

THE SERLING INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH STUDIES AND MODERN ISRAEL

...ature
ventieth
...versation
... November 5th,
... 50 pm

... there has been a recent boom in
Jewish literacy and learning within the
US, few resources exist to enable American
Jews to experience the rich, primary sources of
Yiddish culture. Stepping into this void, Miriam
... of stories and poems for children



SPRING 2021 NEWSLETTER

\$20000

Scholarships for students for every semes
... they take Hebrew in 2020-2021

As we welcome 2021 and a new semester, we applaud the creativity, innovation, and resilience of our faculty, students, and staff during the pandemic. The Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel prides itself on prioritizing teaching and mentoring undergraduate students, and that dedication continues under the pandemic. Indeed, this semester we held a teaching workshop in which our faculty shared their experiences and successes with online teaching; several faculty discuss these experiences in this newsletter. Our students have continued to take intellectually stimulating and enriching courses, engage in virtual internships, and conduct impressive and extensive research projects during this difficult and unprecedented fall semester. Please see our profiles of 10 students who have or are completing their minors and are graduating this May. They have taken diverse, enriching paths through their minor in Jewish Studies, and have combined these minors with a rich array of different majors. Many of our students will be presenting their research at our Serling Institute Undergraduate Research Conference on April 9th and you are invited to enjoy their research (virtually, as all our programming will continue to be this spring). Alumnus Marissa Cloutier, who has had an impressive career in the State Department, will share her experiences during the conference. Another Institute alumnus, Ariana Mentzel, has also had an impressive career, and is now making invaluable contributions to our Institute – see our highlights within to learn more about Ariana.

While we prize teaching and mentorship of undergraduate students, the faculty continue engaging in cutting-edge research and collaborating with scholars across the country and the world. Steve Gold, professor of sociology and long-time faculty affiliate of the Serling Institute, just released his edited book *Wandering Jews: Global Jewish Migration*, which analyzes the experiences of Jews migrating from Latin America, Iran, Israel, and the former Soviet Union, as well as within the United States. Professor of history Kirsten Fermaglich contributed a chapter on academic Jewish migration to East Lansing in the postwar era. We are fortunate to be able to present a virtual book panel in which several of the book's contributors, including Steve and Kirsten, will present their research. I also co-edited a book with Ilan Peleg and Saliba Sarsar, just now appearing in print, entitled *Continuity and Change in Political Culture, Israel and Beyond*. We will also be holding a symposium in which all the contributors from Israel and the United States will share their research.

We continue to offer rich and diverse co-curricular programming, exposing students and community members to internationally recognized speakers and award-winning films. We had over 800 people attending our virtual events last semester. While we miss seeing each other in person, one of the few silver linings of this moment is that people from across the country and the world are participating in our virtual events. This spring's programming continues to address the diversity of Jewish experience across the vast array of subcultures, and their interactions with non-Jewish minorities or majorities. In events like the panel on "Continuity and Change in Political Culture," scholars will examine majority-minority challenges to equality in Israel. Award-winning author Sarah Willen will discuss the challenges faced by migrants from diverse countries who come to work in Israel. Films in our renowned Israeli Film Festival will highlight the diversity of Jewish experiences, including the experience of Mizrahi Jews confined to *maabarot* (resettlement camps) upon their arrival to Israel; the rescue of European Jews in the Muslim majority country of Albania during World War II; the complicated relationships between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians trying to negotiate their individual experiences and national narratives; and a celebration of the diverse Jewish and Palestinian cultures in Israel as represented through food. We will also hear from the directors of these films. We will watch a virtual performance by Yemenite Israeli singer songwriter Tair Haim, of the sister band A-WA, and will have a cooking demo of a Moroccan Israeli dish by chef Hunny Khordokovsky. We will be hearing from top scholars discussing the Holocaust in Greece as well as in Romania and the Soviet Union, and the varied experiences and influences of local non-Jewish populations. At a time when US democracy and cultural identity are under debate, Rabbi Matthew Kaufman, PhD, will discuss his research on philosopher Horace Kallen and the relevance of his theories of cultural pluralism and democracy to contemporary debates.

I want to thank all our faculty, students, and community members who have maintained and increased their engagement with the Serling Institute. A special thank you to Kirsten Fermaglich for her valuable contributions as Associate Director, to Ariana Mentzel, Viki Gietzel, and Michal Eiden for their incredible assistance, and to Yael Eichhorn, our dedicated student intern.

Yael Aronoff Director, Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel
For questions about our Institute please contact me at aronoff@msu.edu or 517-303-6019

FACULTY NEWS HIGHLIGHTS



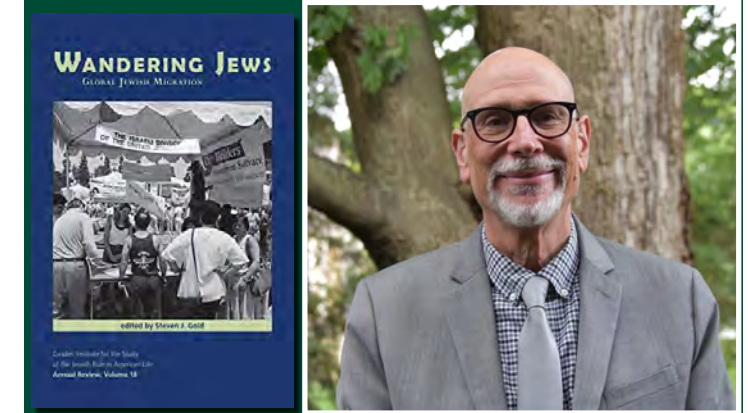
CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN POLITICAL CULTURE, ISRAEL AND BEYOND

Co-edited by Yael S. Aronoff, Ilan Peleg, and Saliba Sarsar

Ten leading scholars and practitioners of politics, political science, anthropology, Israel studies, and Middle East affairs address the theme of continuity and change in political culture as a tribute to Professor Myron (Mike) J. Aronoff, whose work on political culture has built conceptual and methodological bridges between political science and anthropology.

Topics include the legitimacy of the two-state solution, identity and memory, denationalization, the role of trust in peace negotiations, democracy, majority-minority relations, inclusion and exclusion, Biblical and national narratives, art in public space, and avant-garde theater. Countries covered include Israel, Palestine, the United States, the Basque Autonomous Region of Spain, and Poland. The first four chapters by Yael Aronoff, Saliba Sarsar, Yossi Beilin, and Nadav Shelef examine aspects of the conflict and peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, including alternative solutions. The contributions by Naomi Chazan, Ilan Peleg, and Joel Migdal tackle challenges to democracy in Israel, in other divided societies, and in the creation of the American public. Yael Zerubavel, Roland Vazquez, and Jan Kubik focus their analyses on aspects of national memory, memorialization, and dramatization. Mike Aronoff relates his work on various aspects of political culture to each chapter in an integrative essay in the epilogue.

Dr. Yael S. Aronoff - Director of the Michael and Elaine Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel and Serling Chair of Israel Studies. Dr. Aronoff is Associate Professor of International Relations in James Madison College at MSU. She is currently serving as the president of the Association of Israel Studies. Dr. Aronoff's book, *The Political Psychology of Israeli Prime Ministers: When Hard-Liners Opt for Peace* was published by Cambridge University Press in 2014.



WANDERING JEWS: GLOBAL JEWISH MIGRATION (THE JEWISH ROLE IN AMERICAN LIFE: AN ANNUAL REVIEW)

Edited by Steven J. Gold

Wandering Jews provides readers with a broader understanding of the Jewish experience of migration in the United States and elsewhere. It describes the record of a wide variety of Jewish migrant groups, including those encountering different locations of settlement, historical periods, and facets of the migration experience. While migrants who left the Pale of Settlement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are discussed, the volume's authors also explore less well-studied topics. These include the fate of contemporary Jewish academics who seek to build communities in midwestern college towns; the adaptation experience of recent Jewish migrants from Latin America, Israel, and the former Soviet Union; the adjustment of Iranian Jews; the experience of contemporary Jewish migrants in France and Belgium; the return of Israelis living abroad; and a number of other topics. Interdisciplinary, the volume draws upon history, sociology, geography, and other fields.

Steven J. Gold is professor and graduate program director in the Department of Sociology at Michigan State University and is a faculty affiliate of the Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel. His scholarly interests include international migration, ethnic economies, ethnic community development, qualitative field methods, and visual sociology. Gold is the author, coauthor, or coeditor of eight books, including *The Israeli Diaspora*, which won the Thomas and Znaniecki Award from the American Sociology Association's International Migration Section for the best book on international migration in 2003. Author of over one hundred journal articles and book chapters, Gold received the Charles Horton Cooley Award for Distinguished Scholarship in Sociology from the Michigan Sociology Association in 2007 and the Distinguished Career Award from the American Sociological Association's International Migration Section in 2019.

SPRING EVENTS 2021

ALL EVENTS ARE VIRTUAL

Zoom links to all events will be advertised through email

If you are not getting our emails, please contact us at jewishst@msu.edu

1

Symposium on Continuity and Change in Political Culture, Israel and Beyond

Co-edited by Yael S. Aronoff, Ilan Peleg, and Saliba Sarsar

Ten leading scholars and practitioners of politics, political science, anthropology, Israel studies, and Middle East affairs address the theme of continuity and change in political culture as a tribute to Professor Myron (Mike) J. Aronoff whose work on political culture has built conceptual and methodological bridges between political science and anthropology. There will be three consecutive panels on the three themes of the book by its contributors.

Sunday, January 24th, 11 am-1:45 pm EST (6-8:45 pm IST)

Conflict and Peace 11:00-11:55 am EST (6-6:55 pm IST) followed by 10 minute break

Yael S. Aronoff- Pathways to Peace: Legitimation of a Two-State Solution

Aronoff is the director of the Serling Institute for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel and is the Serling Chair in Israel Studies at Michigan State University. Dr. Aronoff teaches in James Madison College, where she is associate professor of political science.

Her book, *The Political Psychology of Israeli Prime Ministers: When Hard Liners Opt for Peace*, was published by Cambridge University Press (2014), and she is the current president of the Association of Israel Studies



Yossi Beilin- The Ecological Fallacy: "Trust" in International Relations—The Case of the Settlement Freeze in the Oslo Process

Beilin initiated the Oslo Process in 1992, the "Beilin-Abu Mazen agreement" in 1993-1995, and the Geneva Initiative in 2001-2003. He also headed the Labour Party and the Meretz Party. Beilin was Israeli Justice Minister and served as deputy minister and as minister in four governments in Israel from 1988-2001.



Saliba Sarsar- Memory, Identity, and Peace in Palestinian-Israeli Relations

Sarsar, born and raised in Jerusalem, is the author of *Peacebuilding in Israeli-Palestinian Relations* (2020), *Jerusalem: The Home in Our Hearts* (2018) and *What Jerusalem Means to Us: Christian Perspectives and Reflections* (2018).



Nadav G. Shelef- Denationalization in the Israel-Palestinian Context

Shelef is the Harvey M. Meyerhoff Professor of Israel Studies and professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. His most recent books include *Homelands: Shifting Borders and Territorial Disputes* (Cornell University Press, 2020) and *Evolving Nationalism: Homeland, Identity and Religion in Israel, 1925-2005* (Cornell University Press, 2010).



Challenges to Democracy 12:05- 12:50 pm EST (7:05-7:50 pm IST) followed by 10 minute break

Naomi Chazan- Israel's Democracy at a Turning Point

Naomi Chazan is professor emerita of political science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and currently serves as a senior research fellow at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and at the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace. She has written and edited nine books and over seventy scholarly articles, headed the Meretz Party, and was President of the New Israel Fund.



Ilan Peleg- Majority-Minority Relations in Deeply Divided Democratic Societies: The Israeli Case in a Globalized Context

Peleg is the author or editor of eleven books and over ninety scholarly essays. A former president of the Association of Israel Studies, he is the founding editor-in-chief of *Israel Studies Forum*, the scholarly journal of the Association for Israel Studies.



Joel Migdal- Creating the Public in a Society of Strangers: Inclusion and Exclusion in American Cities

Migdal is the Robert F. Philip Professor Emeritus of International Studies in the University of Washington's Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies. Among his books are *Strong Societies and Weak States*; *The Palestinian People: A History* (with Baruch Kimmerling); and *Shifting Sands: The United States in the Middle East*.



National Memory, Memorialization, and Dramatization 1:00- 1:45 pm EST (8:00-8:45 pm IST)

Yael Zerubavel- The Bible Now: Political Satire and National Memory

Zerubavel is professor emerita of Jewish studies and history at Rutgers University and the former founding director of the Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life. She is the author of the award-winning *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), and *Desert in the Promised Land* (Stanford University Press, 2019). Professor Zerubavel is the recipient of the 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award in Israel Studies from the Association for Israel Studies and the Israel Institute.



Roland Vazquez- Victim Sculpture and an Aesthetic of Basque Politics

Vazquez is professor of Anthropology and Social Science at Upper Iowa University. His book *Politics, Culture, and Sociability in the Basque Nationalist Party* (University of Nevada Press, 2010) is an ethnographic study of Basque partisan competition.



Jan Kubik- Tadeusz Kantor's Theater as an Antidote against the Excesses of Nationalism and Idiocy of State Socialism

Kubik is professor in the Department of Political Science at Rutgers University and professor of Slavonic and East European Studies at University College London (UCL). Among his publications are *The Power of Symbols against the Symbols of Power*; *Anthropology and Political Science*, with Myron Aronoff.



Fighting for DIGNITY
Migrant Lives at Israel's Margins



Sarah S. Willen will reflect on her long-term ethnographic engagement with global migrants who came to Israel from countries as varied as Ghana and the Philippines, Nigeria, Colombia, and Ukraine seeking work opportunities. After a brief heyday around the year 2000, many of these migrant communities fell apart when the Israeli government launched a mass deportation campaign (2002-05) that set the stage for even more aggressive anti-migrant and anti-refugee policies in the years to come. Drawing on fieldwork in homes and in churches, medical offices, human rights NGOs, and public spaces, Willen explores how global migrants in Tel Aviv struggle to craft meaningful, flourishing lives despite the exclusions and vulnerabilities they endure.

Sarah S. Willen is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Connecticut, where she also directs the Research Program on Global Health & Human Rights at the Human Rights Institute. Her first book, *Fighting for Dignity: Migrant Lives at Israel's Margins* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), was awarded the 2019 Yonathan Shapiro Prize for Best Book in Israel Studies from the Association for Israel Studies, the 2020 Edie Turner First Book Prize in Ethnographic Writing from the Society for Humanistic Anthropology, and was named finalist for the Jordan Schnitzer Book Award in Social Science, Anthropology, and Folklore from the Association for Jewish Studies.



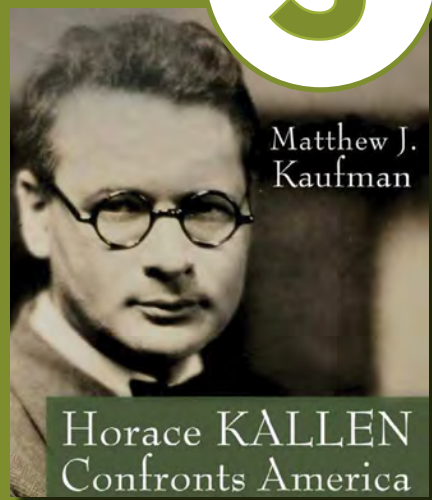
Lecture by Sarah S. Willen about her award-winning book Fighting For Dignity: Migrant Lives at Israel's Margins
Sunday, January 31st,
11 am-12:30 pm
(6-7:30 IST)



Betting on Democracy: The Faith of an American Jewish Pragmatist
Tuesday, February 23rd,
7-8:30 pm

In this significant American political moment, this presentation on the thought of American Jewish philosopher Horace M. Kallen is a timely exploration of his unique and creative conception of democracy as a religion. As we now grapple with understanding what America is and who we are as a people, Kallen's ideas resonate as a sounding board for new debates on the viability of cooperative unity as the operative condition of American society.

Rabbi Matthew Kaufman, PhD, is the author of *Horace Kallen Confronts America: Jewish Identity, Science, and Secularism* (Syracuse University Press, 2019). This intellectual biography traces how one man's quest for authenticity contributed to a gradual shift in Jewish self-perception in America and reveals how Kallen's struggle led to America's embrace of his well-known term "cultural pluralism." Dr. Kaufman serves as the rabbi of Congregation Kehillat Israel in Lansing, MI.



Finifter Panel on The Holocaust in Greece
Tuesday, March 23rd, 12:30-2:30 pm



The Third Perspective on the Holocaust: Non-Jews and the German Murder of their Jewish Neighbours

Historians write about the Holocaust generally from the perspectives of the German perpetrators or the Jewish victims. This means that they miss the vital non-Jewish perspective, in particular the national and local governments that played an important role in facilitating the German murder of their Jewish citizens. This talk will explore non-Jewish involvement in the murder of the Greek Jews of Salonika, the city in which 70% of Greece's Jewish population lived on the eve of World War II.

Andrew Apostolou is the first historian to have written about Greek Christian collaboration during the Holocaust in Greece in an academic journal. He earned his DPhil from St. Antony's, Oxford, for "The Exception of Salonika: Greek Christian Reactions to the Holocaust" (forthcoming as a monograph).



A City against Its Citizens? Thessaloniki and the Jews

The presentation will focus on the reactions of Thessaloniki's city authorities as the Holocaust was unfolding. In so doing, it seeks to answer the questions: did the Christian society stand up for the defense of the city's Jews and did they try to undermine or object to the Nazi orders? Using archives from the City of Thessaloniki and several other sources, five case studies will be presented: the renaming of the streets with Jewish names prior to the deportations; the city's involvement with the destruction of the Jewish cemetery; the use by the city of Jewish slave labor; the replacing of the Jewish employees in the municipality of Thessaloniki; and the acquisition of Jewish property.

Leon Saltiel holds a PhD in Contemporary Greek History from the University of Macedonia in Thessaloniki and has received postdoctoral fellowships at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.



Revisiting Bystanders, Rescuers and Collaborators: Social Distancing and Social Networks in Thessaloniki before and during the Holocaust

The paper will examine the importance of prewar 'social distancing', i.e. the cultural, class and linguistic barriers between Christians and Jews in Thessaloniki, in relation to the low probability of survival (4%) among the members of the community. The paper will then analyze the various networks of survival based on prewar social ties and relations (cultural linguistic, class). What kind of social capital did prewar relations create and was it important for increasing the possibility of survival?

Giorgos Antoniou is Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He currently holds the Chair of Jewish Studies and is a member of European Holocaust Research Infrastructure and International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. His current research interests include the study of contemporary antisemitism in Greece, datasets and demographics of the Thessaloniki Jewish community, survival and social networking, and the commemoration of the Holocaust in Greece.



15th Annual Israeli Film Festival
Sunday, March 7th and Sunday, March 14th

IFF is virtual this year and you are invited to watch the films from the comfort of your own home! **Films will be made available to view several days prior** to the scheduled live, virtual discussion and Q&A with some of the films' directors. **The films will not be shown live** at the discussion, but are available for you to view at your own convenience. For more information go to pages 12-13.



Panel followed by book discussion of *Wandering Jews: Global Jewish Migration* Tuesday, March 30th, 4:30-6:30 pm

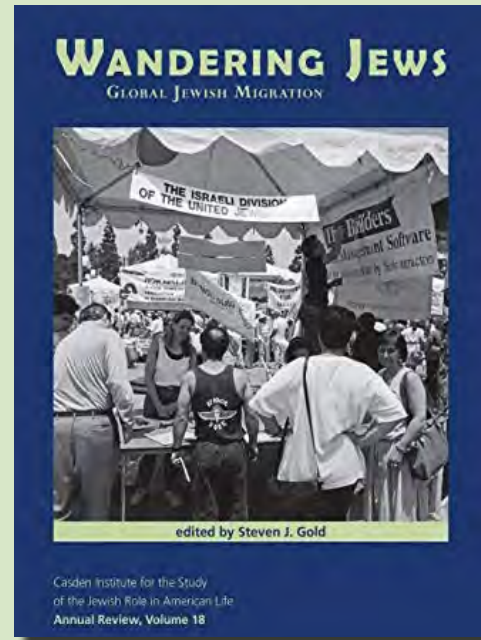
6

Steven Gold will discuss his edited book *Wandering Jews* with Gil Ribak, Laura Limonic, and Kirsten Fermaglich, who will give virtual presentations on their chapters. *Wandering Jews* provides readers with a broader understanding of the Jewish experience of migration in the United States and elsewhere. It describes the record of a wide variety of Jewish migrant groups, including those encountering different locations of settlement, historical periods, and facets of the migration experience. While migrants who left the Pale of Settlement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are discussed, the volume's authors also explore less well-studied topics. These include the fate of contemporary Jewish academics who seek to build communities in midwestern college towns; the adaptation experience of recent Jewish migrants from Latin America, Israel, and the former Soviet Union; the adjustment of Iranian Jews; the experience of contemporary Jewish migrants in France and Belgium; the return of Israelis living abroad; and a number of other topics. Interdisciplinary, the volume draws upon history, sociology, geography, and other fields.

Steven J. Gold is professor and graduate program director in the Department of Sociology at Michigan State University and is a faculty affiliate of the Serling Institute.

Kirsten Fermaglich - It's the Community That We've Made: Jewish Migration to East Lansing, Michigan in the Postwar Era

This presentation explores the experiences of Jewish academics who moved to East Lansing, Michigan to take jobs at Michigan State University in the post-World War II era. These academics were part of a wave of American Jewish internal migration. As antisemitic restrictions lifted and higher education expanded in the years after the war, thousands of Jews moved from large Eastern cities to colleges located in small Midwestern and Southern cities with few Jews. Although Jewish observers at the time called these academics "runaway Jewish intellectuals," fearing they would abandon the Jewish community, this paper will describe how the academic Jews of East Lansing found themselves seeking Jewish community, and indeed creating one that fit their needs. These academic migrants built their own religious school and synagogue, which featured an egalitarian liturgy, participatory worship service and a vibrant Jewish community. The academic Jews of East Lansing experienced a renewal, not a loss, of Jewish identity with their migration.



Kirsten Fermaglich is Professor of History and Jewish Studies at Michigan State University. She is the author of *A Rosenberg By Any Other Name* (NYU Press, 2018) which won the Saul Viener Prize for the best book in American Jewish history from the American Jewish Historical Society in 2019.

Laura Limonic - New Jewish Immigrants: Constructing an American Jewish Identity

Jewish identity is built within and across national borders - influenced by the transnational tenets of Jewish practice, faith and culture as well as the national cultures where Jews reside. Jewish immigrants often find that their Jewish practice and Jewish culture diverges from Jewish life in their adopted country. In this presentation, I compare three immigrant groups, from distinct geographic locations: the former Soviet Union, Israel and Latin America. By comparing demographic and socio-economic characteristics as well as markers of Jewish identity and behavior across these three immigrant groups, we widen our understanding of immigrant communities that comprise the larger US Jewish group. I use data from the Pew Research Center, to construct variables aimed at measuring Jewish identity - providing insight into the changing nature of Jewish identity and the process of assimilation into the larger US Jewish community.

Laura Limonic received her PhD in sociology from the CUNY Graduate Center in 2014. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Latin American Studies from Brandeis University and a Master of International Affairs degree from Columbia University. In addition to academic research, Laura has an extensive background in public policy research and advocacy.

Gil Ribak - Cleanliness Like That of the Germans: Eastern European Jews' Views of Germans and the Dynamics of Migration and Disillusionment

The talk will focus on Eastern European Jews' views of Germans before, during, and after immigration to America. Images of Germans should be understood in the context of the Jewish encounter with modernity. Modernizing Jews initially idealized the non-Jews whom they perceived as more developed and carriers of a higher culture; however, this pattern of initial admiration was frequently followed by disenchantment. Idealization required geographical distance; when Jews came into close contact with Germans, their attitudes often changed.

Gil Ribak is an Associate Professor of Judaic Studies at the University of Arizona. Born and raised in Israel, he came to the United States on a Fulbright Dissertation Fellowship and completed a doctoral degree in history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His book, *Gentile New York: The Images of Non-Jews among Jewish Immigrants*, was published by Rutgers University Press in 2012.

**Annual
Rabin/Brill
Lecture: "Neighbors in
Difficult Times: Jews and Gentiles
in the Borderlands of the Soviet Union
and Romania during the Holocaust"
Thursday, April 8th, 12:30-2:00 pm**

In this lecture, Dr. Diana Dumitru will explore differences between how civilians treated the Jewish populations of Romania and the occupied Soviet Union during the Holocaust. Contrary to most accounts that describe gentile behavior in Eastern Europe as almost uniformly negative in their interaction with Jewish neighbors, Dr. Dumitru demonstrates that the role of governments in the lead-up to the Holocaust mattered a great deal, with more inclusive nationality policies resulting in significantly better outcomes, even in territories with a long history of antisemitism, and exclusivist nationality policies resulting in significantly worse outcomes for Jews. The lecture will discuss Soviet and Romanian nationality policies between World Wars I and II, as well as uncovering the deadly impact this had during the Holocaust. Based on original archival research and hundreds of interviews with gentiles and Jews, the results suggest that relations between ethnic groups are not fixed and destined to repeat themselves, but are instead fluid and susceptible to change over time.

Dr. Diana Dumitru is Associate Professor of History at Ion Creanga State University of Moldova. Her field of research includes the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, nationalism, and Jews under late Stalinism.



7

**Annual Serling Institute
Undergraduate Research Conference
Friday, April 9th, 9 am- 5 pm**

You are invited to enjoy student presentations of their innovative Jewish Studies-related research and to join a discussion after each panel. The conference includes a keynote address by Marissa Cloutier, Division Chief of the US Department of State. Marissa, an alumna of the Serling Institute, will discuss her experiences working on national security and foreign policy in the US State Department.

8



**After a Decade, My Life is Still Shaped by the Jewish
Studies Program**

Ariana Mentzel (née Segal)



I was passionately impacted by the courses I took through the Jewish Studies specialization track (now a minor) at MSU during my undergraduate career from 2004-2008; mainly those analyzing Middle East conflicts and cooperation, as well as Israeli government and politics taught by Professor Yael Aronoff. I majored in International

Relations at the James Madison College and specialized in Jewish Studies and Muslim Studies. Coupled with my academic path, I partook in Jewish communal and leadership experiences with Hillel and served two years on the executive board, representing the Jewish Student Union on two ASMSU boards. What I was learning in Jewish Studies was not just useful for these campus roles, but in independent life as well. When I studied abroad in Cairo in 2007, I met one of my best friends, an Egyptian Muslim. We bonded over the similarities and differences between the Torah and Koran. I remember quite vividly our conversation about Moses, and from there we taught each other a lot about our religions, cultures, and so much more. Speaking of Israel, antisemitism, and war was not a forbidden topic of conversation. It was because of skills, content, and professors' insights I had learned from courses at MSU that I was prepared for many situations in Egypt, including my experience with an anti-Israel professor from the former Yugoslavia teaching comparative politics at the American University in Cairo.

It was my formal and experiential education on antisemitism and civil rights, as well as the recommendation of my professors, that got me hired as the Assistant Director of the ADL Michigan upon graduation. While that position was cut short by the economic crisis in 2009, I then moved to Israel to pursue a Master's Degree in Government, Diplomacy, and Strategy at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya, a decision I credit to the Jewish and Israel studies trajectory I took, and having not studied in Israel before. Specializing in conflict studies, my time at

the IDC took me to the United Nations in New York and to Kigali, Rwanda. While in the region, I traveled back to Cairo to visit my Palestinian friend, whom I had befriended years earlier during the study abroad. This dynamic relationship is a story all of its own, but beyond my own personal identity, the things I learned at MSU really shaped my role in that friendship.

Since moving back to the metro-Detroit area in 2013 after a brief stay in New York City, I have found myself feeling indebted to the Jewish community I was raised in my whole life. For the academic year 2014-15 I was hired by MSU as the Elementary Hebrew lecturer to fill the interim year between my own former Hebrew teacher, Ellen Rothfeld, now retired, and the current Hebrew professor, Yore Kedem. That was a year I will cherish forever, and find it funny that I am in current contact with two of my former students that now work at local Jewish organizations -- the Well and AJC -- how serendipitous!

Today, I am honored to serve as co-Vice President of the Jewish Community Relations Council -American Jewish Committee (JCRC-AJC) Detroit, an organization dedicated to interfaith relations, Israel education, diplomatic and governmental relations, and much more. I dedicate many more volunteer hours to other local organizations, including Zioness, a coalition of Jewish activists and allies who identify as politically and socially progressive while simultaneously and intentionally Zionist. This is an identity I fully formed while a student at MSU.

In the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was presented with another part-time work-from-home opportunity as assistant to the Serling Institute director, Yael Aronoff. After nearly 5 years since teaching on campus, and over a decade since learning from her, I knew the time was right to "return" to my alma mater and work for one of the most inspirational and impressive educators of my lifetime. The Serling Institute at MSU helped shape who I was as a student, it offered me an intimate academic space and lessons learned from faculty who have helped me along my path since graduation, and continues to shape me to this day in the professional and personal choices I make each day.

The Serling Institute Presents:

This year's festival is virtual! You will have access to watch these films at the comfort of your own home in the week leading up to the live and virtual discussions.

15th ANNUAL MSU ISRAELI FILM FESTIVAL

Available to view Feb. 28 - March 7



Ma'abarot (2019)
Documentary
Director: Dina Zvi Riklis

Israel. Language: Hebrew (English subtitles)
Ma'abarot is the first documentary project to tell the story of the Israeli transit camps. The transit camps were a controversial enterprise, housing hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees from different parts of the world and transitioning them into becoming part of Israeli society - a process with mixed, and sometimes traumatic, results that continue to shape Israeli culture and politics today. The film features rare archival materials and testimonies of former residents.

Winner Best Documentary Series, Israel Academy for Television Awards 2020.

Live virtual discussion and Q&A with Director Dina Zvi Riklis and Producer Arik Bernstein on Sunday, March 7th 11 am-12:30pm EST

Available to view Feb. 28 - March 7



Tel Aviv On Fire (2019)
Comedy/Drama/Romance
Director: Sameh Zoabi

Israel. Languages: Arabic, Hebrew (English subtitles)
Salam, a young Palestinian man, becomes a writer for a popular soap opera after a chance meeting with an Israeli check point commander. His creative career is on the rise - until the soldier and the show's financial backers disagree about how the show should end. Salam is caught in the middle.

A sharp, insightful story about the power of storytelling itself, in the context of competing narratives of conflict and peace.

Venice Film Festival, Best Actor: Kais Nashif; Ophir Award (Israeli Academy Awards) Best Original Screenplay.

Live virtual discussion and Q&A with Director Sameh Zoabi on Sunday, March 7th 1:30-3:00pm EST

Join us for a virtual performance by Yemenite Israeli singer-songwriter Tair Haim, of the sister band A-WA, on March 7th 3:30-4:30. She will be singing in Arabic and in Hebrew, and discussing the songs and what shaped them; she will also take questions from the audience.

Available to view March 7 - 14



The Albanian Code (2019)
Documentary by Yael Katzir

Albania. Languages: Albanian, Hebrew, English (English subtitles)
The Albanian Code is a documentary feature about the little-known saga of the thousands of Jewish refugees saved in Albania during WWII, due to the courage and humanity of the Albanian people--mostly Muslims. Most of the rescuers are no longer living; therefore it is urgent to document for posterity both saviors and saved and to leave a legacy for future generations. Premiered in Albania in the presence of the President. Screened in Paris at the Memorial de la Shoah and in Manhattan at the JCC.

Winner Kosice International Film Festival 2020.

Live virtual discussion and Q&A with Director Yael Katzir, on Sunday, March 14th 11 am-12:30pm EST

Join us for a **taste of Israel** with a virtual cooking demo of a Moroccan Israeli dish with the engaging gourmet **Chef Hunny Khodorkovsky, March 14th at 12:45 pm.** Chef Hunny Khodorkovsky was born in Israel to parents of Moroccan descent. She grew up in Montreal, lived in Los Angeles and Puerto Rico after getting married, and moved to Detroit in 2012, with her husband and 4 children. Currently, together with her business partner Stephanie Friedman, she started HUNNY, a professional chef service, offering cooking classes, demonstrations, events and vacation chef services abroad. Hunny and Stephanie value fresh, seasonal ingredients and innovative, healthy cuisine, especially when cooking for their families. Following this demo, we will hear from the **award-winning chef and narrator of In Search of Israeli Cuisine, Chef Michael Solomonov at 2 pm.**



In Search of Israeli Cuisine (2016)
featuring Chef Michael Solomonov
Documentary

Director: Roger Sherman

Israel. Language: English. In Search of Israeli Cuisine is a portrait of the Israeli people told through food. It puts a literal face on the culture of Israel. The film profiles chefs, home cooks, vintners, and cheese-makers drawn from the more than 100 cultures that make up Israel today- Jewish, Arab, Muslim, Christian, Druze. A rich and human story of the people emerges from their food.

Winner Audience Award from the Cherry Hill and Palm Beach Jewish Film Festivals in 2016.

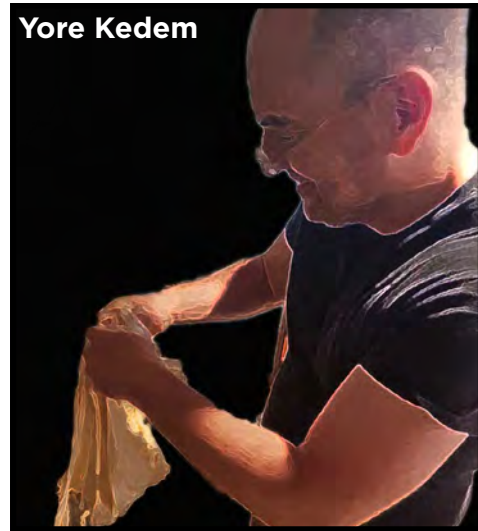
Live virtual discussion and Q&A with film narrator Chef Michael Solomonov on Sunday, March 14th 2-3:00pm EST

Available to view March 7 - 14



Past Fall 2020 Events

September 9
**Shakshukas of Israel -
 Live Cooking Workshop**
 Professor Yore Kedem



September 13
**An Unending Journey to the
 Dream of Being Part of Israeli
 Society: Challenges and
 Successes**
 Michal Avera Samuel



September 24
**Streaming Now: Israeli Culture
 on TV**
 Professor Marc Bernstein



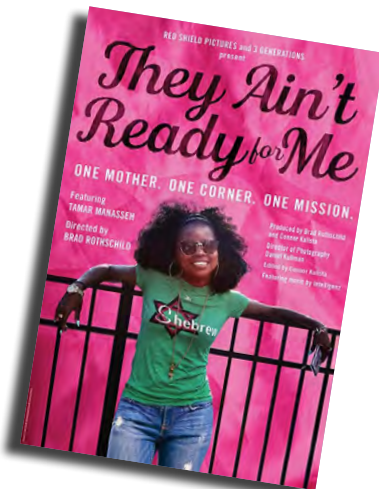
September 29
**Aspects of the Reception of
 Flavius Josephus in the Middle
 Ages: The Greek-Speaking East
 and the Latin-Speaking West**
 Dr. Theofili Kampianaki



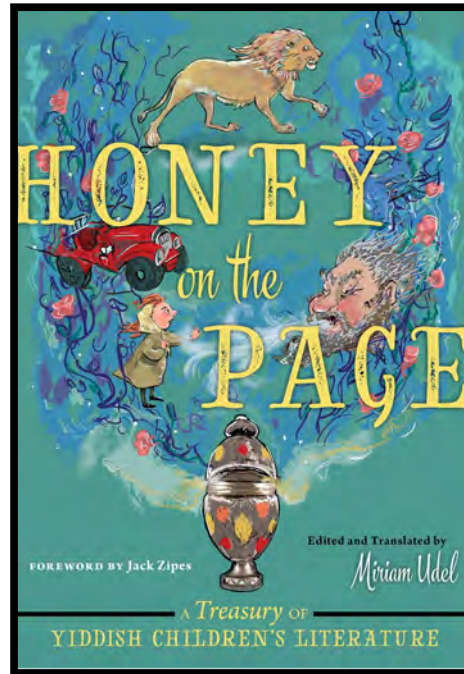
October 6
**Panel on "Keeping the Door
 Open to Israeli-Palestinian
 Peace," moderated by Dr. Yael
 Aronoff with Dr. Ghaith Al-Omari,
 Dr. Daniel C. Kurtzer, Dr. David
 Makovsky and Dr. Saliba Sarsar**



October 13th
**Virtual Screening and Discussion:
 They Ain't Ready For Me (2020)**
 Post-film discussion led by
 by Tamar Manasseh and Brad
 Rothschild (director)



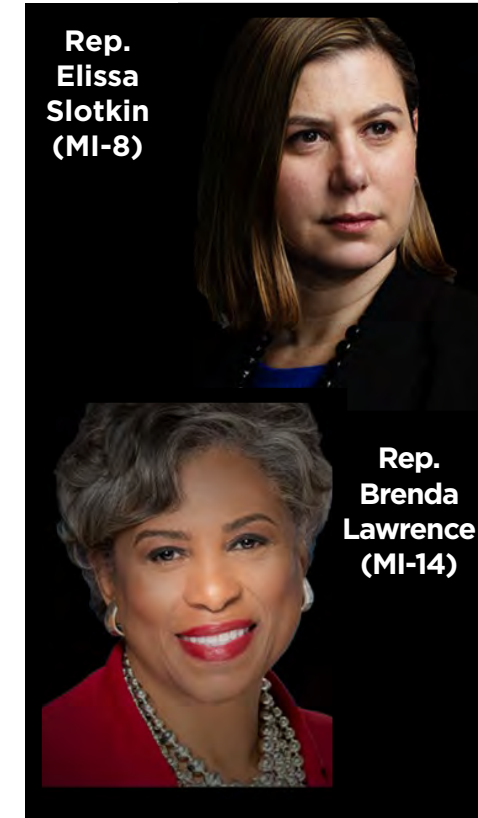
November 5
**Yiddish Children's Literature
 and the Jewish Twentieth
 Century: A Conversation**
 Dr. Miriam Udel discussed her
 book, *Honey on the Page: A
 Treasury of Yiddish Children's
 Literature*, that was just published
 in October 2020



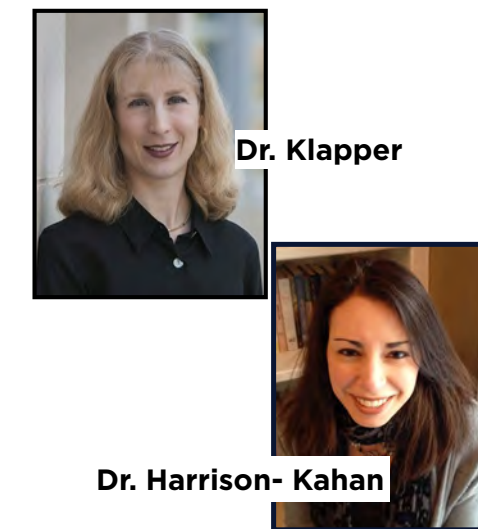
November 10
**The Life and Legacy of Ruth
 Bader Ginsburg in The Historical
 Context of Jewish Justices of
 The Supreme Court**
 Dr. David Dalin



November 17
**Congresswomen Elissa
 Slotkin and Brenda Lawrence
 discussed the work of the
 Black-Jewish Congressional
 Caucus; their thoughts on future
 collaboration, and reflections on
 the film *Shared Legacies: The
 African American-Jewish Civil
 Rights Alliance***



November 19
Jewish Women and Power
 Book Discussion with Dr. Melissa
 Klapper and Dr. Lori Harrison-Kahan



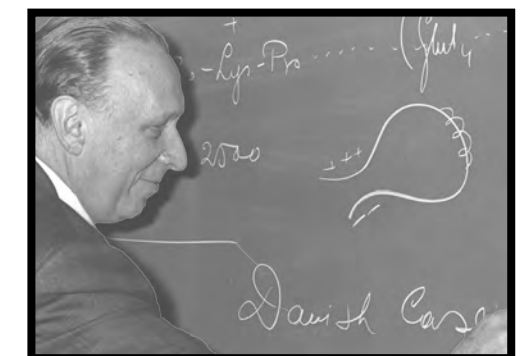
November 20
**Jewish Women, Citizenship, Suf-
 frage, and Sexuality**
 This discussion was moderated
 by **Professor Kirsten Fermaglich**
 Discussant: **Dr. Melissa R. Klapper.**
 Participants: **Dr. Lori Harrison-
 Kahan, Cassandra Euphrat
 Weston, and Hannah Greene**



November 22
**The Impact of the US Elections
 on US-Israeli Relations**
 The panel was moderated by:
Dr. Csaba Nikolenyi
 Participants:
**Dr. Yael Aronoff, Dr. Daniel C.
 Kurtzer, Dr. Jonathan Rynhold,
 and Dr. Tamara Cofman Wittes**



December 3
**In the Crucible of the Scientific
 Revolution- Evolution and
 Evaluation of the Ideas of
 Professor Aharon Katzir**
 Professor Assaf Gilad



Virtual Teaching by Serling Institute Faculty

Laura Yares

This semester I taught almost 50 students across two online, asynchronous courses. These courses, which are self-paced and self-directed with no mandatory virtual class meeting times, enable students to learn at their own pace. Each week, students watch a pre-recorded video lecture, complete reading assignments, take a comprehension quiz on assigned materials, and engage with each other via interactive discussion boards. Asynchronous courses appeal particularly to students who might experience difficulties participating in a class which requires meeting at a set time via zoom, either because of the need to engage in paid work, due to conflicts with other classes and practicum assignments, or because they lack a stable internet connection away from campus. Through discussion boards, individual meetings and assignments I am able to get to know each student and their various needs, and they are able to engage with classmates through online activities too. Asynchronous online courses offer a fantastic opportunity to engage students who would otherwise be prevented by the demands of their schedule from enrolling in Jewish Studies courses.

Laura Yares, Assistant Professor, Jewish Studies Department of Religious Studies.



Neil Kane

By taking advantage of emerging technology tools and new curricula developed especially for online learning, and which are fully integrated into D2L, I have successfully (or attempted to!) provided an engaging learning experience for my students. I even set up a green screen in my home office where I teach. I highly recommend having an external web camera (which you can get for free from MSU at: https://shop.msu.edu/product_p/its-02.htm). The image quality and flexibility enables you to not have to sit right in front of the screen. A good light is really helpful too. Another tool that is very valuable is www.loom.com. Loom allows one to record videos (while showing stuff on the computer screen) that



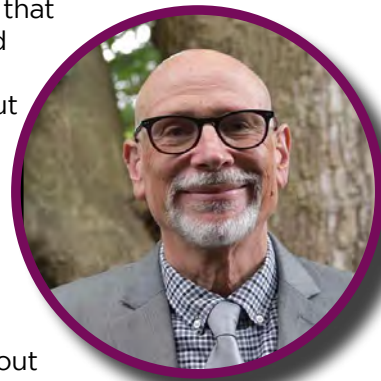
you can effortlessly send to students as video messages. It is surprisingly effective and helpful...especially if you're giving feedback to students about digital assignments or need to provide a tutorial when not everyone is online at the same time. Loom is free for registered educators.

Neil Kane is an affiliate member of the Serling Institute and is the Director of the Undergraduate Entrepreneurship Program at Michigan State University.

Steve Gold

The family history assignment provides students in a virtual sociology of international migration course with first-hand knowledge that helps them to comprehend a global approach to migration. By reading about international migration, creating a PowerPoint that documented their own family's migration history, and watching the family histories of classmates, they acquired substantive knowledge about the topic. Students' learning about diverse types of migration assisted their development of the intellectual skills that lie at the heart of strong sociological work.

Steven J. Gold is a professor and graduate program director in the Department of Sociology and is a faculty affiliate of the Serling Institute



Margot Valles

In my first teaching role at MSU, I taught three courses face-to-face each semester. In the following fall semester, I shifted all of my courses online. In the years after that I taught a combination of traditional, hybrid and fully online courses. In my experience, no modality is inherently superior to another. Each modality has its own challenges and virtues. A successful course leverages its virtues to overcome the challenges. Before the COVID-19 era, I found that one of the virtues of teaching fully online courses is that your course is available to everyone. When you teach an asynchronous course, students who work long hours, who care for family members, and non-traditional students have better access to course materials. Additionally, materials offered online are required by law to be as accessible as possible. This makes taking a fully online course a safer bet for students with physical disabilities. Furthermore, when you teach a class that is asynchronous, you have to employ backwards design. In other words, you design



the course according to what you want the students to learn, what value that learning will provide for them and choose with intention only those readings, activities and assignments that will lead to that learning.

In the age of COVID-19, it is easy to focus on the challenges of online learning—especially those that have been in the media spotlight. In our socially-distanced circumstances, I was concerned that students would feel disconnected, isolated, and apathetic. When I redesigned REL 205 Myth, Self, Religion (a course that counts toward a minor in Jewish Studies) for the virtual classroom, my goal was to build a course where the learners would feel even more connected to me, to each other and to the course content than they would in a traditional class.

To connect with my students, I communicated with students consistently, frequently, and meaningfully. I also found new ways to make myself available. In addition to the typical introductory video, weekly emails and office hours, I invited students to meet with me 1:1 for a 20 minute introductory chat. I made myself available at a range of times and found alternatives if none of the times I listed worked. A surprisingly large percentage of students opted to meet with me and we began the semester with many students having had more 1:1 interactions with me than they have ever had with their professors before.

To build a sense of connection between the 45 students, I gave them opportunities for meaningful discussion and interaction. In addition to low stakes text-based discussion forums, I gave them multiple options for participating in student-led live discussions via Zoom. Nearly all the students chose to participate in this "Round Table" option (a 1:1 meeting option was available for students who do not like to speak up in front of their peers). It was difficult to establish times that would accommodate all the students with their varying schedules and responsibilities, but we did it. These sessions have been hugely successful with students regularly writing in their reflective essays about what they have learned from their peers, and the positive impact of these discussions on their learning.

To build a sense of connection to the course material, I used two main strategies. First, I made all the course materials free, and gave students multiple paths to access them. For example, alongside traditional readings, I offer voice recordings of the readings, share videos about the readings from the library's collection, and encourage students to read versions of the assignment in their first languages. Secondly, I made reflective writing worth the same percentage of the students' course grades as their analytical writing. By asking students to write about their own learning and what they found interesting, important, strange or troubling, students describe their relationship with the course material—in the process reifying their personal connection to that content.

While it is clear that the circumstances are far from ideal, the students in REL 205 regularly articulate that they are learning, and that they feel connected to the course

and to each other. In this regard, it might be the best iteration of this course so far.

Margot B. Valles is an affiliate member of the Serling Institute and is an assistant professor in the Department of Religious Studies.

Academic News

Kirsten Fermaglich In spring 2021, Kirsten Fermaglich's new research on postwar academic Jewish migration (with a focus on Jewish academics in East Lansing) will appear in the volume, *Global Jewish Migration*, edited by colleague Steven J. Gold. She will speak on that chapter at a Serling Institute event on March 30. She is also scheduled to speak this spring on her research on Jewish name changing at Rutgers University; at Temple Sholom in Cincinnati (where MSU Jewish Studies alum Simon Stratford is a rabbi!); at the Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois in Chicago; and at the MSU Community Club. This year, Kirsten has been working as Associate Director of the Serling Institute; in that capacity, she has been working to promote the new Jewish Studies minor track in the College of Social Science and she has been leading efforts to write bylaws for the Serling Institute and to scaffold the Jewish Studies minor experience with a capstone experience for all undergraduate minors.

Please consider a gift to our Institute. You may 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

Seniors Reflect on Highlights from their Jewish Studies Minor Experiences

Bailey Butash, Social Relations & Policy, JMC

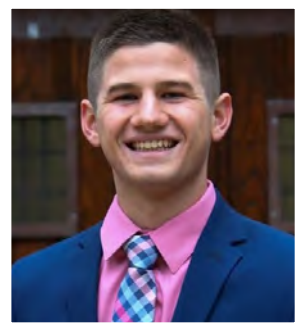
My highlights from my minor include working individually with Dr. Amy Simon on multiple interesting research projects and gaining in-depth knowledge of the Holocaust and genocide. I truly enjoyed every discussion I had in various classes with both professors and fellow classmates. I never intended to be a Jewish Studies minor when I started at Michigan State, but I had fantastic professors that pushed me in that direction, and I am incredibly grateful for them.



After graduating in Spring 2021, I will apply to civil and human rights non-profits in Washington D.C. and Chicago.

Troy Distelrath, Social Relations and Policy, JMC

Taking MC 387: Jews and Antisemitism with Dr. Amy Simon has certainly been a highlight of my Jewish Studies experience. It provided me with the tools necessary to both understand and combat antisemitism from across the political spectrum. Bigotry comes from a place of ignorance (willful or otherwise), and seeing the deep history of antisemitic tropes and stereotypes going back to Biblical times was incredibly compelling and informative for someone like myself who is not a practitioner of the faith.



I currently plan on pursuing a Master's in Public Policy before entering the think tank space to help write, research, and otherwise shape climate justice policies at the federal level.

Yael Eichhorn, Religious Studies, CAL

I am really enjoying minoring in Jewish Studies. At MSU there are Jewish Studies classes available on a wide variety of topics so I have been able to learn about so many different aspects of Jewish life, culture and history. It has worked really well with my major and creates a space for me to focus



on the areas of religion that interest me. I have been given the opportunity to work at the Institute and it has been a great experience, and has taught me a lot about Jewish academia. This past summer I had an internship with the *Detroit Jewish News* and was able to write an article entitled: "Reflection: Finding My Jewish Identity at MSU" about the program and my experiences. Jewish Studies also puts an emphasis on involving students, and I have appreciated getting to know the professors and faculty. I am confident that the knowledge I have gained in my Jewish Studies minor will be helpful to me in my future career.

Ben Francis, Political Theory & Constitutional Democracy, Religious Studies, JMC and CAL

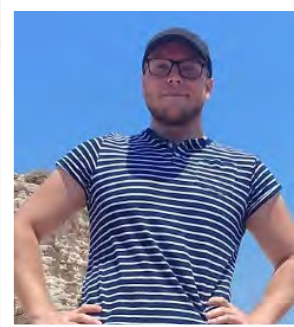
I will be graduating from MSU with a major in Political Theory and Constitutional Democracy from James Madison College and a major in Religious Studies, and with a minor in Jewish Studies. I took two years of Hebrew, two faculty-led study abroad programs in Israel, an additional Hebrew



ulpan in Israel, and courses by Serling Visiting Israeli Scholar Harry Yuklea on Israel as a startup nation. Another highlight of my minor was when I did an internship in Israel with Bar Ilan University's Faculty of Law Clinic and conducted comparative legal research on the rights of parents with disabilities through the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Serling Institute Hersh, Levy, and Slade scholarships supported these study abroad and internship opportunities. I also presented my field research conducted in Israel at the Serling Undergraduate Research Conference and was awarded the Serling Institute Student Achievement Award. My future plans are to make aliya to Israel and I'm interested in Jewish non-profit work or finance before pursuing graduate school.

Jared Kaczor, Linguistics, CAL

Highlights from my minor would be studying abroad with Yore Kedem. I found being in Israel to be transformative and would not trade the experiences and education I received there for anything. In particular, I have quite fond memories of my friends and I going through Machane

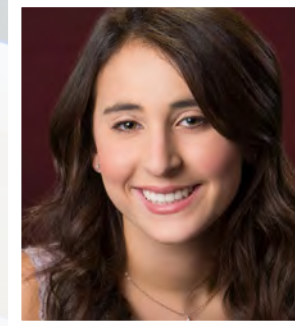


Yehuda market on our way to the old city, drinking iced coffee, and enjoying the sun.

I plan on continuing my education here at MSU, and in a year I will have my MA in Linguistics.

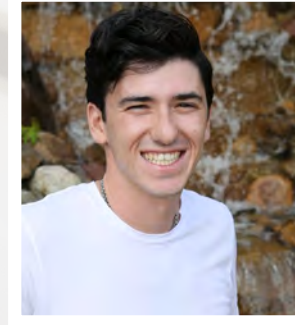
Sidrah Kovan, Arts & Humanities, CAL

The highlight of being a Jewish Studies minor for me has been being able to connect with students from an array of backgrounds. Initially going into Jewish studies, I expected to just meet more Jewish students like myself but have been pleasantly surprised in meeting people that come from many different places and have fresh views they bring to the table. Additionally, each Jewish Studies class that I have taken has taught me not only more about Judaism, but more about myself. The ability to learn about Jewish topics at Michigan State has given me a basis for my beliefs and understanding of Judaism that I would not have had without this program. It has helped me grow as a student and person.



Maverick Levy, Social Relations & Policy, JMC

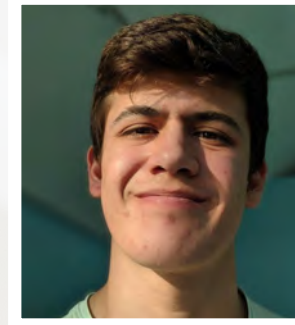
I love being involved in the Jewish Studies program at MSU because of the relationships that have flourished. I now have professors on campus that I can go to if I need to talk, need an opinion, or want to share a concern. In such a big university environment, it is comforting to know they are there for me. That is just one of the many reasons that the Jewish Studies program is so amazing!



I plan to attend law school. Also, I have a podcast that has been gaining tons of attention. It is called "The Best of The Best: Maverick's Guide to Success" where the topics are a range of things covering life essential skills that are not taught within school.

Jake Austin Nessel, Political Theory & Constitutional Democracy, JMC

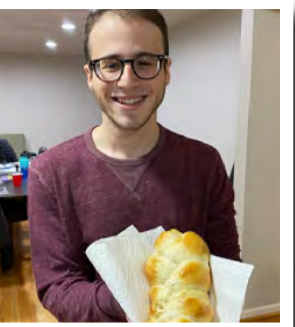
There were a lot of highlights in my minor. I really enjoyed Dr. Simon's class (I ended up having Dr. Simon again for my field experience) because we learned about different historical perspectives in Jewish studies. I also enjoyed Dr. Kedem's Hebrew classes. We learned to speak the language in a way that was very engaging, which helped me apply the language to my daily activities.



After MSU, I am planning on going to law school to work in either music law or civil rights law.

Jake Rubin, Arts & Humanities, CAL

The summer of 2019, I had many unique experiences while studying abroad in Israel with Professor Yore Kedem. The trips we went on every week, the food we ate, and the adventures the group shared together proved to be a trip I will remember for a lifetime. Without the Levy scholarship offered through the minor, the trip would not have been possible, and I'm still extremely grateful for the opportunity.



My future plan is to go to grad school to earn my masters in social work.

Jordyn Weinberg, Humanities - Pre-Law, CAL

Professor Kedem was an absolute joy to learn Hebrew from, and still to this day is one of my favorite teachers from MSU. Highlights of the minor are that I was able to take such a multitude of classes, as well as attend Jewish Studies events for extra credit. In addition, I learned a foreign language very near and dear to me as I am Jewish. In HEB290 I was able to then use that previously learned information and language, and work on a research paper, written fully in Hebrew (something I am quite proud of). Studying abroad was perhaps the most amazing experience of my college career. Being immersed in the culture, truly living and learning in Israel for a full month was an absolute dream. Interacting with the people, meeting fellow students and living in a country I have learned about my whole life was a once in a lifetime experience. On top of that, I was able to use the credits from the classes I took to count for my minor, which was the icing on the cake! The Jewish Studies program facilitated a large number of events for students to attend, from having speakers to (my personal favorite) the film festival. 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.



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

