



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



Spring 2022
NEWSLETTER

It was wonderful to be teaching and to be able to gather in person, even in a limited way, this past semester. As boosters are now required for all MSU faculty, staff and students, and many children have been vaccinated, we look forward to holding all our events in person this coming semester (with masks and socially distanced), while providing livestream options as well for most events. We will continue to work hard and think creatively to provide community while prioritizing health, and adapt to changing conditions of the pandemic and MSU guidelines.

While our students and faculty are thriving in many ways (see our highlights of graduating seniors), we also faced challenges this past semester. We felt compelled, for example, to issue a statement in response to antisemitic incidents impacting the MSU Community in September. (I invite you to read the statement in full on our website, at jsp.msu.edu/statements.) As we said in that statement, “these incidents make clear that antisemitism is a real problem that we need to address to realize our vision of MSU as an inclusive community for all its members.” These events on campus, of course “are not isolated. In the last several years, students at MSU have shared more than 75 incidents of antisemitism ranging from ‘jokes,’ to verbal attacks, to destruction of property. In the United States there has been a significant rise in antisemitism over the past four years, from Neo-Nazis marching in Charlottesville in 2017, to the Tree of Life shooting in Pittsburgh in 2018, to violent attacks on the streets of New York City, Los Angeles, and Boston in 2021.” In that statement, we reiterated our commitment to be a resource on campus for education about antisemitism, noting the guide to understanding antisemitism some of our faculty, staff, and students are developing, and the symposia and courses on antisemitism being run by Institute faculty and staff. The statement elicited expressions of support from individuals and units from across the University, including the Asian Pacific American Studies Program issuing its own statement of solidarity, and the President, Provost, VP and Chief Diversity Officer, and Deans’ Council all expressing their support individually. President Stanley and Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer Jabbar Bennett gave introductions to our symposium on antisemitism on October 8th.

I am working with the Director of Muslim Studies, Mohammad Khalil, to increase awareness of antisemitism and Islamophobia across our campus. We will work together to provide presentations for 340 Residential Advisors and intercultural aids on Janu-

ary 27th. I want to thank Professors Amy Simon and Kirsten Fermaglich, as well as our assistant in the Serling Institute, Ariana Mentzel, for presenting with me on these topics and/or facilitating group discussions. Kirsten Fermaglich and I also led a successful workshop on antisemitism at the three residential colleges’ teach-in this Fall. I also want to thank Steve Weiland, Amy Simon, Deborah Margolis, and Lynn Wolff for their exceptional team-taught honors college research seminar on Holocaust testimony in the digital age, highlighted in our newsletter.

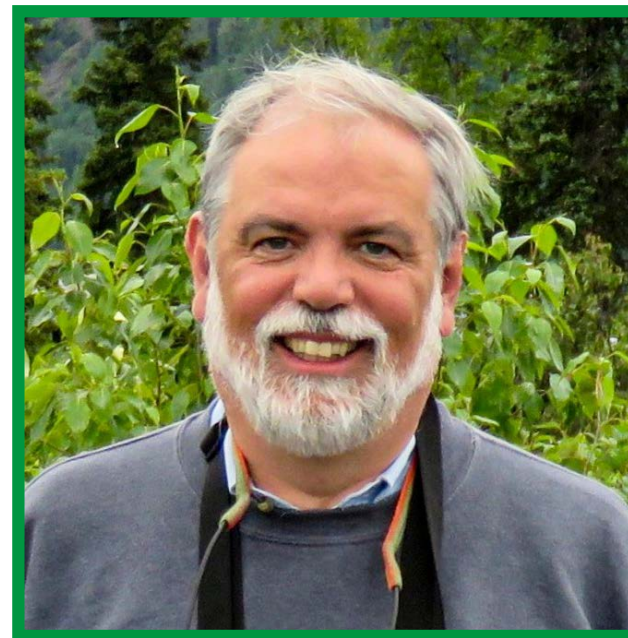
As we look forward to the Spring semester, we are thrilled to provide many co-curricular activities that provide ground-breaking new research related to the Holocaust and/or its antecedents. We will offer a panel with MSU faculty including Professors Fermaglich and Simon; lectures by Professors David Fishman, Jeffrey Veidlinger, and Michael Berkowitz; and an Israeli film that highlights a unique survivor’s story. We will host our 16th Israeli film festival and are most fortunate to have each film followed by a discussion by a director. Yael Katzir has returned to MSU to teach a short course on Israeli documentaries and will discuss her most recent film, and Mira Awad will discuss her television series grappling with the challenges faced by Palestinian Israelis. Awad, an award-winning musician, will also perform a concert at the Wharton Center. Professor Laura Yares will share her innovative research on fan reactions to and learning from *Shtisel*, an Israeli television show centering on an ultraorthodox community in Israel, now on Netflix. Finally, Professor Helen Kim will discuss her co-authored book *JewAsian: Race, Religion, and Identity for America’s Newest Jews*. We look forward to seeing you at our Spring events!

Yael Aronoff

Director, Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel

If you have any questions about our Institute, please email me at aronoffy@msu.edu or call me at 517-303-6019.

New Affiliated Faculty of The Serling Institute



Professor Sherman W. Garnett

Sherman W. Garnett is a Professor in James Madison College, teaching courses in international security, Russia and the former USSR, nuclear weapons, and literature and politics. Dr. Garnett was previously Dean of the College for more than two decades, stepping down in May 2020. Before becoming Dean, he was a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, specializing in the foreign and security policies of Russia, Ukraine and other states of the former USSR.

Dr. Garnett supported the Jewish Studies Program and then the Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel while he was Dean in myriad ways, including supporting two endowed positions wholly or mostly sited in JMC, supporting numerous Israeli visiting scholars at JMC, co-sponsoring all Serling Institute

events, and serving on the Deans’ Council for the Institute.

Over the past few years, Dr. Garnett’s research and teaching has increasingly included Jewish Studies content. As Dr. Garnett writes, “About eight years ago, I developed a course on Politics of the Novel, teaching its first two versions looking at novels and supporting texts by historians about Moscow and Vilnius in the interwar period. When I first conceived the course, I thought I would likely use Czesław Miłosz’s work to bring Vilnius alive, but my reading and first scholarly steps on Miłosz’s city brought me to sustained consideration of Jewish Vilnius. Miłosz speaks directly to that city and praises Chaim Grade. His *My Mother’s Sabbath Days* became the central text of the Vilnius portion of the course, using Miłosz’s writings as a gloss and contrast. I also used David Fishman’s book, *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture* (and brought Fishman to campus, followed the next year by a visit by Elissa Bemporad, author of *Becoming Soviet Jews: the Bolshevik Experiment in Minsk*, the next year). In addition, I developed a freshman seminar for this spring—two sections—that will focus solely on Vilnius from 1918 to 1944. Grade is again the centerpiece, along with Miłosz and another book by Fishman. I have found Grade’s work compelling and believe the juxtaposition between Polish and Jewish Vilnius reveals important and enduring questions such as national, ethnic and religious identity and conflicts that continue to be of relevance. This turn in my teaching toward Central Europe and especially Vilnius grows out of an ongoing scholarly project on the political and social thought of Czesław Miłosz, one that is leading to a book I hope to have in first draft in the coming year.”

Dr. Garnett is the author or co-author of works on Russian foreign policy, European security, and the foreign and security policies of Eurasia. He has lectured at leading universities and institutes in the United States and throughout the world and advised the U.S. Government on arms control and security issues. From 1983 to 1994, Dr. Garnett worked in a variety of positions in the US Government, specializing in arms control and the former USSR, ending his service as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasia. Dr. Garnett received his Ph.D. in Russian Literature from the University of Michigan in 1982. He has an MA in Russian and East European Studies from Yale University and a BA in Political Philosophy from James Madison College at Michigan State University.

SPRING 2022 EVENTS

*Masks are required for indoor events at MSU

Shtisel - Let's Talk About It by Professor Laura Yares

Wednesday, January 19, 5:30-7:00pm, JMC Library, Case Hall



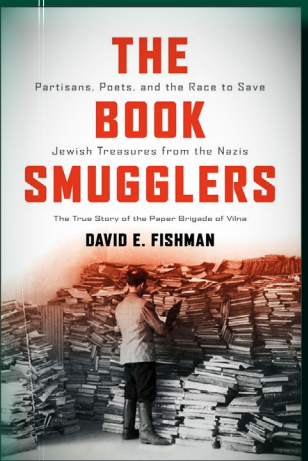
The Facebook group "Shtisel - Let's Talk About it" was founded in 2019 by three women in Detroit, to discuss their mutual interest in a new Israeli television show added to Netflix. By November 2021, the group reached over 33,000 members. Members use the group to post questions and insights about a broad range of topics related to the television show, including the Hebrew and Yiddish languages, the practices of ultra-Orthodox Jews, and life in contemporary Israel. Drawing on surveys, ethnographic interviews, linguistic analysis of social media postings, and audio diaries of group members as they watch the show recorded via a specially created app, this talk explores how members of the group learn about Judaism from watching *Shtisel*, and forge community by discussing, analyzing and critiquing it together.

Dr. Laura Yares is Assistant Professor in the Department of Religious Studies and a core member of the Michael and Elaine Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel at Michigan State University. Her work explores Jewish education as a site for understanding the ways that Jews and non-Jews construct understandings of self, community and other. Her current research projects includes a history of Jewish Sunday Schools in 19th century America, and a contemporary ethnographic study analyzing Jewish learning in cultural arts spaces.

The Book Smugglers of the Vilna Ghetto: A Story of Moral Resistance by Professor David E. Fishman

Wednesday, January 26, 7:00-8:30pm, Club Spartan (3rd Floor, Case Hall)

In Vilna, the city Jews called "The Jerusalem of Lithuania," a group of ghetto inmates risked their lives during World War II to rescue thousands of rare books, documents, and works of art from the Nazis. In an operation that lasted eighteen months, they smuggled the materials past guards and buried them in bunkers. Those members of the group who survived the War returned after Vilna's liberation and dug up the materials. They eventually smuggled the books across Europe until they reached the United States and Israel. What did they rescue, and why did they do it?



Dr. David E. Fishman is a professor of Jewish History at The Jewish Theological Seminary of America. He is the author of numerous books and articles on the history and culture of East European Jewry. His most recent book, *The Book Smugglers: Partisans, Poets, and the Race to Save Jewish Treasures from the Nazis*, received a National Jewish Book Award. Dr. Fishman also serves as director of Project Judaica, which publishes guides to Jewish archival materials in the Former Soviet Union. Dr. Fishman has taught at Brandeis University, Bar-Ilan University, Russian State University in Moscow, and Vilnius University in Lithuania. He serves on the Academic Committee of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Reflecting on the Holocaust: a Panel and Discussion

Panelists: Professor Ana Bracic, Professor Kirsten Fermaglich and Professor Amy Simon

Thursday, February 3, 7:00-8:30pm, South Kedzie Hall

Panelists will investigate Jewish and Roma Holocaust history and reflect on postwar impacts of the Holocaust in the United States. After the presentations, we hope the audience will participate in a robust conversation about these topics.

Porajmos: The Romani Holocaust and its Aftermath

Dr. Ana Bracic is an Assistant Professor in the Political Science Department at Michigan State University and a member of the Minority Politics Initiative at MSU. Her research is predominantly in the field of comparative politics, and focuses on questions of human rights, discrimination, the persistence of social exclusion, and ground-level effectiveness of human rights institutions, such as NGOs. Most of her research relies on lab-in-field and survey experiments. In order to gather data from severely underrepresented populations, such as Roma in Central Europe, Dr. Bracic uses innovative approaches to measurement, like videogames.



Reflecting on the impact of the Holocaust in the United States

Dr. Kirsten Fermaglich is Professor of History and Jewish Studies at Michigan State University. She teaches classes on American Jewish history and culture, as well as recent United States history. Her most recent book, *A Rosenberg By Any Other Name: A History of Jewish Name Changing in America* (NYU, 2018) was awarded the Saul Viener Book Prize by the American Jewish Historical Society in June 2019. Dr. Fermaglich is also the author of *American Dreams and Nazi Nightmares: Early Holocaust Consciousness and Liberal America, 1957-1965* (Brandeis University Press, 2006) and the co-editor of the *Norton Critical Edition of Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique* (2013), with Lisa Fine.



Holocaust History

Dr. Amy Simon holds the William and Audrey Farber Family Chair in Holocaust Studies and European Jewish History at Michigan State University. She teaches in the residential James Madison College, the Department of History, and the Michael and Elaine Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel. Dr. Simon has worked as a researcher at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, and she held a Leon Milman Memorial Fellowship for research there. She regularly gives public lectures on Holocaust history, diaries, and pedagogy for academic and lay audiences. Dr. Simon's work on Holocaust fiction, memoir, diaries, and pedagogy has appeared in *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History*, *Jewish Historical Studies*, the *Journal of Jewish Identities*, and a number of edited volumes.



All Spring events will be held socially distanced in person, unless there are changes in circumstances. If you are not already on our email list, we encourage you to contact us at jewishst@msu.edu, so that you will be notified of any changes of COVID and MSU related policies. All events, except for the in-person movies, will also be livestreamed and recorded. You can find us on YouTube: Serling Institute for Jewish Studies.

SPRING 2022 EVENTS

*Masks are required for indoor events at MSU

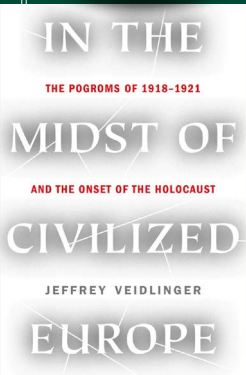


In the Midst of Civilized Europe: The Pogroms of 1918-1921 and the Onset of the Holocaust by Professor Jeffrey Veidlinger

Tuesday, February 22, 5:30-7:00pm, JMC Library, Case Hall

Between 1918 and 1921, over a hundred thousand Jews were murdered in Ukraine by peasants, townsmen, and soldiers who blamed the Jews for the turmoil of the Russian Revolution. In hundreds of separate incidents, ordinary people robbed their Jewish neighbors with impunity, burned down their houses, ripped apart their Torah scrolls, sexually assaulted them, and killed them. Largely forgotten today, these pogroms—ethnic riots—dominated headlines and international affairs in their time. Aid workers warned that six million Jews were in danger of complete extermination. Twenty years later, these dire predictions would come true.

Drawing upon long-neglected archival materials, including thousands of newly discovered witness testimonies, trial records, and official orders, acclaimed historian Jeffrey Veidlinger shows for the first time how this wave of genocidal violence created the conditions for the Holocaust. Through stories of survivors, perpetrators, aid workers, and governmental officials, he explains how so many different groups of people came to the same conclusion: that killing Jews was an acceptable response to their various problems.



Dr. Jeffrey Veidlinger is Joseph Brodsky Collegiate Professor of History and Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan. Professor Veidlinger is the author of the award-winning books, *In the Shadow of the Shtetl: Small-Town Jewish Life in Soviet Ukraine*, *The Moscow State Yiddish Theater: Jewish Culture on the Soviet Stage*, and *Jewish Public Culture in the Late Russian Empire*. Veidlinger is the chair of the Academic Advisory Council of the Center for Jewish History, a member of the Executive Committee of the American Academy for Jewish Research, a member of the Academic Committee of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and a former vice-president of the Association for Jewish Studies. His work has been supported by grants and fellowships from numerous agencies, including the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council.

Leonard Gilman Lecture: "Funny - You Don't Look Jewish!" by Professor Helen Kim

Tuesday, April 5, 5:30-7:00pm, Lincoln Room, Kellogg Center

This talk will explore the intersections of race, religion, and Jewish identity in the context of mixed-race families in contemporary U.S. society. Dr. Kim will discuss the research she conducted with her partner, Noah Leavitt, for their book, *JewAsian: Race, Religion, and Identity for America's Newest Jews* (University of Nebraska Press, 2016) and reflect on some connections between this work and the current demographic landscape in the U.S.

Dr. Helen Kim is Professor of Sociology and Associate Dean at Whitman College in Walla Walla, WA. Her scholarship focuses on race and American Judaism in the contemporary era. Her scholarship has been profiled in the *New York Times*, *NPR*, and *Huffington Post*. Along with co-author, Noah Leavitt, she published *JewAsian: Race, Religion, and Identity for America's Newest Jews in 2016* with University of Nebraska Press.



Annual Serling Institute Undergraduate Research Conference

Friday, April 8, 9:00am-5:00pm, JMC Library, Case Hall



Annual Rabin/Brill Lecture: Lesser-Known Perspectives on the Holocaust and Photography: The Significance of Jewish Expertise in Film by Professor Michael Berkowitz

Monday, April 18, 7:00-8:30pm, Auditorium, Kellogg Center

This presentation centers on the engagement of European and American Jews with photography and film in the interwar period, the Holocaust, and Europe's 'liberation.' It introduces an international occupational cohort that has only recently been noticed as Jewish. The contrasts and continuity between Jewish photographic involvement in the pre-war period, the work of photographers during the Second World War (in both Nazi and Allied orbits), and pictures (and motion picture film) from the war's aftermath will be explored. Berkowitz addresses diverse genres of visual documentation and creative expression that remain largely obscure despite having great importance in their own time.

Dr. Michael Berkowitz is a professor of modern Jewish history at University College London. He is the author of *Jews and Photography in Britain* (2015), and since 2012, editor of *Jewish Historical Studies: Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*. His previous publications include *The Crime of My Very Existence: Nazism and the Myth of Jewish Criminality* (2007), *The Jewish Self-Image* (2000), *Zionist Culture and West European Jewry before the First World War* (1993; 1997), and "We Are Here": *New Approaches to Jewish Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany*, coedited with Avinoam J. Patt (2010). He is currently a Cain Senior Fellow at the Science History Institute in Philadelphia.

Follow us on:

Facebook [MSUJewishStudies](https://www.facebook.com/MSUJewishStudies) | Instagram [msujewishstudies](https://www.instagram.com/msujewishstudies) | Twitter [@JewishMSU](https://twitter.com/JewishMSU)
JS minor alumni, join our LinkedIn group <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8976564/>

16th Annual MSU Israeli Film Festival

Sunday, March 20 and Tuesday, March 22, Wells Hall B-117

Musical Performance: Mira Awad - HuMAN/WoMAN **Pasant Theater (Wharton Center at MSU)**

Monday, March 21, 7:00pm-8:30pm, Pasant Theater
(Wharton Center for Performing Arts)

Mira Awad, a Palestinian citizen of Israel, creates Fusion Arabic music, that combines the East and the West. Mostly in Arabic, with the occasional English and Hebrew, Mira sings about human solidarity and the fervent wish for peace. Accompanying on guitar: Shay Alon.

Ticket prices: Public: \$15 | Child: \$12 | Senior: \$12

Tickets available for purchase at the Wharton Center Ticket Office and online at <https://www.whartoncenter.com/>

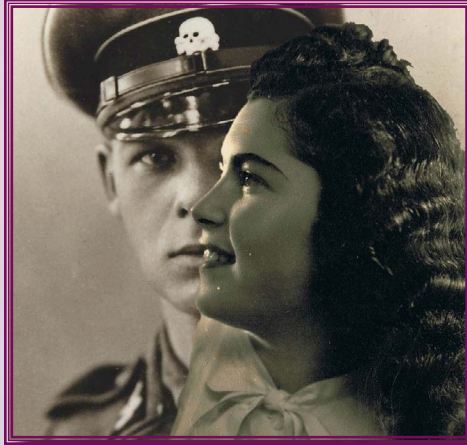
Complimentary tickets are available through the Serling Institute for MSU faculty and students. Contact us at jewishst@msu.edu



THE SERLING INSTITUTE PRESENTS: 16TH ANNUAL MSU ISRAELI FILM FESTIVAL

All films are complimentary and will be screened in Wells Hall B-117.
Masks are required and there will be social distancing.

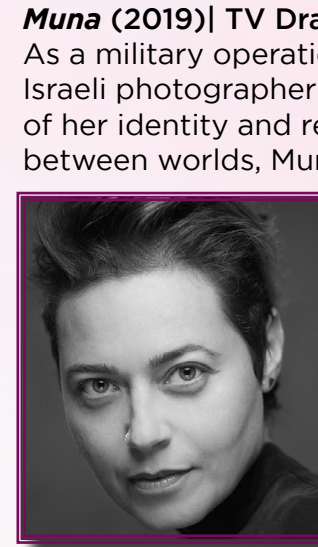
Live screening of *Love It Was Not*, Sunday, March 20, 1:00pm
Live discussion and Q&A with Professor Yael Katzir, 2:40pm



Love It Was Not (2021) | Documentary | Director: Maya Sarfaty
Love It Was Not is a story about a relationship between a prisoner and a Nazi. Beautiful and full of life, Helena Citron, is taken to Auschwitz as a young woman, and soon finds unlikely solace under the protection of Franz Wunsch, a high-ranking SS officer who falls in love with her and her magnetic singing voice. Thirty years later, a letter arrives asking Helena to “return the favor”-- testify on Wunsch’s behalf. Faced with an impossible decision, Helena must choose.

Best Israeli Film DocAviv Festival 2020

Live screening of *Muna*, 3 episodes, Sunday, March 20, 6:30pm
Live discussion and Q&A with Creator Mira Awad, 8:00pm



Mira Awad

Singer, songwriter, actress, artist and content creator. Born in Rameh, a Palestinian village in the Galilee, northern Israel, to Palestinian father - Dr. Anwar Awad, and Bulgarian mother - Snejanka Izvorska, between two brothers - Ala'a and Sinan. Ms. Awad grew up in a politically involved family with high humanitarian values. From an early age she spoke out for women’s rights, for equal citizenship for Palestinians living in Israel, a two state solution and for environmental awareness.



Muna (2019) | TV Drama | Creator: Mira Awad | Directed by Ori Sivan.
As a military operation in Gaza escalates, Muna Aboud, a Palestinian-Israeli photographer living in Tel Aviv, is confronted with the complexity of her identity and relationships. Being constantly pressured to choose between worlds, Muna embarks on a journey towards herself.

Monday, March 21, 7:00pm: Musical Performance: Mira Awad - HuMAN/WoMAN Pasant Theater (Wharton Center at MSU)

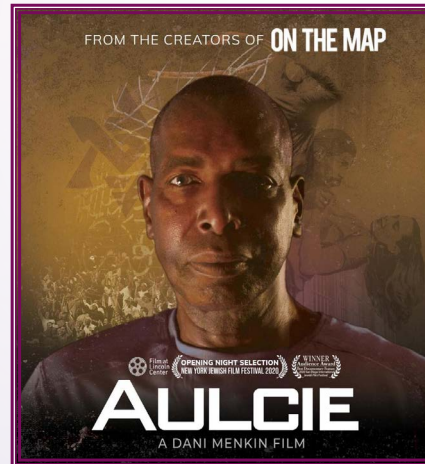
Tickets available for purchase at the Wharton Center Ticket Office and online at <https://www.whartoncenter.com/>. Complimentary tickets are available through the Serling Institute for MSU faculty and students. Contact us at jewishst@msu.edu.

Live screening of *My Grandma Had a Gun*, Tuesday, March 22, 7:00pm
Live discussion and Q&A with Director Yael Katzir, 8:00pm

Live screening of *Aulcie*, Sunday, March 20, 3:30pm
Live discussion and Q&A with Director Dani Menkin, 5:00pm

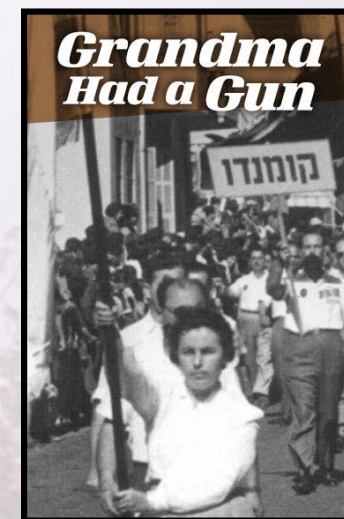
Aulcie (2020) | Documentary | Director: Dani Menkin

Aulcie is a documentary about an African American basketball player from Newark, who moved to Israel to join Maccabi Tel Aviv’s basketball team, converted to Judaism, changed his name to Elisha Ben Abraham and began dating Israeli supermodel Tami Ben Ami. Tragically, Aulcie was eventually arrested and jailed for narcotics smuggling, the end result of a hidden but growing addiction to drugs. Now committed to uplifting others confronting the disease of addiction and abuse, Aulcie works with youth in Israel and across the world. And as only he can, director Dani Menkin has captured the essence of the harrowing tale of its adopted and much-beloved son, in the true story of Maccabi Tel Aviv’s legendary player, Aulcie.



Dani Menkin

A two- time Israeli Academy Award winner, Dani Menkin’s narrative and documentary films include *Picture of His Life*, *On the Map*, *Aulcie*, *Dolphin Boy*, *39 Pounds of Love*, and *Is That You?* His movies have been sold to Disney and HBO. Menkin is an internationally renowned speaker and film juror at International Festivals around the world, as well as a film professor in universities and colleges in Israel and the U.S. He co-founded “Hey Jude Productions.” Menkin is known for exploring the courage of the human life through personal stories. He connects the extraordinary heroes of his films to a larger context, and their impact on the world. The result is always a riveting emotional experience for the viewers, transformative and triumphant.



My Grandma Had a Gun (2020) | Documentary | Director: Yael Katzir

The amazing life story of Surika Braverman, one of only 3 female paratroopers during WWII. Surika’s story was overshadowed by the mythology of her two colleagues, Hannah Szenesh and Haviva Reik that were captured and died fighting the Nazis. Surika’s story did not enter the pantheon of Israeli culture even though she was the only female paratrooper that survived. Later she was one of the first female fighters to serve in the Palmach, the elite fighting force of the Haganah, the underground Jewish army during the British mandate.

Dr. Yael Katzir, Serling Visiting Israeli Scholar in 2012, 2017, and 2021, taught a cross-listed class for English, James Madison College, and the Film Studies Program: “From Collective Identity to Personal Diversity: Israeli Documentary Filmmaking”.



Dr. Katzir is an accomplished and award-winning Israeli documentary filmmaker, former head of the History Department and lecturer at the Film Department in the Art School of Beit Berl Academic College. Her films include *Company Jasmine*, *Praying In Her Own Voice*, *Violins in Wartime*, *Shores of Light*, *The Albanian Code*, and *Shiva for My Mother*.

Complimentary dinner by Woody’s Oasis will be served outdoors, Sunday, March 21, 5:30-6:30pm
Outside Wells Hall facing the International Center (Behind the Starbucks in the B-Wing)

Select Past In-Person Events of Fall 2021

You may watch our recorded programs on the Serling Institute for Jewish Studies YouTube channel

Reception for Jewish Studies Minors, 09-24-2021



Discussion of selected chapters in *Contending with Antisemitism in a Rapidly Changing Political Climate* Edited by Alvin H. Rosenfeld, 09-24-2021



Serling Modern Israel Lecture: *The Struggle over Israel's Legitimacy; A Status Report and Analysis* by Ilan Troen, 11-16-2021



Honors College Undergraduate Research Seminar: Holocaust Testimony in the Digital Age

Deborah Margolis, Amy Simon, Steven Weiland, Lynn Wolff



This Honors Seminar, now in its fifth year, has been a rewarding opportunity to introduce dedicated first- and second- year students to the history of the Holocaust, to major questions within Holocaust studies, and to the process of primary source research. It capitalizes on faculty teaching and research experience about the Holocaust, and full access to the University of Southern California's Shoah Visual History Archive through the MSU Library, in exploring these questions: 1) What can be learned about the Holocaust and what it signifies about antisemitism from the perspective of those who survived to tell their stories? 2) What are the best methods for learning from testimony as a form of historical evidence? And 3) How can the evidence of testimony, in particular digital and archival resources, best be incorporated into Holocaust research and made part of written and oral presentations? Dr. Steve Weiland proposed and administered this team-taught class that has brought together faculty from five different university units and students from across campus. This seminar is truly a unique offering at MSU.

The class offers a holistic approach to Holocaust study, introducing students to academic texts on the Holocaust and to the uses of archives and online textual and visual resources (e.g., museum websites and exhibits). Students think through the questions animating the Seminar with digital testimonies from Holocaust survivors, and explore what it means to learn—historically, morally, and emotionally—from digital resources about a demanding topic. They also gain experience with using digital presentation software to embed video, audio, and images alongside textual analysis. One goal is to guide students toward thinking about adaptations of the traditional college research paper, and another is to consider how we gain knowledge (via text, photographs, video, and audio)

in order to understand it. This perspective on learning, through interactions with peers and faculty, extends well beyond the seminar.

The seminar extends over an entire academic year and enrolls about fifteen students from a range of backgrounds and with a variety of majors (in science and engineering, business and economics, social science and humanities), and this makes for rich discussions. In the fall semester, the class meets weekly to discuss readings and films, to become familiar with the USC Shoah Visual History Archive, and to narrow down possible research topics. In the spring, students work independently on their research papers and meet individually with faculty members to discuss their progress. Research topics have included, among others: child survivors and the long-lasting effects of the Holocaust; the Holocaust as a motivation for Jewish survivors to support Zionist movements; bystander complicity in “Kristallnacht,” and “the easily distinguishable but overlooked minority” of Afro-German victims. The course culminates with student presentations at MSU’s annual Undergraduate Research and Arts Forum. Last year, four students from the seminar won first place in their section (“History, Political Science, and Economics”).

Overall, the seminar is a positive experience for faculty and students alike. The faculty has had the distinct pleasure of sharing knowledge and watching students develop their engagement with the deeply challenging content over the academic year. Two students summed up their perspectives well in the following comments: “watching testimony offered firsthand perspectives of the Holocaust that I had never had access to before” and “the topic was difficult but the course really allowed me to expand my knowledge.”

Academic News

Yael Aronoff's chapter “Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu,” is forthcoming in *Handbook of Israeli Democracy*, ed. P.R. Kumaraswamy, Palgrave, in Spring 2022. Dr. Aronoff will be joining the editorial board of the premier refereed journal, *Israel Studies Review*, in Spring 2022. In Spring 2022 she is chairing the Association for Israel Studies (AIS) Lifetime Achievement Award Committee. She will also chair the AIS nomination committee for Board members and officers, and will serve on the program committee for international relations and conflict resolution for the AIS Conference taking place at Bar Ilan University June 27-29, 2022.

Steven Gold's chapter “The Jewish Israeli Diaspora” has been published in the *Oxford Handbook of the Jewish Diaspora*, Hasia R. Diner, ed. He will also present “Leaving the Promised Land” on January 16, 2022 on a panel moderated by Robert Kenedy celebrating and promoting the publication of an edited collection *Israel and the Diaspora: Jewish Connectivity in a Changing World* (Spring 2021) Robert Kenedy, Uzi Rebhun, Carl S. Ehrlich (editors).

Noah Kaye will be presenting three papers this Spring: 1) a paper at the 16th International Congress of Greek and Latin Epigraphy in Bordeaux, France, on the topic of Judaeo-Greek culture contact, “What’s Hellenistic about Hellenistic Institutions? Contact, Spread, and Resilience;” 2) a paper on the topic of ancient Jewish conceptions of kingship, entitled “The Withdrawal of Charisma? Roman Hegemony and Hellenistic Kingship in the 2nd Century,” at the conference “The Same, but Different? Monarchical Representation in the Hellenistic World between Assimilation and Differentiation,” hosted by the Westfälische Wilhelms- Universität Münster (Germany); and 3) a paper at the annual meeting of the American Institute of Archaeology, on the applicability of Anatolian models of temple administration to Jerusalem’s Second Temple, “The Archaeology of Strabo’s so-called Anatolian Temple States.”

Reflections from a JMC alumnus who minored in Jewish Studies

Tyler Thur '16

International Relations, JMC

Having grown up as a Roman Catholic and graduating from a Jesuit high school, I often get confused looks when I share that I earned a Jewish Studies Minor. To me, though, this experience was an integral part of my growth at Michigan State. For one, film showings, symposiums, luncheons, and speaker events hosted by the Jewish Studies Program broadened my cultural exposure and social network in a way that encouraged me to seek difference. With that, classes with Professors Aronoff and Benziman on Israeli politics, culture, and society along with international relations in the Middle East provided opportunities to add context to my undergraduate degree while developing still-relevant critical thinking and communication skills. Finally, Professor Hanshew’s History of the Holocaust course hardened my commitment to combating hate while emphasizing the importance of maintaining a rigorous ethical orientation. I am grateful for these lessons and skills that the Jewish Studies Program afforded to me. They have made me more effective and principled in my current role as the Assistant Director of Data and Evaluation for the Office of K-12 Outreach in MSU’s College of Education.



Please consider the Serling Institute in your charitable giving this year, to support our mission to educate students and future leaders on Jewish Studies and Modern Israel. You may scan here to donate or give online at <http://jsp.msu.edu/giving> and click on the Give Now button. 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



SCAN ME

Seniors Reflect on Highlights from their Jewish Studies Minor Experiences

Aldo Buttazzoni May '22
International Relations, JMC

The Jewish Studies minor was a highlight of my academic career at Michigan State and I would strongly recommend it to other students.

Learning Hebrew was one of my favorite parts of the minor. Learning Hebrew stimulated me mentally and I learned to love studying the language. The dedication of the professors in the Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel, especially Yore Kedem, made it easy to want to engage actively in the courses.

Traveling to Israel was another unique learning experience I received through the minor. Studying abroad in the Holy Land was something I will never forget and I am a better person for taking part in the trip. The skills and experiences I took away from this trip will stay with me for life and I'm grateful for the opportunity to have participated.

After graduating in the Spring I'll be moving to Fort Worth, Texas where I will be working in political media. I will apply to law schools for the 2024 academic year. I'm excited to move back to Texas, where I lived in the spring and summer of 2021, to continue pursuing my passion for politics and law.

I would also like to sincerely thank Michael and Elaine Serling for supporting the JS Program through the Serling Institute at the University. Throughout my progress in the JS minor, the Michael and Elaine Serling Institute offered me scholarships and unique learning opportunities that I never otherwise would have had. It is because of their passion for the program that I, and many other students, get to partake in life changing experiences and push themselves in the pursuit of knowledge. Thank you.



Samantha Chaben December '21
International Relations, JMC

The Jewish Studies minor at MSU has provided me with the opportunity to reconnect to my Jewish identity and further expand my knowledge of Judaism, not only on a personal level, but on a cultural and



political level as well. The Jewish Studies minor has given me a sense of community and has made a big campus feel much smaller and more meaningful. Additionally, I have concluded my time at MSU with a capstone to both my major and minor by taking a Senior Seminar (MC492) on the Dilemmas of Asymmetric Wars. I wrote an extensive research paper, under the guidance of Professor Aronoff, comparing the political and military effectiveness of actors in two Israeli-Hamas wars, evaluating the relationship between the actors and considering policy recommendations for the future. I intend to present my research paper at both the JMC Undergraduate Research Conference and the Serling Institute Undergraduate Research Conference. Upon graduation with an International Relations degree from James Madison College, I plan to move to D.C. and work for a legislative lobbyist firm.

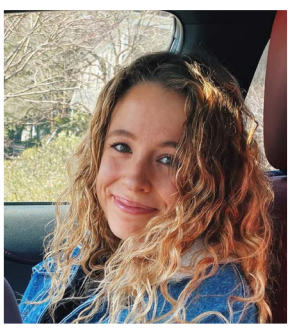
Avi Cohen May '22
Social Relations and Policy, JMC

My exploration of the Jewish Studies minor has provided me with the opportunity to nurture my familial relationships. Whether it is reviewing my papers with my father or calling my grandfather to inquire about my great uncle's Holocaust experiences, the academic requirements of the minor have oftentimes pushed me to explore my family's history and experiences as Jews. Through the studies of my cultural history, I have not only developed my interpersonal relationships but have strengthened my Jewish identity as an individual. With more knowledge comes a greater understanding of what elements of Judaism resonate with me. I am grateful for the opportunity to pursue the Jewish Studies minor and look forward to what is to come. I will apply to law schools in September.



Talia Gruber May '22
Psychology, CSS

Growing up attending Jewish Day School, I have always had a passion for the many different facets that Judaism contains. Being able to further study



the rich culture and history that Judaism holds at the university level has been incredibly fulfilling for me. With three out of four of my grandparents being survivors of the Holocaust, I was raised with deep discussion and learning about this significant piece of our history. I am fortunate enough to be working on my own research with the guidance of Professor Kirsten Fermaglich in an independent study this year. My paper discusses the experience of Holocaust survivors in post-WWII North America and how these immigrants were received by those in Canada and the United States. The Jewish Studies courses that I was able to take at MSU provided me with several valuable skills. Most importantly though, they reminded me how important a Jewish education and its presence in my life is to me. After graduating, I am hoping to take a gap year working preferably at a Jewish Family and Children's Services location or pursuing opportunities in Israel. Following the gap year I hope to earn my PhD in Clinical Psychology. I am sad to leave my home here at MSU, but I know I am taking away incredible memories, lessons, relationships, and knowledge. Thank you to everyone who has helped and supported me along the way!

Michelle Raytman May '22
Interdisciplinary Humanities, CAL

The Jewish Studies minor has allowed me to deepen my knowledge of Judaism as a whole, along with strengthening my personal relationship with Judaism. I had the privilege of attending the Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel Summer Study Abroad Program at the Hebrew University this past summer. There I experienced Israel in a different light with my newfound knowledge and understanding of Hebrew and Arabic. I was able to conduct research and make connections with people through my use of language. I created and strengthened friendships with incredibly genuine and caring students on the program from MSU and felt a sense of community in this little MSU abroad family that we had built. In the future, I hope to take my knowledge and use of languages to translate and connect with numerous individuals throughout the world. I hope to find a career that allows me to practice and learn more new languages along my journey.



Parker Renberg May '22
English and Economics, CAL and CSS

The highlight of the minor for



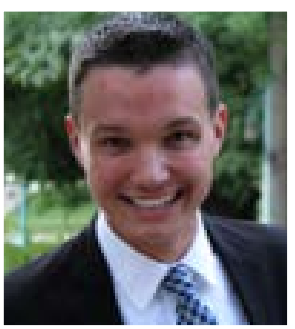
me was participating in the study abroad at the Hebrew University this past summer. I have benefitted from gaining a more nuanced understanding of Israel and its multicultural nature. I feel better equipped to engage in quality conversations with others about Israel and support my positions. My post-graduation plans are to attend law school with the hopes of doing public interest environmental litigation.

Jordan Robinson December '21
Interdisciplinary Studies, CSS

I am studying Interdisciplinary Studies with minors in Jewish Studies, Leadership of Organizations, and Sociology. I will be graduating in May 2022 and hope to earn a Masters in Business Administration to quickly excel in the Jewish Non-Profit world to make a large-scale impact.

I really have enjoyed minoring in Jewish Studies because it has allowed me to build relationships with faculty. I worked on an independent study with Professor Laura Yares on bringing alive the stories of the Metro Detroit Jewish people by telling their unique Jewish story through a series of interview questions and photos. By asking about their experiences, stories, and the overarching question of "what is it like being a Metro Detroit Jew," I gained a vast collection of different stories from Jewish individuals, families, and couples. The end product was a compilation of all the stories into a physical book modeled after the popular best seller "Humans of New York."

The Jewish Studies program is intimate, allowing you to build relationships with your peers and faculty and experience Judaism from an academic and overall different perspective.



Angelina Sandora May '22
International Relations, JMC

One highlight of my minor in Jewish Studies has been an independent study I did under the guidance of Professor Lorch, studying Zionism, and its effects on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and efforts to negotiate peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Also just getting to know different professors has been rewarding. The courses have given me a passion to learn about different religions more in-depth. I plan on starting a Masters in International Relations Program in the fall.





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

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Michigan State
University

