



The Michael and Elaine Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel

Fall 2021
NEWSLETTER

We in the Serling Institute community are looking forward to a year that will return to some relative sense of normality, while carrying forward the beneficial lessons learned from the challenges of the last 18 months. With all MSU community members being vaccinated, the vast majority of courses will be in person, and some of our programming will be in person, while also being livestreamed for those who want to participate virtually. While uncertainties about the future of the pandemic remain, we know that we will continue to provide a strong intellectual community, to be resilient, and to thrive.

The newsletter you are holding contains lots of good news to celebrate. The Serling Institute study abroad at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem was one of the very few MSU study abroad programs that was able to run this summer, thanks to low rates of COVID in Israel at the time and the hard work of Professor Yore Kedem. Please read about the great experiences of our students, of whom we are so proud. You can also read about the 14 students who presented their Jewish Studies related research at our annual Serling Institute Undergraduate Research Conference in April, as well as about the experiences of several highlighted JS minors. We are also thrilled to highlight so many of our faculty who received competitive teaching awards or research grants to work on their path-breaking Jewish Studies related research.

In response to rising antisemitism globally, nationally, and on college campuses, we are strengthening our efforts to provide antisemitism education on campus. We have long-standing courses on antisemitism and on the Holocaust, and we have provided lectures and teach-ins on antisemitism. In addition, this summer we embarked on a new initiative, establishing a committee to draft a guide on antisemitism, which will be used as a resource for MSU faculty, students, staff, and administrators. Throughout the summer our committee of select faculty, staff, and students worked together to draft the guide. Going forward, the committee will solicit input from our faculty, Hillel staff, our Advisory Board, Dr. Jabbar Bennett Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer, and colleagues working on antisemitism at other universities, before we distribute it across campus. In conjunction with this initiative, we are sponsoring a discussion of portions of the new book, *Contending with Antisemitism in a Rapidly Changing Environment*, edited by Alvin Rosenfeld, forthcoming in November 2021. We also organized a Jonathan Netanyahu Symposium on Antisemitism, which includes two panels of six experts from across the country, who will engage the campus community

on the history of antisemitism, its relationship to white nationalism, the concept of intersectionality and Jews, as well as the campus climate.

We continue to focus on the diversity of Jews and of Jewish experiences in our courses and in our programming. We are thrilled that Professor Bruce Haynes will deliver the Inaugural Leonard Gilman Lecture on Jewish Culture. He will present “Black Folks and the Jewish Experience” based on his recently published book, *The Soul of Judaism: Jews of African Descent*. We also have organized a fascinating Finifter panel on Romaniote Jews from Greece which will include: Zanet Battinou, the Director of the Jewish Museum of Greece in Ioannina, Greece; Moses Elisaf, the first Jewish mayor in Greece and the current mayor of Ioannina; and Marcia Haddad Ikononopoulos, the Museum Director of Kehila Kedosha Janina in NYC, who will discuss the experiences of over half of the Romaniote Jewish Community of Ioannina that immigrated to the US from 1906-1924.

In addition, we are sponsoring three Israel-related lectures on varied themes: Israel’s response to the global climate crisis; Israeli-UAE cooperation on promoting the rights of the disabled through the Abraham Accords; and ongoing contradictory trends regarding Israel’s perceived legitimacy. To deliver these thought-provoking lectures we have eminent speakers including: Michigan Supreme Court Justice Richard Bernstein, who spent 6 months in Israel and the UAE working on fostering cooperation in several areas for people with disabilities; Serling Visiting Israeli Scholar and Knesset Member Alon Tal who is intimately involved with environmental advocacy; and Professor Ilan Troen, a pioneer in the field of Israel Studies.

We hope that you will join us for our rich programming over Zoom or in person. If you have any questions about the Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel you are welcome to contact me at aronoffy@msu.edu or at 517-303-6019.

Professor Yael Aronoff
Director, Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel

A Backward Glance: Celebrating the Fifth Annual Serling Institute Undergraduate Research Conference Which Took Place April 9, 2021.

8:45am—10:00am Panel 1

Identity in Israel and Beyond

Discussant: Professor Marc Bernstein

- ✦ Pelli Mechnikov - “Becoming Israeli: Stories of Aliyah”
- ✦ Yael Eichhorn - “Tzniut and Modern Day Jewry”
- ✦ Ben Francis - “Graffiti in the Israeli-Palestinian Context”

10:15am—11:15am Panel 2

Oral History and American Jewish Experiences

Discussant: Professor Amy Simon

- ✦ Joshua Montgomery-Patt - “Skokie Jews’ Experiences Surrounding the 1977 Attempted Nazi March”
- ✦ Leah Welch - “Like a Snapshot of a Bigger Picture: Oral History and the Role of the Individual”

11:30am—12:45pm Panel 3

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and Its Impacts

Discussant: Professor Yore Kedem

- ✦ Scott Howard - “The Impact of Israeli-Arab Small Arms Evolution on the Conflict”
- ✦ Stephanie Garcia - “The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Psychological Effects on Populations’ Youth”
- ✦ Roya Rochelle - “Women’s and Children’s Healthcare in Israel and Palestine”

12:55—1:05pm

Recognition of Yael Eichhorn and Hannah Margolis as recipients of the Serling Institute Student Achievement Awards

1:05—2:20pm Panel 4

American Jewish Community Life in the 20th Century: Unity, Division, and Violence

Discussant: Professor Kirsten Fermaglich

- ✦ Blair Bean - “Jewish Camp Culture”
- ✦ Hannah Margolis - “From the Forbidden to the Mitten: Out of State Jewish Student Population at Michigan State University from 1936-1966”
- ✦ Dalena Cross - “Some were Leaders and Some Led: Gender Violence within Jewish Communities in America Between the 1880’s and the 1940’s”

2:30pm—3:45pm Panel 5

Efforts to Resolve the Israeli Palestinian Conflict and the UN

Discussant: Professor Yael Aronoff

- ✦ Remy Reed - “The Interaction and Influence of Arab Monarchies on Palestinians and on the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process”
- ✦ Angelina Sandora - “Zionism and its Effects on the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process”
- ✦ Ellie Baden - “Naming and Shaming of Israel in the United Nations Human Rights Council”

4:00pm—5:00pm Keynote and Discussion

Marissa Cloutier, Jewish Studies Minor Alumna 2010

Marissa Cloutier (née Tons) discussed her experience applying what she learned through the curriculum of the Jewish Studies minor, including her visits to Israel and internship at the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv with the U.S. Commercial Service, to her career in international trade as a Division Chief at the U.S. State Department.



FALL EVENTS 2021

Some of our events this semester will be held virtually, while others will take place in person and be livestreamed. Masks are required to be worn at in-person events. As pandemic conditions are constantly evolving, some in-person events might be moved online. For our virtual events you can press on "Register here" and you will receive a Zoom link. The events and Zoom links will be advertised through email as well. If you are not getting our emails, please contact us at jewishst@msu.edu. Thank you for your understanding.



What Happens When the Middle East Gets Even Hotter? Israel's Response to the Global Climate Crisis

| Register here
Sunday, September 19th 11:00am-12:30pm



Climate change is expected to be particularly severe in the Middle East. Israel and its neighbors are already seeing statistically significant changes in the weather. This lecture constitutes a briefing of the present situation and what changes are projected ahead. It will also consider the geopolitical implications associated with extreme weather events, droughts and climate refugees. While Israel for many years was slow in fielding a meaningful response to the climate crisis, in response to the increasing manifestations and new signals about global norms coming from Washington and the Biden administration -- this is starting to change. What can we expect from the Israeli government policies as the world looks to the UN Climate Conference in Glasgow and how does Israel's new government differ from that of previous, Netanyahu cabinets?

Dr. Alon Tal is a Serling Visiting Israeli Scholar teaching at James Madison College in MSU for the seventh time during the Fall 2021 semester. Dr. Alon Tal [Sc.D., Harvard University; LI.B., Hebrew University] has taken an absence from the Department of Public Policy at Tel Aviv University to serve in the Israeli Knesset as a member of the Blue and White party; he will focus on environmental issues, religious pluralism, keeping the door open to the two state solution, and gender equality. He founded the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, a graduate studies center in which students join Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian environmentalists to study common environmental challenges and solutions. Dr. Tal founded and served as the co-chair of Israel's Green Party. He also established Adam Teva V'din, The Israel Union for Environmental Defense. He is the author or editor of eleven books, including most recently a co-edited book, *Climate Change, Environment and National Security, A New Front* (2021) and *The Land Is Full: Addressing Overpopulation in Israel*, New Haven, Yale University Press, (2016).

Presentation and discussion with students on internship opportunities in Israel by Alon Tal

| Register here

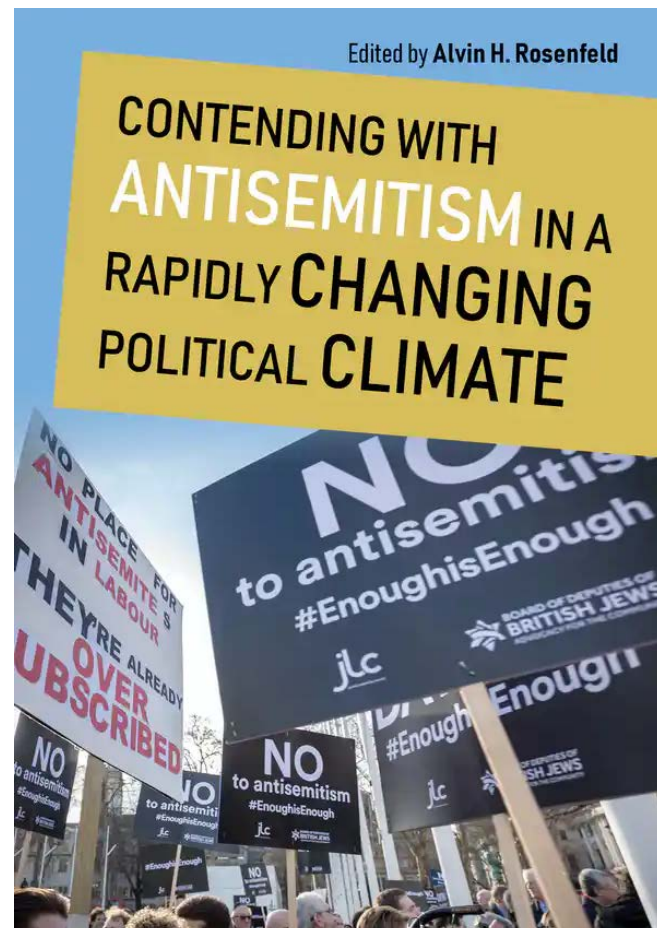
Monday, September 19th 12:30-1:30pm



Discussion of selected chapters in *Contending with Antisemitism in a Rapidly Changing Political Climate* edited by Alvin H. Rosenfeld

Friday, September 24th 12:00pm-1:30pm,
Wells B342

Faculty, students, and community members interested in participating in the book discussion should contact Ariana at mentzela@msu.edu, to receive PDFs of selected chapters. These chapters will include: "Contending with Antisemitism in its Many Forms on American Campuses," "In the Context of a Coarsened Climate," and "Rethinking Campus Antisemitism in America and How to Address It."



Finifter Panel on Romaniote/Greek Jews

Friday, October 1st 10:00am-12:00pm | [Register here](#)



The speakers will be available from 12-1pm to talk to students and faculty about research or internship opportunities related to Romaniote Jews. The Serling Institute offers Finifter Scholarships to cover the costs of these opportunities.



Zanet Battinou - "The Jewish Community of Ioannina: A Journey in Time through the Collections of the Jewish Museum of Greece"

This brief presentation by the Director of the Jewish Museum of Greece, archaeologist Zanet Battinou, will offer a journey through aspects of the Romaniote history and tradition of Ioannina, examining selected artifacts from the Museum's permanent exhibition and collections. The Jewish Museum of Greece was founded almost 45 years ago to collect, preserve, research, and present evidence of the history and culture of the Greek Jews and their centuries of presence in the southeastern corner of Europe.

Zanet Battinou is a native of Ioannina and of the local Jewish Community. She studied Archaeology and Museology. She represents the Jewish Museum of Greece in organizations such as ICOM and AEJM. She has been participating in the biannual meetings of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance since 2000 as a member of the Greek National Delegation, while since 2005, she has been serving as a delegate in the Museums & Memorials Working Group of the organization. Under her leadership, the JMG initiated Holocaust Education in Greece in 2001.

Moses Elisaf - "Romaniote Jewry: Past, Present and Future"

This lecture will focus on the rich history and tradition of Romaniote Jewry, as well as a personal story of the challenges of being the first Jewish Mayor in Greece, especially during the pandemic.

Moses Elisaf is Professor of Medicine and the President of the historical Jewish Community of Ioannina for the last 20 years. He is Mayor of Ioannina and is strongly committed to preserve the memory of the city and to make its rich multicultural past known.



Marcia Haddad Ikononopoulos - "From the Cobblestone Streets of Ioannina to the Sidewalks of New York"

From 1906 to 1924 over half of the Romaniote Jewish Community of Ioannina immigrated to the USA; for most the port of entry was Ellis Island in New York Harbor. Why did they leave? What was different about their experience, both in Greece and in New York? What institutions did they establish? What occupations did they engage in? What remains of the Romaniote presence in New York? This presentation will fill the void often felt by Romaniote Jews and explain how they are represented in mainstream studies.

Marcia Haddad Ikononopoulos is Museum Director of Kehila Kedosha Janina and President of the Association of Friends of Greek Jewry. As a former educator, writer, editor and translator, she has dedicated her life to telling the story of Greek Jewry. Ms. Ikononopoulos was honored to be chosen as a member of the scholarly committee that reviewed, translated and microfilmed the Salonika Archives at YIVO, and which compiled the text and visuals for the USHMM's website on the Holocaust of Greek Jewry.



The Jonathan Netanyahu Symposium on Antisemitism

Friday, October 8th 10am-3:00pm | [Register here](#)



Panel 1: 10:00am-12:00pm “Antisemitism: Past and Present Permutations”



David Nirenberg - “Does Anti-Judaism’s Past Tell Us Anything About Its Future?”

Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism have a long history. How can the study of that history help us to understand the present, and what can it offer the future?

David Nirenberg is Dean of The Divinity School and Deborah R. and Edgar D. Jannotta Distinguished Service Professor at the University of Chicago, where he has also served as Dean of the Social Sciences and Executive Vice Provost. Much of his research focuses on the ways in which Jewish, Christian, and Islamic cultures constitute themselves by relating to or thinking about each other. His prize-winning books include *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*, and *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*, and *Neighboring Faiths: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism Medieval and Modern*. His most recent book, written in collaboration with a mathematician, is *Uncountable: A Philosophical History of Number and Humanity from Antiquity to the Present*. He is currently at work on a World History of Race and Religion in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.



Eric Ward - “Skin in the Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism”

Where do we currently stand in relation to the nation’s reckoning with the issues of race, white privilege and inequality, and what stake do we have in this process? Eric K. Ward, Executive Director of Western States Center, will discuss the historical contexts, current challenges and future possibilities that together reflect the connections between antisemitism and white nationalist ideology in the United States.

Eric K. Ward is a nationally-recognized expert on the relationship between authoritarian movements, hate violence, and preserving inclusive democracy. In his 30+ year civil rights career, he has worked with community groups, government and business leaders, human rights advocates, and philanthropy as an organizer, director, program officer, consultant, and board member. The recipient of the Peabody-Facebook Futures Media Award, Eric’s widely quoted writings and speeches are credited with key narrative shifts. He currently serves as Executive Director of Western States Center, Senior Fellow with Southern Poverty Law Center and Race Forward, and Co-Chair for The Proteus Fund.



David Schraub - “White Jews: An Intersectional Approach”

The application of both “intersectionality” and “whiteness” to American Jews is controversial within many segments of the Jewish community. However, I suggest that an intersectional approach offers the best way of understanding the dynamic relationship between Jewishness and Whiteness, and can help illuminate elements of the Jewish experience that would otherwise remain obscure. Resisting simplistic conclusions that Jews uncomplicatedly either are or are not “White,” my core claim is that Whiteness and Jewishness in combination function in ways that are not necessarily grasped if one atomizes the identities and holds them apart. What Whiteness “does” to Jewishness is act as an accelerant for certain forms of antisemitic marginalization even as it ratifies a racialized hierarchy within the Jewish community. Absent an intersectional vantage, many political projects and controversies surrounding Jewish equality will be systematically misunderstood.

David Schraub is an Assistant Professor of Law at Lewis & Clark Law School, where he teaches courses on constitutional law and anti-discrimination law. He previously taught at DePaul University, the University of California-Berkeley, and the University of Illinois. David has published extensively on the subjects of antisemitism and anti-discrimination more broadly in both academic and popular outlets, such as the *California Law Review*, the *American Political Science Review*, and the *Association of Jewish Studies (AJS) Review*, as well as *The Atlantic*, *The Jewish Daily Forward*, and *Haaretz*. He holds a B.A. from Carleton College, a J.D. from the University of Chicago Law School, and a Ph.D. from the University of California-Berkeley.



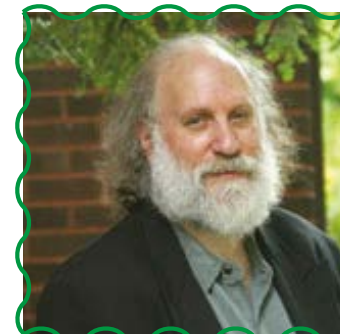
Panel 2: 1:00pm-3:00pm “Antisemitism and the Campus Climate”



Saba Soomekh - “From the Classroom to the Quad: The Rise of Antisemitism and a Hostile Campus Climate”

Dr. Soomekh will discuss the many challenges Jewish and pro-Israel students deal with regarding the rise of antisemitism on campus and in the classroom. She will discuss how we can support Jewish students and their allies in order to build a secure and positive campus environment and empower campus leaders to strengthen their Jewish community’s position within the larger university. Finally, Dr. Soomekh will specifically address the antisemitism Iranian and other Mizrahi Jews experience in America and their Ashkenormative experience on campus.

Dr. Saba Soomekh is the Associate Director at the American Jewish Committee-Los Angeles and a lecturer at The Academy for Jewish Religion-CA, where she teaches Religious Studies and Middle Eastern History courses. Dr. Soomekh teaches and writes extensively on World Religions, Women and Religion, intersectionality and its impact on the Jewish community, and the geo-politics of the Middle East. She is a participant in the 2021 Fellows Program at King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID), and was a Scholar-in-Residence at Oxford University with the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy. Professor Soomekh is the editor of the book *Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews in America* and the author of the book *From the Shahs to Los Angeles: Three Generations of Iranian Jewish Women between Religion and Culture*.



Cary Nelson - “The Academic Mandate for Antisemitism”

Anti-Zionist beliefs have become institutionalized in a number of humanities and social science departments. As a consequence, the guard rails that blocked or discouraged their faculty from drifting from anti-Zionism to antisemitism have disintegrated. Teaching about contemporary antisemitism should therefore confront current faculty practices.

Cary Nelson is Jubilee Professor of Liberal Arts & Sciences Emeritus at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Dr. Nelson was President of the American Association of University Professors between 2006 and 2012. His 35 authored books include 5 about antisemitism and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict including *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel* (Co-edited with Gabriel Noah Brahm, 2015) and *Israel Denial: Anti-Zionism, Anti-Semitism, & The Faculty Campaign Against the Jewish State* (2019).



Ethan Katz - “From Jewish Studies Educator to Anti-Bias Training Filmmaker: How the Changing Realities of Campus Politics Led Me to the Fight Against Antisemitism”

In this talk, Prof. Ethan Katz will present the acclaimed training film *Antisemitism in Our Midst: Past and Present*, which he co-wrote with colleagues at UC-Berkeley. He will explain how over the past couple of years, his scholarship, background, and political circumstances have led him to focus substantial attention on antisemitism education at Berkeley and far beyond. Drawing on that experience, Dr. Katz will address what he sees as the key challenges and most promising approaches in that work today and how those shaped the training film.

Ethan Katz is Associate Professor of History and Jewish Studies at the University of California-Berkeley, where he is also the Chair of the Chancellor’s Committee on Jewish Life and Campus Climate. Since the spring of 2019, he has been the co-founder and co-director of the Antisemitism Education Initiative at Berkeley (along with Rabbi Naftalin-Kelman). This effort brings together administrators, faculty, and leaders of the campus Jewish community to create a sustained program to combat antisemitism, and has been treated as a resource and model by colleagues on a number of other campuses. Dr. Katz is also currently the co-chair of a Task Force of the Association for Jewish Studies on Antisemitism and Academic Freedom.

As a scholar, Dr. Katz’s work has focused on the Jewish experience in modern Europe and the Middle East, especially in France and the Francophone world. Much of his scholarship examines Jewish belonging and exclusion, Jewish-Muslim relations, the Holocaust, Islamophobia, and colonialism and its legacies. His book *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (Harvard, 2015) received five prizes, including a National Jewish Book Award and two awards for the best book of the year in French history.

MI Supreme Court Justice Richard Bernstein: “The Human Face of the Abraham Accords: Disability as a Common Struggle”

Tuesday, October 12th 7:00-8:30pm, Lincoln Room of the Kellogg Center

Michigan Supreme Court Justice Richard Bernstein will discuss his experiences working for three months in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and three months in Israel in 2021 to forge relationships and develop a common understanding of the struggles faced by the disabled, and the strength and resilience that emerges from those struggles. Justice Bernstein, who is blind, was invited by the UAE, in the wake of the Abraham Accords, to help draft policy empowering the disabled. Bernstein will describe how leaders and community members of each country worked to promote cooperation in the areas of education, job placement programs, and athletic opportunities. Bringing Israeli assistive technologies and logistical capabilities in these areas to bear, Israeli organizations like the Shalva National Center and Access Israel, with Bernstein's guidance, worked with organizations like the Ministry of Community Development of the UAE to develop new initiatives and projects, as well as develop relationships of mutual understanding through shared experiences. Richard Bernstein has been doing this kind of advocacy work with the United Nations for years.

Justice Richard Bernstein became the first elected blind justice to the Michigan Supreme Court in November 2014. Prior to being elected to Michigan's highest court, Justice Bernstein was known as a tireless advocate for the rights of the disabled, heading the public service division for The Sam Bernstein Law Firm. Blind since birth, Justice Bernstein is a graduate of the University of Michigan and earned his JD from Northwestern University School of Law.

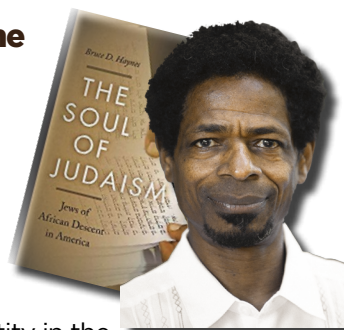
In his spare time, Justice Bernstein is an avid runner, completing 24 marathons-including fourteen New York City marathons, a full Ironman triathlon, and a half Ironman.

The Inaugural Leonard Gilman Lecture on Jewish Culture: Black Folks and the Jewish Experience | [Register here](#)



Bruce D. Haynes, Professor of Sociology, University of California Davis will speak about his most recent publication, *The Soul of Judaism: Jews of African Descent in America* (NYU Press 2018), which challenges the dominant paradigm that Jews are white and of European descent. The book won the 2019 Albert J Raboteau Prize for Best Book in Africana Religions. Haynes has spent the last two decades studying Black-Jewish relations and Afro-Jewish identity in the U.S.

Dr. Haynes is professor of sociology at the University of California, Davis and a Senior Fellow in the Urban Ethnography Project at Yale University. Dr. Haynes' work uses ethnographic and historical methodologies to extend and expand racialization as an analytical and explanatory framework for understanding racial group boundaries and neighborhood segregation.



Serling Modern Israel Lecture: The Struggle over Israel's Legitimacy; A Status Report and Analysis

Tuesday, November 16th 7:00-8:30pm, Club Spartan, Case Hall 3rd Floor

The struggle over the establishment of a Jewish state in a land sacred to the three main streams of monotheism is entering a second century after the beginnings of the dispute over the Balfour Declaration (1917) and the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine (1922). The establishment of Israel in 1948 did not end the conflict. In fact, it has reached a new stage in recent decades with Israel's demonization as an apartheid, racist and colonial-settler state and the call for BDS. At the same time, Israel has reached unprecedented acceptance with recognition by more than 160 states worldwide including a growing number of proximate Arab, Muslim countries. The presentation will examine and comment on these contrary movements.

Ilan Troen is professor emeritus of both the Lopin Chair of Modern History (Ben-Gurion University, 2007) and the Stoll Family Chair in Israel Studies (Brandeis, 2017). He was the director of the Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism (Sde Boker) and of the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies (Brandeis). He is a past president of the Association for Israel Studies. Dr. Troen has authored or edited numerous books in American, Jewish, and Israeli history. He is the founding editor of the journal *Israel Studies* and the book series *Perspectives on Israel Studies* (Indiana University Press). Publications include *Imagining Zion: Dreams, Designs and Realities in a Century of Jewish Settlement*; with Jacob Lassner, *Jews and Muslims in the Arab World*; *Haunted by Pasts Real and Imagined*; and, with Rachel Fish (eds.), *Essential Israel: Essays for the Twenty-First Century*. He is completing a manuscript on *Israel's Struggle for Legitimacy; the First Century*.

Academic News

Yael Aronoff has the following publications and conference presentations: “Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu,” *Handbook of Israeli Democracy*, ed. P.R. Kumaraswamy, Palgrave, forthcoming 2021; Book Review of *Babel - A Guide to the East-West Encounter* (Ben Gurion University of Negev: 2020) by Ofer Grosbard, *Political Science Quarterly* Fall 2021; Book Review of *Israeli Foreign Policy Since the End of the Cold War* by Amnon Aran, *Middle East Journal* Fall 2021; “Hope Against Hope: The New Israeli Government,” *Detroit Jewish News*, June 24, 2021. At the Association of Israel Studies Conference June 7-9, 2021 hosted by the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign (virtual) Dr. Aronoff concluded her term as President and presided over the General Assembly and Board meetings. She presented “Pathways to Peace: The Legitimation of a Two-State Solution,” participated in the APSA sponsored “Roundtable on U.S.-Israel Relations in a Post-Trump Era,” participated in a “Roundtable Honoring Joel Migdal,” and chaired the “Roundtable on the *Oxford Handbook of Israeli Politics and Society*, edited by Reuven Y. Hazan, Alan Dowty, Menachem Hofnung, and Gideon Rahat, (Oxford University Press, 2021).” She also presented “Israeli Prime Ministers: Transforming the Victimhood Discourse,” IPSA World Congress of Political Science Conference, Universidade NOVA de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal, July 10-15, 2021 (virtual). Dr. Aronoff will be participating in the plenary session on varied perspectives on Israel's foreign and security policy at the The European Association of Israel Studies annual conference which will be held virtually at The National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA) Bucharest 10-12 October 2021. She will be participating in a roundtable on “Teaching the Israeli/Palestinian Present,” at the Association of Jewish Studies Conference, December 19-21, 2021 in Chicago.

Steve Gold published “The Jewish Israeli Diaspora,” Ch 26 in *The Oxford Handbook of the Jewish Diaspora*. Hasia R. Diner (ed.), Oxford University Press, 2021. Dr. Gold also presented at IMISCOE (International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion in Europe) a paper entitled “Does privilege travel?” Debating class, privilege, and belonging within contemporary forms of mobility and migration,” as part of a session on “Privileged Mobilities: local impacts, belonging and citizenship. His second paper, “Just do IT? Cultural capital and Israeli techies in the US and the Netherlands” is co-authored with Nir Cohen (Bar Ilan University).

Amy Simon will present her paper, “‘Why is the Whole World Deaf to our Screams?’: Jewish Responses to Potential Allied Rescue in the Ghettos of Nazi-Occupied Poland” at the Forty-Fifth Annual German Studies Association Conference, Sept. 30-Oct. 3, 2021, Indianapolis, IN. She will also present the virtual public lecture, “Antisemitism in the 21st Century” as part of the “Sundays at Seven” program at Temple Chai, Long Grove, IL, November 2021.

Chantal Tetreault is co-editor with Sarah Hillewaert (U Toronto) for a special issue of the journal *Religion and Society*, appearing Fall 2021, entitled “Spiritual Communities: Reimagining Sharedness in Belief and Practice.” Professor Tetreault will also have an article in that special issue, entitled “Wrestling with Tradition: Reconstructing Jewish Community through Negotiating Shared Purpose.” Chantal thanks Kirsten Fermaglich, Steven Weiland, and Laura Yares for their incredibly helpful suggestions on revising her article. She also thanks Yael Aronoff and the Serling Institute for their support.

Laura Yares' research on Jewish learning and cultural arts was featured in an article published in the *Times of Israel*, and in a forum for ethnographic research during COVID-19 organized by Georgetown University. An article from this project, “Saturday Night Seder and the Affordances of Cultural Arts during COVID-19,” co-authored with Sharon Avni from CUNY, will appear in the journal *Contemporary Jewry* this fall. She will speak about this research, as well as her book project on nineteenth-century Jewish Sunday schools, at the upcoming meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Association for Jewish Studies in fall 2021. She also contributed an article, “The Education of Jewish Girls in the United States” to the Jewish Women's Archive's new edition of the Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women, which is now available online.

Ken Waltzer's essay, “Contending with Antisemitism on American Campuses,” will appear this fall in *Contending with Antisemitism in a Rapidly Changing Political Climate*, ed., Alvin Rosenfeld, Indiana University Press, 2021.



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If you wish to make a gift via check, please make your check payable to Michigan State University and in the memo section include Serling Institute. Please mail it to: University Advancement, Spartan Way, 535 Chestnut Road Room 300, East Lansing, MI 48824. If you have questions about giving, please contact: Christine Radtke, CFRE, Sr. Director of Development, College of Arts & Letters at 517.353.4725 or email at radtkech@msu.edu

THE SERLING INSTITUTE SUMMER PROGRAM AT HEBREW UNIVERSITY

By Yore Kedem



In June-July 2021, the Summer Program for the Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel took place on the Mount Scopus Campus of Hebrew University in Jerusalem. This program, which was extended to 5.5 weeks instead of the usual twenty-five days, included two four-credit courses. Prof. Yore Kedem, who led the program, taught a course titled Immigration and Cultural Diversity in Israel. Prof. David Mendelsson of Hebrew University taught the other course in the program - The Emergence of the State of Israel.

Leading study abroad programs is always challenging. Carrying through the Serling Institute Summer Program in Jerusalem in 2021 has proved to be even more of a challenge than in normal years. Supported by hard work by Serling Institute staff, the Education Abroad Office at MSU, Rothberg School for International Students at Hebrew University, and the Israeli Consulate in Chicago, we recruited ten students, and pushed through administrative challenges, COVID19 regulations, and a conflict with Hamas. On June 14, nine students arrived at the Student Village at Hebrew University, joined by a tenth student two weeks later.

Upon arrival in Israel, students entered quarantine in the dorms, and took a serological blood test within a day of arrival. After taking class on Zoom for two days, most

students were out of quarantine on time for the first group outing. This trip to Central Jerusalem included an orientation, followed by the first observation exercise, in which students observed and interviewed people for two hours. Later in the course, students repeated this exercise in the Old City of Jerusalem, and in the Carmel Market area of Tel Aviv.

Observations and interviews with locals are central for Prof. Kedem's class. For this class, students develop independent research projects, and integrate their experiences with the academic readings and discussions in the course. This course also included meeting several guest speakers. We met Siba Awad, an East Jerusalem Arab, who told us about her life as a resident of East Jerusalem, married to an Israeli Arab and mother of a child with Israeli citizenship. On a field trip to Ashdod, we met Sharon Eretz, who discussed her conversion and Aliyah story. On another field trip to Kfar Qara, we met with Dr. Muhamad



in the port of Jaffa

Yehia, who told us about the challenges of running a scientific non-profit organization and startup center in the Arab Triangle area in Northern Israel.

A new component in this year's program was a visit to Start-Up Nation Central in Tel Aviv. Organized and hosted by Harry Yuklea, Serling Visiting Israeli Professor at the Broad College of Business at MSU, the visit included several presentations on the technology sector in Israel, and meeting members of the center and Harry's company. Part of the discussion was the integration of different parts of Israeli society into the high tech sector, and the efforts that the Israeli government is doing to advance the integration of Ultraorthodox Jews and Israeli Arabs into this industry.



in the port of Jaffa

Dr. Mendelsson's course included two field trips, one to Tel Aviv, to discuss its central role in the building of Israel, and a trip to Mount Herzl, which demonstrated to the students the emergence of a "secular religion" in Israel. Following this trip was a visit to Yad Vashem, Israel's central Holocaust museum.

Students integrated these experiences into independent research projects. Among the topics investigated were the impact of kashrut laws on the restaurant industry, language in Israel, secular women and their life in Jerusalem, and ultraorthodox women and their role in that society. Students also researched the secular and orthodox public educational systems in Israel, studied the autonomy of the ultraorthodox educational system, and compared music education in Israel and the US. Other students investigated different aspects of conflict in Israeli society by looking at uniting factors, the impact of societal conflicts on the human condition, and the political protests for governmental change, which took place over the last year.

All participants in the program learned that Israel is a complex country with compelling issues, and a complicated society. They experienced the many challenges of observing and interviewing people, and finding multiple perspectives on the issues that they investigated. They all grew and changed through this process as Ben Goldstein (Social Relations & Policy, James Madison College) reflected in his final paper:

"Through this process, my interviewing skills, along with my ability to communicate with those around me who come from different cultures and backgrounds, vastly improved. This process was unbelievably beneficial for me and truly opened my eyes to how much more Israel has to offer and ultimately improve compared to what I once understood. My perspective has shifted many times this trip due to conversations in and out of the classroom. Through actively listening and challenging my own original thoughts, I was able to see more than I could

have ever hoped to. I am grateful for the new knowledge and understanding, and look forward to continuing to question and learn."

Another Jewish Studies Minor, Sydnie Burnstein (Social Relations & Policy, James Madison College) commented:

"Living in Israel allowed me to grapple with all its complexities and beauty firsthand. My trip abroad has been a crucial moment for me in my academic career. Knowing that my opinions have been formed with validity and significance, I can now engage in informed discussion and understand more nuanced ideas. I am immensely grateful for this study abroad opportunity afforded me through the Levy Scholarship that showed me what I am capable of learning, and that allowed me to expand on my critical thinking skills."



Jerusalem pedestrian street

Triangle R&D Center, Kafr Qara

FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

Yael Aronoff

Promoted to Full Professor, Professor Aronoff finished her two year term as President of the Association of Israel Studies. She established a mentorship program, a Distinguished Lectureship Program, helped expand membership, and supported virtual lectures, workshops, and symposiums during a difficult

pandemic year in which the AIS managed to thrive. "It has been a pleasure serving as President for the past two years of this incredible association of impressive, engaging, and committed interdisciplinary scholars from across the globe that provides a supportive and collegial environment in which to share, encourage, and celebrate cutting edge scholarship in the growing and thriving field of Israel Studies."

Matthew Handelman

Received a Humanities and Arts Research Program (HARP) Development Grant to work on his project, which focuses on the work of German-Jewish intellectuals in the orbit of the Frankfurt School who sought to engage in cultural politics (*Kulturpolitik*) through technological media (such as newspaper, radio, and film) as a means of shaping public opinion in Germany's first democracy.

While scholarship has thoroughly analyzed the Nazi's use of propaganda, Handelman locates the conceptual origins of cultural politics on the left within a debate over the progressive potential of technology and media among German-Jewish intellectuals, such as Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Alfred Döblin, Siegfried Kracauer, and Georg Lukács. Through the fast-paced production of the feuilleton, rapid (and, at points, even digital) communication technologies, radio's power to disrupt an aesthetic marketplace governed by capital, and a literary aesthetics that matched the erosion of meaning in a technological world, mass media put cultural politics into action as the future of German society (and Jewish existence within it) hung in the balance.

Ben Lorch

Awarded a Ken and Sandy Waltzer Teaching Excellence Award at James Madison College. Dr. Lorch has taught at James Madison College since 2015 and has been a long time affiliate of the Serling Institute, serving as Associate Director in 2019-2020. He is a master teacher who teaches in the College's Introduction to



Public Affairs program for first year students, and upper level courses in political theory and American constitutionalism. He will teach the College's course on Jews and Antisemitism in the fall. Incredibly, in the most challenging pandemic year, he graciously taught an overload of 5 courses, 3 of which were live. Students raved about Dr. Lorch, and he received excellent, and sometimes

perfect, evaluations in all five courses. Dr. Lorch not only is an exceptional teacher in the classroom, but offers extra reading groups for students, independent studies, and guided four honors theses this year! He always goes above and beyond for his students. Dr. Lorch also works extensively with Jewish Studies students, and has supervised independent research on topics such as Zionism and antisemitism, and recruited and planned for the 2020 study abroad in Israel.

Dr. Lorch's chapter "Emil Fackenheim on Moses Maimonides and the 'One Great Difference between the Medievals and the Moderns,'" is forthcoming in *Emil Fackenheim's Post-Holocaust Thought and its Philosophical Sources*, edited by Kenneth Hart Green and Martin D. Yaffe, University of Toronto Press, 2021. His other Jewish Studies related publication includes "Maimonides on Prophecy and the Moral Law," *Interpretation* 43:1 (Fall 2016) 91-110.

Amy Simon

Received a Humanities and Arts Research Program (HARP) Development Grant to support the revision and re-submission of her book manuscript titled, *Surrounded by the Hunter on all Sides: Jewish Perceptions of Perpetrators in Holocaust Ghetto Diaries*. The book argues that Yiddish diaries written within the major ghettos in Poland during World War II present a nuanced and complicated picture of inter-personal relations within those ghettos in contradiction to the traditional historical narrative regarding the roles of different groups of people during the Holocaust that predominately relies on the "perpetrator," "victim," "bystander," model. Through an examination of the moments at which Holocaust diarists writing in the Warsaw, Łódź, and Vilna ghettos described the people who caused their suffering, the types of language they used to represent them, and the evaluations and judgments they consequently revealed, the book concludes that ghetto inhabitants perceived a multitude of perpetrators all around. They rarely understood people as blameless or passive, which led to an unrelenting feeling of fear and uncertainty. They evaluated people around them



according to the threat they posed based on the actions they committed rather than on their national or religious identity or the ultimate power they had in the process of the Holocaust.

In their final evaluation, though diarists attempted to maintain an "us" versus "them" differentiation between Jewish and German persecutors, the worsening situation over the course of the years 1939-1945 led them to radically rethink positive notions of humanity and belonging. The perceptions revealed through reading the emotions surrounding descriptions of perpetrators in these diaries demonstrate that the ghetto period of the Holocaust served for victims as a "gray zone" between pre-war freedom and the totalitarian concentration camps. During that time, diarists began to cast out even formerly respected members of their own communities who acted as perpetrators in their attempts to both redefine and maintain norms and conceptions of ethics in the face of persecution from "the hunter on all sides."

Lynn L. Wolff

Received a Humanities and Arts Research Program (HARP) Development Grant to work on her next book, tentatively titled: *The Legibility of Abstraction: Knowledge and Empathy in Graphic Narratives*. The project aims to shed light on the visual dimension of Holocaust testimony through an investigation of works that exhibit complex text-image relationships. Broadly defined as "graphic narratives", these works offer

new ways to consider how memory and trauma – experiences that challenge discursive modes of representation – are captured in visual forms. The project further investigates how experience is 'translated' into word and image, how subjectivity and narrative voice are visualized, and how such visual texts reach a wider readership. A core argument of the book is how engagement with spoken and written testimony has become increasingly visual and progressively abstract. By examining Holocaust testimony through the lens of the visual, the project complicates notions of testimony and artistic representations as directly reflecting reality, to argue with even greater urgency that imagination is necessary for both knowledge and memory of the Holocaust. In this way, the book will contribute to important discussions of how we will study and teach about the Holocaust when no witnesses remain. Combining aesthetic, epistemological, and ethical perspectives, Wolff is building on her past research that explored the fundamental and sustained tension between literature and historiography. This new project furthermore dovetails with the Undergraduate Research Seminar she is co-teaching with Steven Weiland and Deborah Margolis for the MSU Honors College on "Holocaust Testimony in the Digital Age."

**Laura Yares**

Received a research grant from the Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education at Brandeis University. "My work as a scholar of religion and Judaism focuses on education as a site where people learn what it means to be, think about, and feel religious. I am interested in settings that are focused on formal instruction – for example, I am currently at work on a book about the Jewish Sunday school in 19th century America. But I am also interested in learning that happens outside of explicitly educational venues. My most recent research project, co-directed with Sharon Avni, Professor of Literacy and Linguistics at CUNY, is focused on a set of sites that are more commonly thought of as leisure activities rather than educational ones. *Beyond Engagement of Religious Nones: Jewish Learning Through the Cultural Arts* is an ethnographic project that examines how and what Jews learn about Judaism, and about themselves, when they participate in cultural arts activities.



When we imagined our research for 2020, we had anticipated doing ethnographic observation of a film festival, interviewing participants in their homes and at cultural events, and attending workshops for Jewish visual arts. The pandemic put an obvious wrench in our plans. It changed the plans that our potential participants had in mind too. Instead of attending film festivals and cultural events, they were stuck in their own homes, and like us, they were watching a lot of television. So, this year, our work has focused on analyzing television as a cultural arts experience. In particular, we have been researching what people learn about the Hebrew and Yiddish languages, ultra-Orthodox Judaism, and Judaism as a religious and cultural tradition by watching the Netflix series *Shtisel*. We are conducting digital fieldwork on a Facebook site, "Shtisel – Let's Talk About It" created by three women in metro Detroit in January 2019, and which currently has over 25,000 members. We have also developed an audio diary app, "Shtisel Diaries," that members of the site use to verbally record their thoughts and feelings about each episode of the show as they watch in their own homes. The third series of *Shtisel* came to Netflix on March 25, 2021, and in the first week alone, we collected over 300 audio diaries from viewers across the world. Diarists wanted to know why the principal characters, all Haredi Jews, dressed as they did, why they ate certain foods, why husbands and wives slept in different beds, and how they prayed. They asked about divisions between Jews and non-Jews, as well as between different kinds of Jews in Israel. They wondered about language as they noticed that some characters used Yiddish, others Hebrew, and others switched between the two. We are still collecting data, and anticipate coding and analyzing hundreds of diaries over the coming months. It is clear, however, that as viewers watch *Shtisel*, they are also participating in a rich and nuanced educational experience."

STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

Molly Appel, Accounting, Broad College of Business

Being a Jewish Studies minor has allowed me several opportunities to engage in the classroom on various topics while challenging myself outside the classroom through research. I am grateful for being able to complete two years of Hebrew at MSU and for having the opportunity to learn about the history of American Jews through the courses available through the Jewish Studies minor. In addition to the course itself, I was able to learn more about the history of American Jews by researching how Jews interacted with the business world and how the nature of economics evolved throughout American history. As a current business-admitted student pursuing an accounting degree, it was a great opportunity to learn about an area of history I was interested in and have the opportunity to combine this with my future professional career goals. Additionally, by having the opportunity to take an entrepreneurship class about Israeli Start-Ups the following year, I continued to explore how the Jewish Studies minor could be intertwined with my future professional career. As I look to the future, I am planning on pursuing a career in accounting and completing my Jewish Studies minor in a way that allows me to explore how I can relate the business world to the Jewish world. I think the classes I took for my Jewish Studies minor made me a more well-rounded student and person as a whole.

In the far future I plan on attending law school, and would like to become a prosecutor. In the near future, I have considered working for a Jewish non-profit before I go to law school. I did not originally plan on pursuing a Jewish Studies minor, but as I took more and more classes, I realized it would be a wonderful and quite special minor to add to my college accomplishments.



recognized with the 2021 MSU Emerging Leader award and was MSU's nominee for the Udall Scholarship. Ellie is an intern with the Serling Institute and is currently working with a team of professors, staff, and students to create a campus guide for antisemitism education. After taking a year of Hebrew, she participated in the summer study abroad program at the Hebrew University in Israel, where she studied cultural diversity and Israeli political history. She is grateful to have received three scholarships through the Serling Institute. She received the Finifter scholarship for studying Hebrew and received the Levy and Gladner scholarships to support her study abroad experience in Israel. Additionally, she presented her research on the relationship between Israel and the United Nations Human Rights Council at the Serling Institute's Spring Research Conference. Ellie looks forward to continuing her Jewish Studies education and her work with the Serling Institute in the coming year.

Rachel Nicole Kramer, Theater, CAL

I am a second year BFA Stage Management major with a minor in Jewish Studies at Michigan State! Growing up Jewish I always felt connected to my religion. I chose to minor in Jewish Studies because I wanted to learn more about Judaism and the history behind it. My first semester I took Hebrew to challenge myself to understand a new language that I have heard so much growing up. Although it wasn't always easy, I am glad I was able to take the class and I know I will be able to use it in the future. I plan to take more history-based courses in the future to continue learning about Jewish history.



Ellie Baden, Social Relations & Policy, JMC & Interdisciplinary Humanities, CAL

Ellie is a junior majoring in Political Theory and Constitutional Democracy, Social Relations and Policy, and Interdisciplinary Humanities. She was



Pelli Mechnikov, Neuroscience, College of Natural Science

Hopping on a plane to Israel was a fairly last-minute decision for me as far as college summer planning goes. Within two days at the end of April I had decided to spend my summer in Israel, and I have never been happier



with an impulsive decision. The freedom to make this decision was provided to me by the donors and individuals who support and run the Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel at MSU. With the generous scholarship and guidance from the Institute, taking this trip became feasible - and what a trip it has been. For the past month and a half, I have been working in a daycare center for adults with both cognitive and physical disabilities. I have met so many wonderful individuals, both co-workers and members of the daycare center, who have truly touched my life. Additionally, I have had the opportunity to explore Israel and further expand my knowledge on Israeli culture in ways that I have never experienced before. I was surprised to see what a strong background my Hebrew Independent Studies provided me in understanding certain facets of Israeli culture. I have also gotten to spend time catching up with close family that I haven't seen since before the pandemic, which has been a lovely bonus. I am certain that this trip will change my life and am forever grateful for the help the Serling Institute provided in making it possible. I look forward to seeing what the end of my two months in Israel has in store!

Andrew Schulman, Social Relations and Policy, JMC

I am minoring in Jewish Studies and am graduating in 2024. I chose to pursue the Jewish Studies minor after I took Hebrew with Professor Yore Kedem this past spring. After hearing that I could go to Israel to take classes and earn credit towards my minor I could not turn down the opportunity - especially after having receiving the very generous Finifter scholarship for Hebrew and Levy Scholarship to study abroad in Israel through the Serling Institute. I have loved spending time with the Jewish Studies community, whether it is interning or traveling to different cities in Israel. Recently, we have been working on a guide on antisemitism to be a resource for students on and off-campus. It is always great learning and working on interesting and important topics within such a supportive environment.



Chloe Shemano-Krupp, Hospitality Business, Broad College of Business

I am a rising Junior in the School of Hospitality Business and am minoring in Jewish Studies. This summer, I interned at a startup in Tel Aviv called FellowMe. The purpose of the app is to make friends online



based on similar interests. I focused on connecting the app with other universities in America to help lonely college students. I also have had the privilege to join a Serling Institute Committee on drafting a guide on antisemitism for Michigan State. I have learned a lot about antisemitism on campus and throughout the United States, and about the need for more education on antisemitism. Through my minor in Jewish Studies, I was able to take a full year research class on the Holocaust. I used testimonials to research Holocaust survivors that immigrated to Cuba after the war. The Serling Institute has taught me so much in the past two years and I look forward to learning more through my continued studies through the Jewish Studies minor.

Alberto Villarreal, International Relations, JMC & Economic Geography, CSS

I am a rising junior minoring in Jewish Studies and I am set to graduate in Spring 2023. This summer, I was afforded the opportunity to attend the Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel Summer Study Abroad program at Hebrew University of Jerusalem which was made possible through the Serling Institute Levy Scholarship. Over the course of five and a half weeks, I was exposed to several new ideas both inside and outside the classroom and gained a new perspective that I could not have received anywhere else. If I could sum up the highlights of my trip to Israel, I would use three words: food, diversity, and Jewishness. First, the food of Israel is a wonderful amalgamation of different colors and flavors that offered me a tangible product to discover the delicious role of immigration in Israel. Speaking of immigration in Israel, one cannot walk around without being impressed by the amount of diversity within Israel's borders. In terms of the natural landscape and the plethora of cultural identities on display, it is fair to say that I felt as if I was visiting several countries in the span of one country. My visits to Tel Aviv, Ashdod, and Eilat were unique and each portrayed daily life very different from the next. Visiting several cities in Israel outside of Jerusalem also helped me answer the age-old question: what does it mean to be Jewish? Based on the wide range of experiences I had on this trip, it is clear that what defines one person's Jewishness is not identical to the next person. These differences do not invoke a polarization within Israeli society; rather, it allows people to open themselves up to a new perspective and sometimes a newfound respect for the other person. In the end, I look back at my study abroad experience in Israel as an eye-opening experience that changed the way I see our world today.





The Michael and Elaine Serling Institute
for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

619 Red Cedar Rd., Wells Hall C-730
East Lansing, MI 48824
1 (517) 432-3493
www.jsp.msu.edu
jewishst@msu.edu

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