

Jewish Studies Program

Fall Semester 2014



Michigan State University

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Yael Aronoff, Director

Michael Serling, Chair, Advisory Board
Bill Bilstad, Yael Aronoff, & Ken Waltzer, Editors

Notes from New Director, Yael Aronoff

I am enthusiastic about starting my five-year tenure as Director of Jewish Studies. I am looking forward to working with faculty, staff, students, MSU administrators, the Board of Directors, and community members to strengthen our Jewish Studies program. We continue to offer co-curricular lectures, research seminars, and films in coordination with other units on campus, to fundraise for the development of a new endowed Chair in Holocaust Studies, to host our Visiting Serling Israeli Scholars, and to build the number of students minoring in Jewish Studies as well as faculty whom are affiliated with Jewish Studies. This fall alone we are sponsoring thirteen lectures, many of them are co-sponsored with at least one of eight other units. I am excited that Professor **Alon Tal**, a leading environmental historian and activist from Ben Gurion University, will be offering two classes at James Madison College this spring as the Serling Visiting Israel Scholar.

I would like to express my immense appreciation for **Kenneth Waltzer's** exemplary job as director for the last decade. Under his leadership, the Jewish Studies Program has grown and flourished. He helped develop three new positions: the Michael and Elaine Serling and Friends Chair in Israel Studies, which I occupy; the Serling Israeli Visiting Scholar position; and a Jewish Studies position in Religious Studies, which **Benjamin Pollock** has filled with distinction. Ken helped get Schusterman Visiting Israeli Fellows to MSU and initiated study abroad programs to Israel. I have been lucky to have worked closely

with Ken for the past eight years on most programming related to Israel, and for the past year on all Jewish Studies programming. I appreciate his continued willingness to support Jewish Studies in his retirement.

I would also like to thank **Ellen Rothfeld**, who retired this past May, after eighteen years of teaching Hebrew at MSU with dedication. She also successfully coordinated our annual Israeli Film Festival for the past ten years. We will sorely miss Ellen and hope to see her in many of our events.

We mourn the passing of **George Peters**, affiliated Jewish Studies faculty, who was a supportive colleague, a student of modern German Jewry, and a friend of the program.

I would like to welcome **Ariana Metzel**, who will be teaching first-year Hebrew for us. Ariana graduated from MSU and was a Jewish Studies specialist. She worked for the Anti-Defamation League in Michigan and on projects that aim to improve Jewish-Muslim relations, and earned her Masters in Conflict Resolution from IDC Herzliya. We face the challenge of declining enrollment in Hebrew, but Professor **Marc Bernstein** and Ms. Metzel will be working to recruit more students.

It is with sorrow and empathy that we followed the Israeli-Hamas war this past summer. Hamas fired over 4,500 rockets at Israeli civilian targets, forcing many people to leave their homes and others to make frequent trips to bomb shelters. Seventy Israelis lost their lives due to the war. Since Hamas often fires rockets from and stores the rockets in civilian areas, builds tunnels into Israel from civilian

areas, and does not wear a distinguishing uniform while fighting, the Palestinian toll has been heavy. Israeli actions took 2,000 Palestinians lives, and Israel estimates that approximately half were militants. Our hearts go out to Israelis and to Palestinian civilians who have suffered, and we hope for a long-term truce and eventually an agreement to bring peace and security to Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Due to the tragic war this summer, our study abroad program was prematurely aborted by MSU for safety concerns. We will be petitioning the MSU risk committee to reinstate our study abroad programs in Israel and for MSU students studying independently at Israeli universities.

Given the tragic events this summer, the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement is likely to capitalize on mischaracterizations of Israeli actions (exaggerating civilian deaths beyond the already tragic number and portraying them as intentional on Israel's part), in order to gain momentum. The movement's goals of cutting interactions with Israel and Israelis would impede the ability of Jewish Studies to promote the study of the only Jewish majority country in the world. Professor **Carey Nelson's** lecture, "Bait and Switch: The Meaning of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions," will be held November 20, 7:00-8:30 pm, in Club Spartan, Case Hall.

I look forward to an intellectually stimulating year and to seeing you at all our events.

~**Yael Aronoff**, Professor and Director

Serling Modern Israel Lecture "Zionism as a Liberal Democratic Worldview"

Monday, October 6
7:00-8:30 pm

Case Hall, Club Spartan, 3rd Floor

Gadi Taub, Israeli historian, writer, screenwriter, and public intellectual, is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Communications at Hebrew University, the author of *The Settlers and the Struggle Over the Meaning of Zionism* (2010), and writes regularly for the Israeli press and American journals.



Fall Jewish Studies / Hadassah Brunch "Teaching About Israel in Higher Education Today"

Sunday, October 19
10:00 am-12:00 noon

University Club,
3435 Forest Rd., Lansing, MI

Yael Aronoff is the Michael and Elaine Serling and Friends Israel Studies Professor at James Madison College and the new director of Jewish Studies at MSU. Dr. Aronoff won the Teacher-Scholar Award at MSU in 2011.



Recent and Upcoming Events

Monday, September 22

Jewish Studies Faculty Student Research Seminar
"Huwiya/Zehut: Identity and Language in the Israeli Bilingual Sitcom 'Arab Labor'"

Marc Bernstein, MSU

Dr. Bernstein explores Arabic and Hebrew linguistic topics in the popular Israeli sitcom *Arab Labor*. Co-sponsored with Muslim Studies

4:00–5:30 pm, Wells Hall C-742

Tuesday, September 25

Michigan State University Study Abroad Fair

Learn about the MSU Jewish Studies Summer Program at the Hebrew University/Rothberg School in Jerusalem.

12:00–6:00 pm, Breslin Center

Monday, September 29

"On Being a Palestinian Arab Writer in Israel"

Sayed Kashua, visiting scholar U of Illinois-Champaign Urbana
Sayed Kashua writes for *Haaretz*, and won the Prime Minister's Prize for Literature in Israel in 2004. Co-sponsored with Arabic Flagship, Global Studies, and Muslim Studies.

4:00 pm, 208 IM West

Monday, October 6

2014 Michael and Elaine Serling Modern Israel Lecture

"Zionism as a Liberal Democratic Worldview"

Gadi Taub, Israeli historian, writer, screenwriter
Senior Lecturer in the Department of Communications at Hebrew University, Gadi Taub is the author of *The Settlers and the Struggle Over the Meaning of Zionism* (2010) Co-sponsored with James Madison College.

7:00–8:30 pm, Case Hall, Club Spartan, 3rd Floor

Friday, October 10

Jewish Studies Faculty Student Research Seminar
"A Geography of Mourning: Jewish American Narratives"

Steve Weiland, Michigan State University

Steve Weiland will give a talk and lead a discussion on his ongoing research on Jewish-American autobiographical accounts of mourning.

10:00–11:20 am, Wells Hall, C-742

Tuesday, October 14

Kessler Jewish Film Event

Film *Numbered* (2012), dirs. **Dana Doron & Uriel Sinai**
This film focuses on Auschwitz prisoners' tattooed numbers as enduring signs. Discussion by **Ken Waltzer**, James Madison College and Jewish Studies, and **Howard Bossen**, College of Communication Arts and Sciences.

7:00 pm, MSU Main Library, West 4th Floor, W449

Sunday, October 19

Fall Jewish Studies / Hadassah Brunch
"Teaching About Israel in Higher Education Today"

Yael Aronoff, Michigan State University

Dr. Aronoff won the Teacher-Scholar Award at MSU in 2011, and is the Michael and Elaine Serling and Friends Israel Studies Professor in the James Madison College, and is the new director of Jewish Studies.

10:00 am–12:00 noon, University Club,

Thursday, October 23

Neal Shine Ethics Lecture

"Ethical Considerations in Documentary Photography and Photojournalism"

Natan Dvir, Israeli photographer

Award-winning photographer Natan Dvir's documentary photographs depict individuals in conflict-ridden societies.

3:00–4:30 pm, 145 Comm Arts

Monday, October 27

YIDDISHKEIT LECTURE

"Women in Times of Persecution in Jewish East European Legends"

Haya Bar-Itzhak, University of Haifa

Dr. Bar-Itzhak has published extensively on settlement, immigration, and ethnicity in Israel; Jewish folk literature in Eastern Europe; and women in Jewish folklore.

4:00 pm, Wells Hall B-342

Thursday, October 30

"Kibbutz Lotan: Environmental Sustainability and Intentional Community in the Arava Desert"

Alex Cicelsky, Kibbutz Lotan, CfCE

The Center for Creative Ecology (CfCE), established on Kibbutz Lotan in 1996, is one of Israel's premiere environmental education, conservation, and research institutes. Co-sponsored by RCAH, the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and the Hillel Center.

7:30 pm, Snyder Hall, RCAH Theater

Saturday, November 1

Film "Zero Motivation" (2014) director: **Tayla Lavie**

The film provides a darkly comic glimpse into the Israeli society, told through the zany story of five female Israeli soldiers stationed in a remote desert base.

7:00–9:00 pm, Wells Hall B-115

Friday, November 14

"Writing About Franz Rosenzweig's Life and Thought"

Benjamin Pollock, Michigan State University

Dr. Pollock re-examines Franz Rosenzweig's near-conversion to Christianity in 1913 and his decision to return to Judaism later that same year.

10:00–11:20 am, Wells Hall C-742

Thursday, November 20

"Bait and Switch: The Purpose of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement"

Cary Nelson, U. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Former president of the American Association of University Professors, Cary Nelson is co-editing a book with Gabriel Brahm called *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel*. Sponsored by James Madison College and Jewish Studies.

7:00–8:30 pm, Case Hall, Club Spartan, 3rd Floor

Friday, December 5

"The Political Psychology of Israeli Prime Ministers: When Hard-Liners Opt for Peace"

Yael Aronoff will give a talk about the decision-making criteria of six Israeli prime ministers and how they changed Israel's foreign policy.

10:00–11:20 am, Wells Hall, C-742

2015 Serling Visiting Israeli Scholar Alon Tal

Dr. Alon Tal will be the 2015 Serling Visiting Israeli Scholar at MSU in January and February 2015. Dr. Tal's courses that will be taught in James Madison College are **MC335—Israeli Politics, Society, and Culture**, and **MC390—Special Topics: Environmentalism in Israel**. Although James Madison College and Jewish Studies minors get priority in scheduling, these classes are open to all MSU students.



After a recent sabbatical at Stanford where he completed a new book on Israel's forests, Alon has returned to the JNF international board where he chairs the land development committee that oversees forestry. As chairman, he is presently preparing Israel's Green Party for the upcoming elections.

Dr. Alon Tal's career has been a balance between academia and public interest advocacy. He was most recently a visiting professor on sabbatical at the Stanford University Center for Conservation Biology. He is on the faculty at Ben Gurion University. Alon has held faculty appointments at Tel Aviv and Hebrew Universities in Israel, and was a visiting professor at the University of Otago in New Zealand. Between 1990 and 1998 he was an adjunct faculty member at Harvard University.

Dr. Tal was the founding director of Adam Teva V'din, the Israel Union for Environmental Defense from 1990–1997, a leading public interest law group. He was also chairman of Life and Environment, an umbrella group for eighty environmental organizations in Israel from 1998–2003.

In 1996, Dr. Tal founded the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, a graduate studies center in which Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian students join environmentalists from around the world in an advanced interdisciplinary research program. He served as chairman of the committee for sustainable development and is still a member of the international board of the Jewish National Fund (KKL). Dr. Tal represents Israel's Foreign Ministry at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. He is also co-chair of Israel's Green Party.

Most recently, he established the Tal Fund, a new grassroots ecological initiative in Israel in conjunction with the Jewish National Fund. Dr. Tal has published dozens of academic and popular articles. His recent books are *All the Trees of the Forest*, *Water Wisdom*, *Speaking of Earth*, and *Before Pollution in a Promised Land*.

Dr. Tal has received degrees in political science and economics from the University of North Carolina, and a degree in law from Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He received his Masters and Doctoral degrees from the Harvard School of Public Health in Environmental Health Policy.

Jewish Studies Faculty Research Notes Yael Aronoff, Steve Gold, and Benjamin Pollock

Yael Aronoff has published *The Political Psychology of Israeli Prime Ministers: When Hard-Liners Opt for Peace* with Cambridge University Press (2014). Her book examines decision-making by six Israeli prime ministers over the past twenty-five years, asking why some leaders have persisted in hard-line positions but others have opted for peacemaking. Professor Aronoff goes beyond simply arguing that "leaders matter" by analyzing how their particular belief systems and personalities can ultimately make a difference to Israel's foreign policy. She examines how varied ideologies, as well as each leader's emotional intelligence, risk propensity, cognitive rigidity, and individual time orientation influenced the extent, rate, and mechanisms of change for each prime minister.

Steve Gold explores female self-employment in three migrant ethnic communities in the US (Vietnamese, Russian Jews, and Israelis) in the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. Such women may benefit from a proximal host co-ethnic economy—the Jewish community or the Chinese community. Refugee status and benefits to Vietnamese and Russian Jewish women also facilitate business formation. Women may build on country-of-origin experience and skills relevant to generating income, but Russian Jewish women and Israeli women are dissimilar. Israeli women are less active in income generation, lack access to state-funded resettlement services, and often plan to return to Israel, which affects the nature of their self-employment activities.

Benjamin Pollock has published *Franz Rosenzweig's Conversions: World Denial and World Redemption* with Indiana University Press (2014). This book re-examines the most famous story in modern Jewish thought: Franz Rosenzweig's near-conversion to Christianity in the summer of 1913 and his decision to return to Judaism in fall that same year. The book offers a radically new account of this period of personal and intellectual transformation in Rosenzweig's life, arguing that both Rosenzweig's decision to convert to Christianity, and his later about-face were rooted in Rosenzweig's long-standing perplexity over a web of metaphysical questions concerning the relation between the self and the world.

New Affiliated Jewish Studies Faculty Ronen Steinberg

Ronen Steinberg (Ph.D., History, University of Chicago) is an assistant professor of history at Michigan State University. His primary areas of interest are the French Revolution, Modern European History, and mass violence. He has published articles and book chapters on the history of terrorism, transitional justice, and the aftermath of the Reign



of Terror in revolutionary France. Dr. Steinberg has been a residential fellow at the Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies at the University of Michigan and a Benjamin Franklin Fellow of the American Philosophical Society. Most recently, a yearlong residential fellowship in the Institute for Historical Studies at the University of Texas at Austin funded research on trauma and history. He is currently working on a book manuscript titled tentatively *The Afterlives of the Terror: Dealing with the Legacies of Violence in Post-Revolutionary France*. At Michigan State University he teaches regularly a course "History and Theory of Genocide" as well as a seminar on how societies deal with the legacies of massive violence.

Mark Your Calendar!
**10th ANNUAL
ISRAELI FILM FESTIVAL**
Sunday, March 22
and
Tuesday, March 24





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Academic News

Yael Aronoff's book *The Political Psychology of Israeli Prime Ministers: When Hard-Liners Opt for Peace* was published by Cambridge University Press in June 2014. Dr. Aronoff participated in the Israel Institute Leadership Summit in June 2014 in Kfar Giladi, and presented with Eric Aronoff on "Bordering on Peace: Spatial Narratives of Israeli Border Crossings with Jordan and Egypt" at the Association for Israel Studies Meeting, June 23–25, in Sde Boker, Israel. Dr. Aronoff was a discussant on Joel Migdal's important book *Shifting Sands: The United States in the Middle East* (2014); and she published a review essay, "Making the Next Peace Process Succeed," in *Israel Studies Review* 29:1 (Summer 2014). Professor Aronoff is the 2014 Scholar in Residence September 12–14 in Grand Rapids, speaking on "America and Israel" at Temple Emanuel and Congregation Ahavas Israel.

Marc Bernstein conducted research in Israel this summer on Sayed Kashua's TV show *Arab Labor*, and led the MSU Jewish Studies summer program at Hebrew University in summer 2014.

Kirsten Fermaglich co-chaired two panels on Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* this past spring and summer. In April, she moderated a panel on Friedan and mid-twentieth century feminism at the Organization of American Historians conference in Atlanta; in June, she co-chaired a panel at the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women on the global and local legacies of *The Feminine Mystique*.

Steve Gold presented "Women's Self-Employment: The Case of Vietnamese, Russian-Speaking Jews, and Israelis" at the American Sociological Association in August in San Francisco, CA. Steve will visit the University of Amsterdam and University of Osnabruck this fall to participate in MISOCO, the Joint European Master Programme in International Migration and Social Cohesion. This programme seeks to explore the critical elements of international migration and incorporation of immigrants and to educate students in advanced theories, techniques, and methodologies in Migration Studies.

Deborah Margolis presented "Holocaust and Genocide Testimony: Key Online Resources," with Emily Newberry, UM-Flint, and Terri Kovach, Monroe County Community College, Michigan Library Association Academic Libraries conference (<http://libguides.lib.msu.edu/holocaust-genocide>), in May 2014.

Deborah has put together the exhibit on the author Sayed Kasha, at the Main Library 2W, which runs September 15-October 31.

Anna Norris presented a paper on Holocaust survivor and filmmaker Marceline Loridan Ivens at the Women in French biennial conference at the University of Guelph, Canada, in May 2014. This October, she will present on testimonies at Le Memorial de la Shoah at the international conference, "Exploring Women's Testimony from a Historical Landscape of the Holocaust, War, Revolution and Human Rights," sponsored at the University of Maine at Augusta, Colby College, and the Holocaust Center of Maine.

Mat Pauley's *Breaking the Tongue: Language, Education, and Power in Soviet Ukraine, 1923–34* will be published by University of Toronto Press in late October. The book discusses Yiddish schools within the larger context of the early Soviet promotion of Ukrainian-language schooling, relations between children, Jewish attitudes towards Soviet nationalities policy, and reported anti-Semitism.

Benjamin Pollock's *Overcoming Marcionism: Rethinking Franz Rosenzweig's Conversions* was published by Indiana University Press this summer. His article "To Infinity and Beyond: Hermann Cohen and Franz Rosenzweig on *Comportment towards Redemption*" will appear in the fall in *Rethinking the Messianic Idea in Judaism*, edited by M. Morgan and S. Weitzman. In the winter/spring semester of 2014, while on a HARP grant, Pollock worked on conceptions of theocracy in modern Jewish philosophy.

Kenneth Waltzer will participate with Yael Aronoff in the first Big Ten meeting of directors of Jewish Studies Programs to be held at the University of Michigan in October, in Ann Arbor. He will present on "Family Fragments, Pairs, and Small Groups: Another Look at Social Relations in the Nazi Concentration Camps" and moderate the session on "New Challenges" organized for Jewish Studies Directors at the Association for the Jewish Studies meeting in December 2014 in Baltimore, MD.

Steve Weiland will present a paper on "Memory and Mourning: Jewish-American Narratives" at the annual meeting of the Midwest Jewish Studies Association in mid-September at Kent State University.