOV

Oded Shoseyov is a faculty member of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research is in plant molecular biology protein engineering and nano-biotechnology. Dr. Shoseyov’s group focuses on bio-inspired nanocomposite materials. He has authored or co-authored more than 180 scientific publications and is the inventor or co-inventor of 50 patents. Dr. Shoseyov is a TED speaker. His talk was translated to 21 languages with more than 1.4 million views. Dr. Shoseyov received the 2012 Israel Prime Minister Citation for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. He is the scientific founder of 12 companies.

BILL SLOTT

Bill Slott moved to Kibbutz Ketura in the far south of Israel after graduating from Cornell University, and he has spent the last 36 years as a farmer, a tour guide, and a cantor, as well as serving as the community’s “Mazkir” (General Secretary). He also writes a column for The Times of Israel - "Israel Rediscovered" - and performs regularly in the bluegrass band The Arava Riders.

ALON TAL

Alon Tal is a Serling Visiting Israeli Scholar at Michigan State University and chair of the Public Policy Department of Tel Aviv University. He was the founding director of Adam Teva V’din, the Israel Union for Environmental Defense from 1990-1997, a leading public interest law group. Dr. Tal founded the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, a graduate studies center in which Israeli, Jordanian, and Palestinian students join environmentalists from around the world in an advanced interdisciplinary research program. Dr. Tal established the Tal Fund—a new grassroots ecological initiative in Israel in conjunction with the Jewish National Fund. His most recent books are The Land is Full: Addressing Overpopulation in Israel; All the Trees of the Forest; Water Wisdom; Speaking of Earth, and Pollution in a Promised Land. Dr. Tal received his Ph.D. from the Harvard School of Public Health in Environmental Health Policy and his law degree from Hebrew University.

KEN WALTZER

Kenneth Waltzer is Professor Emeritus of History in James Madison College and served as Director of Jewish Studies from 2004 until 2014. He received his Ph.D. in History from Harvard University and has won numerous teaching awards at Michigan State University. He was formerly Associate Dean and Interim Dean of James Madison College, and he directed the Center for Integrative Studies in Arts and Humanities. Dr. Waltzer’s interests cover American social and political history, especially urban and immigration history, and also modern Jewish history in Europe, America, and Israel, particularly the Holocaust and history beyond extremity in the camps. He is recognized internationally for his research and writing with Red Cross ITS documents and survivor testimonies in his work on the rescue of children at Buchenwald. Dr. Waltzer was historical consultant to and appeared in the feature-length documentary film Kinderblock 66: Return to Buchenwald. Since retiring from MSU, Kenneth Waltzer has served as executive director of the Academic Engagement Network, a national faculty organization, committed to countering the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement and to helping protect free speech and academic freedom on campus.

TAMARA COFMAN WITTES

Tamara Cofman Wittes is a senior fellow in the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. She served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs from November of 2009 to January 2012, coordinating U.S. policy on democracy and human rights in the Middle East during the Arab uprisings. Dr. Wittes is the author of Freedom’s Unsteady March: America’s Role in Building Arab Democracy and the editor of How Israelis and Palestinians Negotiate: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of the Oslo Peace Process. Her current research is for a forthcoming book, Our SOBs, on the tangled history of America’s ties to autocratic allies. Dr. Cofman Wittes holds a doctorate in government from Georgetown University. She serves on the board of the National Democratic Institute, as well as the advisory board of the Israel Institute, and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and Women in International Security. Dr. Wittes was one of the first recipients of the Rabin-Peres Peace Award, established by President Bill Clinton in 1997.
DORON YORK

Doron York was born and raised in Tel Aviv but has been a die-hard Michigander for the past 32 years. His high-level experience as a Special Forces officer, along with his passion for business and human performance helped distinguish him as the “Navy SEAL of Business.” He has developed an extraordinary ability to develop ordinary people into high performers with vast experience in translating any solid vision into business realities. At the same time he was managing his own business, Mr. York began providing coaching services to Fortune 100 companies’ senior executives in creating “Intrapreneurship” within their organizations, causing breakthrough results in a short time. The high-impact investing model he has created combines more than 50 years of proven high-performance leadership models.

HARRY YUKLEA

Harry Yuklea is a Serling Visiting Israeli Scholar at Michigan State University this semester. He is both an academic and practitioner and has been directly involved for the last 40 years in the remarkable build-up process of the Israeli high-tech sector. Dr. Yuklea has held executive and board positions at a series of tech firms. He served as advisor to the Israeli National Economic Council, the Israel Innovation Authority and various international agencies. He recently co-founded Quantum China-Israel Investment Ltd., a Chinese firm specializing in creating Israel-China technology joint ventures. Dr. Yuklea holds a Ph.D. in Business Management from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He currently serves Israeli universities including the Hebrew University, the Technion, and Tel Aviv University. Dr. Yuklea has held visiting professorships at several international universities.

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The Michael and Elaine Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel at Michigan State University has one of the most robust Israel Studies components in the country, and we are continuing to grow. Often, 16 courses a year are offered on different aspects of Israel Studies and Hebrew by the program’s faculty, its Serling Visiting Israeli scholars, as well as faculty leading our study abroad programs in Israel.

Our study abroad programs to Israel are thriving. For the last 20 years, we have offered a study abroad program based at the Hebrew University each July, and for the last 12 years we have offered a second faculty led “Nature, Culture, and Environmental Issues in a Green Israel” program. Over 200 MSU students have benefited from our study abroad programs. Almost all students have received generous scholarships that cover the program fees through the Ed Levy and Dresner scholarships, Albert and Sherie Gladner scholarships, and the Ed and Dot Slade Scholarships. The Levy scholarship is expanding to include internship and research scholarships for our students, as will the new Modern Israel endowment from the Serlings. We helped support Create for STEM MSU PhD students, led by an Israeli post-doc at MSU, to study abroad at the Weitzman Institute in Israel in the summer of 2017 and hope to continue that in future years. In addition, we have a new James and Anna Hersh scholarship for students conducting internships in Israel.

Over the past six years we have hosted over seven visiting Israeli scholars in four different colleges at MSU, who have offered a total of 27 courses. They have included anthropologists, architects, screenwriters, documentary film makers and directors, political scientists, environmentalists, and business entrepreneurs. This has been possible through the Michael and Elaine Serling Visiting Israeli Scholar Endowment, as well as support from the Israel Institute and the Schusterman Foundation. Not only do these scholars offer courses to our undergraduates that count for the Jewish Studies minor, but they also help strengthen relations between their Israeli universities and MSU, facilitate research collaboration, and assist with academic conferences that include both Israeli and American scholars. Visiting scholars also help guide our students with internships and graduate study opportunities in Israel. Over six of our students have pursued graduate studies in Israel in conflict resolution, counter-terrorism, and Middle East Studies. Our graduates are pursuing PhD programs in Israel Studies, have worked for NGO's and think tanks related to the Middle East, and have worked in the U.S. government on Israel related issues.

The Michael and Elaine Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel also benefits from the Serling Endowment in Israeli Culture, which provides support for this conference and has helped us sponsor 14 annual MSU Israeli Film Festivals, showing over 64 Israeli films and hosting many of the film’s directors to introduce and discuss the films. We have also hosted many annual Serling lectures on Modern Israel and other lectures that include prominent novelists, journalists, film directors, political scientists, historians, professors of literature, and policy makers including David Grossman, Etgar Keret, Sayed Kashua, Meir Shalev, Dennis Ross, Daniel Kurzer, Yael Katzir, Ilan Troen, as well as some of our conference participants such as Alan Dowty, Robert Freedman, Ilan Peleg, Alon Tal, Rachel Harris, and Yuval Benziman.

The Michael and Elaine Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel has sponsored two previous symposia related to Israel Studies. The most recent was “Sustainable Management of Iconic Lakes: Lessons Learned from Lake Michigan and Lake Kinneret (Sea of Galilee)” in Fall 2016. In Fall 2013 we sponsored the Symposium on Modern Hebrew and Israeli Literature to celebrate the Holtzman Israeli Literature Collection and Archive at MSU Libraries. The Irwin T. and Shirley Holtzman Collection of Israeli Literature at Michigan State University contains works published from the early 20th century through the early 21st century, with a focus on belles-lettres. The archival portion of the collection contains a wealth of primary resources, including manuscripts of poetry and drama; posters advertising literary events; political cartoons and other original artwork; and Irwin “Toby” Holtzman's extensive correspondence with many important Israeli literary figures, including Amalia Kahana-Carmon, Yoram Kaniuk, Amos Oz, and A.B. Yehoshua. The Holtzman Collection is accessible to scholars and the public alike at the MSU Libraries’ Special Collections. For more information, contact librarian Deborah Margolis, deborahm@msu.edu, or see https://libguides.lib.msu.edu/jewishstudies/holtzman

For more information on minoring in the Michael and Elaine Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel, our scholarships, visiting scholar opportunities, and/or to receive our bi-annual newsletters and emails of events, please contact Institute Director Yael Aronoff, aronoffy@msu.edu