

FROM THE DIRECTORS

THE CROWN FAMILY CENTER FOR JEWISH AND ISRAEL STUDIES

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be on our mailing list.



Dear Friends, The Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies provides an umbrella framework for Jewish studies and Israel studies at Northwestern University. Our mission is to foster excellence in teaching and research

in these fields. To this end, we engage in four activities. First, we coordinate curricula and academic affairs for undergraduate and graduate students; second, we sponsor academic lectures, conferences, colloquia, performances, and other events for campus and public audiences; third, we host visiting scholars and postdoctoral fellows; and fourth, we support scholarly research.

Coordinating curricula and academic affairs The Jewish Studies Program includes more than 40 courses that are offered each year by faculty members affiliated with the Crown Center. More than 600 students enroll in these courses, including 12 who are currently pursuing a major or minor in Jewish Studies.

Sponsoring events We host four large annual public events on campus: the Renée and Lester Crown Speaker Series, the Allan and Norma Harris Day of Jewish Study, the Philip M. and Ethel Klutznick Lecture in Jewish Civilization, and the Manfred H. Vogel Memorial Lecture in Judaic Studies. Each event allows a broad community audience to engage with Jewish studies scholarship. We also sponsor and co-sponsor a variety of other public events. See pages 8 and 9 for more details on all of our events.

Hosting visiting scholars and postdoctoral fellows Each year, as part of our visiting scholar program, we welcome a postdoctoral fellow in Israel studies. This year, we also hosted Ruth Gavison of the Hebrew University, Dan Peled of the University of Haifa, and Noam Tirosch of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

Supporting research The Crown Family Center supports scholarly research in a variety of ways, including helping faculty members to host meetings and conferences at Northwestern. These meetings foster cooperation between faculty and scholars from our Center, other Northwestern departments, and researchers from around the world. The Water in Israel and the Middle East Symposium, now in its second year, serves as an excellent example of this type of activity.

The Crown Family Center plays an active role in graduate education through the Graduate Cluster Program in Jewish Studies. This year, two of our advanced graduate students presented their dissertation research at lunchtime colloquia. These seminars give students an opportunity to receive substantive feedback from faculty while also helping them to develop their skills at presenting highly specialized research in an accessible manner.

In short, the Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies ensures that the work of Jewish studies and Israel studies research at Northwestern is done at the highest level and in conversation with the best scholars on campus and around the world.

On the cover: Certificate given to Lady Beatrice Samuel in recognition of her work in Jerusalem by Hadassah, 1925 (Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Libraries)

Martin Eichenbaum
Director

Claire Sufrin
Assistant Director, Jewish Studies

Meet our Faculty

Mira Balberg, associate professor in the Department of Religious Studies

Danny M. Cohen, assistant professor of instruction in the School of Education and Social Policy

Sarah Cushman, director of the Holocaust Educational Foundation of Northwestern University, lecturer in the Department of History

Yael Dekel, postdoctoral fellow in Israel studies

Peter Fenves, Joan and Sarepta Harrison Professor of Literature, Department of German and Comparative Literary Studies Program

Benjamin Frommer, associate professor in the Department of History

Marcia Gealy, associate professor of instruction in the Writing Program

Edna Grad, distinguished senior lecturer emerita in Hebrew Language

Peter Hayes, Theodore Zev Weiss Holocaust Educational Foundation Professor of Holocaust Studies Emeritus in the Departments of History and German

Lucille Kerr, professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese

Jacob Lassner, Philip M. and Ethel Klutznick Professor Emeritus of Jewish Civilization in the Departments of History and Religious Studies

Phyllis Lassner, professor of instruction in the Writing Program, Gender Studies, and Jewish Studies



Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern

Marcus Moseley, associate professor in the Department of German

Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, Crown Family Professor of Jewish Studies and professor in the Department of History

Elie Rekhess, Crown Visiting Professor in Israel Studies, associate director for Israel studies, and visiting professor in the Department of History

Joseph Ringel, postdoctoral fellow in Israel studies

Kenneth Seeskin, Philip M. and Ethel Klutznick Professor of Jewish Civilization and professor in the Departments of Philosophy and Religious Studies

David Shyovitz, associate professor in the Department of History

Claire Sufrin, assistant director of Jewish Studies and lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies

Eran Tzelgov, visiting lecturer in Hebrew language

Barry Scott Wimpfheimer, associate professor in the Department of Religious Studies and the Pritzker School of Law

Laurie Zoloth, professor in the Department of Religious Studies and the Feinberg School of Medicine

Faculty News

Mira Balberg Mira Balberg's new book, *Blood for Thought: The Reinvention of Sacrifice in Early Rabbinic Literature*, will be published by the University of California Press in October 2017. In spring 2017, Balberg was promoted to associate professor in the Department of Religious Studies.

Phyllis Lassner Phyllis Lassner published her book *Espionage and Exile: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Spy Fiction and Film* with Edinburgh University Press. She also completed her International Diamond Jubilee Fellowship at Southampton University in the United Kingdom with a keynote address at a symposium on visual representations of the Holocaust and a lecture on gendered approaches to World War I British memoirs. As part of the Fellowship, she co-edited a special issue of the *Space Between Journal: Literature and Culture 1914-1945* on the subject of "Espionage as Cultural Artifact."

Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern Together with Paul Robert Magocsi from the University of Toronto, Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern published *Jews and Ukrainians: A Millennium of Co-Existence* (University of Toronto Press, 2016), which won a Special Award of the President of the International Book Forum (Lviv). He spoke at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, University of St. Gallen, University of Toronto, Ukrainian Institute of America, Shevchenko Scientific Society of America, Harvard University, the Ukrainian Museum of Modern Art, the Free University in Berlin, Free Ukrainian University in Munich, and Johns Hopkins University. He taught at the University of Warsaw as the Kosciuszko Visiting Professor and served as a visiting professor at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He also took a group of students on a tour through the *shtetlakh* in eastern Poland.

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Faculty News, continued

Kenneth Seeskin Kenneth Seeskin's latest book, *Thinking about the Torah: A Philosopher Reads the Bible*, was published by the Jewish Publication Society in 2016. He is currently working on an extended discussion of the Jewish understanding of freedom as well as an essay on Maimonides' purpose in writing *The Guide of the Perplexed* and an essay on the concept of *tzimtzum*.

David Shyovitz In May 2017, David Shyovitz celebrated two milestones: his first book, *A Remembrance of His Wonders: Nature and the Supernatural in Medieval Ashkenaz*, was published by the University of Pennsylvania Press; and he was promoted to associate professor in the Department of History. During the 2016-17 year, Shyovitz delivered invited lectures in Berlin, Frankfurt, Jerusalem, New York, and Chicago, and completed an article that will appear in the forthcoming volume *Monsters and Monstrosity in Jewish History: From the Middle Ages to Modernity*.

Claire Sufirin In September 2016, Claire Sufirin was appointed assistant director of Northwestern's Jewish Studies Program. In June 2017, she participated in the Hartman Institute Philosophy Conference and spoke at the Luther, Barth, and Movements of Theological Renewal (1918-1933) conference hosted by the Center for Barth Studies at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Barry Wimpfheimer Barry Wimpfheimer participated in the Alice Kaplan Digital Humanities Workshop with a project tentatively titled, "The Talmud Project: A Digital Critical Edition." He is also participating in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences' Hewlett Curricular Fellowship Program to help design and shepherd his upcoming fall course titled "Jews and the Transgender Moment."

Spotlight on Eran Tzelgov, visiting lecturer in Hebrew language



For the past two years, Northwestern Hebrew language students have had the opportunity to study with Hebrew poet, translator, scholar, and social activist **Eran Tzelgov**. In addition to teaching at Northwestern, Tzelgov has held teaching positions at Ben-Gurion University, New York University, the Open University in Israel, and the Minshar School of Art.

In 2012, Tzelgov founded the small independent publishing house Ra'av to produce works that challenge the Israeli literary canon. Among its publications is *Shiur Geografia* (Geography Lesson), selected poems by Chris Abani co-edited by Tzelgov and Noga Shevach.

Tzelgov's 2013 collection of poems *Bhirot* (Selections) was awarded the Israeli Ministry of Culture and Sports award for New and Upcoming Poets. His second book, *Gam He-Hatul* (Also the Cat), was published in 2016 and included new poems along with his original sketches. Among his translations are Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood* (Shocken Books, 2016) and *Weiwei-isms* by Ai Weiwei and edited by Larry Warsh.

As Tzelgov leaves Evanston and returns to Israel, we share one of his poems in English.

THE CALMING SEA

Can you remember that you have forgotten?
 You did. You have forgotten because you
 Are well, even better than that:
 The sun is right, keeping you off the
 Neon light, and the street is safe:
 It is people and windows reflecting the smile
 Upon hearing your name,
 Police cars passing by never to leave salty scars on you.
 And the sea? The sea is freedom –
 Not tearing you apart from the ones you love. You have forgotten –
 You have forgotten how the sea was torn apart for you when you escaped,
 How the police were looking for your grandmother,
 How windows can shatter like crystals at night,
 How the street is a house when no other,
 How to freeze upon hearing your name even on a sunny day,
 How the earth trembles and shakes with your every step
 Like the sea, the same sea, the dark calming sea –
 Deep and calm like forgetting.
 And now that you have remembered,
 Now what?

Phyllis Lassner reflects on 24-year run at Northwestern

Accomplished Holocaust studies scholar played key role in Crown Center's interdisciplinary ethos



Phyllis Lassner with students from her 2017 first-year seminar

After an action-packed 24 years at Northwestern University, Phyllis Lassner has called it a career.

The professor, a prominent voice in the field of Holocaust studies, represented the interdisciplinary nature and scholarship of the Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies. Throughout her time at the University, Lassner taught courses for the Cook Family Writing Program, the Gender & Sexuality Studies Program, and the Jewish Studies Program, courses inspired by and influencing her research on topics such as “Colonialism, Race, and Gender,” “Representing the Holocaust in Literature and Film,” and “Spy Fiction and Film.”

In March, the Jewish Studies Program honored Lassner with a fitting retirement event: a panel of Holocaust scholars and teachers discussing the importance of Holocaust studies in higher education that also included a series of heartwarming tributes from some of Lassner's most recent students.

“To hear students speak so warmly and appreciatively, especially given how difficult the subject matter can be, completely put the cap on my teaching career,” Lassner said.

The retiring scholar discusses her career at Northwestern, her attachment to the field of Holocaust studies, and Northwestern's future in this academic field.

What is one word or phrase you would use to characterize your time at Northwestern?

Stimulating. All of my classes were seminars, which means they were rooted in discussions. Those conversations stimulated and challenged my thinking and since the classes were also based on research projects I was pursuing, the discussions inevitably affected how I approached my research as well.

How did you first become involved with Holocaust studies?

It was not a direct route. In fact, I began my research career working on British women writers of the Second World War, some of whom were anti-Nazi activists. And as it goes, one thing led to another because you cannot possibly study the Second World War without dealing with the Holocaust.

Though the Holocaust is a dark period in human history, what did you appreciate and gain from your research into this subject?

Because I was studying British women writers, I was naturally studying narrative innovation. What I came to discover is that the Holocaust writers were equally innovative and experimental, but not for the same reasons. These writers were not interested in any aesthetic mandate, but rather in bearing witness, and that whole idea of testimony and experimental writing became very intriguing to me.

How has the field of Holocaust studies evolved over the last 25 years?

The field keeps growing, getting bigger and even more interesting as it works with different media. There has always been debate about the ethics of representation and there are many who believe that any study of the Holocaust has to be historical and incredibly accurate.

Yet, we're now seeing the Holocaust represented in every conceivable medium from YouTube shorts to graphic fiction and cartoons. I'm working on a project now dealing with Holocaust art and refugees. Experimentation in the forms of representation just keeps going, which has led to a variety of rich perspectives, as well as critical debate about whether different representations are ethical, accurate, and respectful.

What do you hope is next for the field of Holocaust studies at Northwestern?

I'm very optimistic for the future of the field at Northwestern, especially as we now host the Holocaust Educational Foundation under the direction of Sarah Cushman. We're only going to get bigger and better and become a key place in the United States for the teaching and training of Holocaust scholars.

Crown Center hosts renowned Israel Studies scholar Ruth Gavison

The academic might of the Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies at Northwestern University received an added boost of star power during the 2016-2017 academic year's spring quarter with the presence of renowned Israeli scholar Ruth Gavison as a visiting professor of Israel Studies.



Ruth Gavison delivers the 2017 Klutznick Lecture

The Haim H. Cohn Professor Emerita of Human Rights in the Faculty of Law at Hebrew University and a member of Israel's National Academy of Science, Gavison is highly regarded as an expert on various issues facing the state of Israel, including the delicate balance between its identity as a Jewish state and its democratic structure. Her teaching and research cover fields including legal theory, legal process, theories of adjudication, human rights and democracy, law and ethics, law and society, religion and state, and constitutionalism.

A founding member and former president of the Association of Civil Rights in Israel, the award-winning scholar, an Israel Prize Laureate, has also written extensively about the role of courts in rifted democracies, advocating for minimal judicial activism in matters of ideological controversies.

"Professor Gavison is one of Israel's leading, present-day academic intellectuals and having someone of her magnitude on campus is a wonderful achievement," said Elie Rekhess, the Crown Visiting Professor in Israel Studies and associate director of Israel Studies at Northwestern.

During her quarter-long stay on the Evanston campus, Gavison actively participated in campus life and regular activities of the Crown Center including meetings, seminars, and workshops.

She met one-on-one with faculty and students to discuss research across a wide range of academic disciplines including religious studies, law, philosophy, history, political science, and economics.

In April and May, Gavison offered three talks for faculty and students on the Evanston campus, presentations that covered: human rights and democracy; the justification for a Jewish nation state; and the role of religion in a liberal democracy. She also presented programs at Northwestern's Pritzker School of Law, including a working paper series event centered on her report to the Israeli Minister of Justice defining what's Jewish about the Jewish state.

"Approachable and available, Professor Gavison really added to the academic value and vitality of the Center during her time on campus," Rekhess said.

Gavison's reach extended beyond Northwestern as well, including a keynote talk at the Academic Engagement Network National Conference, where she discussed the compatibility of the Zionist idea with liberal democratic values.

Most notably, perhaps, Gavison delivered the Crown Center's annual Philip M. and Ethel Klutznick Lecture in Jewish Civilization on May 18. Titled "Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State," Gavison's program dissected the intense and polarizing debate about Israel's ability to be, at once, the nation-state of the Jewish people, a democracy, and a nation committed to the human rights of its entire populace.



Ruth Gavison

Maintaining the belief that Israel's nature as a Jewish state and a democratic state are indeed compatible, Gavison advocated for working through the tensions within Israel's founding vision by leveraging democracy.

"When a complex society has a vision and the vision has more than one element ... the relationships between these elements are always relationships of mutual reinforcement and creative tensions," Gavison said during the Klutznick lecture.

With Israel continuously divided by different schisms—religious and secular, Jews and Arabs among them—Gavison's visit offered the Northwestern community a compelling opportunity to understand the complexity of present-day life in Israel, while her deep expertise in areas such as human rights and democracy, legal theory and process, religion, and state constitutionalism provided important perspective.



I hope that the Center will grow and become an example of how one can sustain [both] the presence of Israel and scholarship about Israel in a way that is balanced and academic, and not propagandist.

RUTH GAVISON, HAIM H. COHN PROFESSOR EMERITA OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE FACULTY OF LAW AT HEBREW UNIVERSITY AND A MEMBER OF ISRAEL'S NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCE

Gavison called her time at Northwestern and work with the Crown Center "an especially enjoyable and interesting experience," crediting the Center's scholarship in Israel studies for further legitimizing the young academic field in the U.S. and abroad.

"I hope that the Center will grow and become an example of how one can sustain [both] the presence of Israel and scholarship about Israel in a way that is balanced and academic, and not propagandist—and, at the same time, can present the activity of the state of Israel and its legacy in ways that are not limited to the terms of the ongoing conflict," Gavison said.



Meir Shalev signs books after his presentation at the Crown Speaker Series in November

NU Israeli Film Club — *Late Marriage*

Students, faculty, and the public were treated to a special free screening of *Late Marriage*. Elie Rekhess, Crown Visiting Professor in Israel Studies, provided the introduction to this Dover Kosashvili-directed film, a dark, complex Israeli comedy that puts lead character Zaza's Georgian heritage and family in direct conflict with modernity, and his own taboo desire for Judith, a Moroccan immigrant and divorcee.

Allan and Norma Harris Day of Jewish Study

At this now-annual Crown Center event, more than 80 attendees gathered at the Norris University Center on Sunday, October 30, 2016, for a free morning of study and discussion with Crown Center faculty. Please see story on pages 10 and 11 for additional details.

Renée and Lester Crown Speaker Series

On the evening of November 10, 2016, Israeli author and journalist Meir Shalev shared the stories that inspired his most recent novel, *Two She-Bears*. Relating these tales, including a decades-old rumor about a murder disguised as a suicide, to biblical verses about bears, lions, and snakes, Shalev reflected on the importance of stories and

storytelling in his own family and how his father's love of the Bible inspires him. Following Shalev's talk, Crown Visiting Professor in Israel Studies Elie Rekhess interviewed the author on the wide appeal of his novels and nonfiction writing.

The Place of Holocaust Studies in the University

At this special March 30, 2017 panel and reception honoring the retirement of longtime Crown Center faculty member Phyllis Lassner, five Jewish studies scholars, including Lassner's Crown Center faculty colleagues Peter Hayes, Danny M. Cohen, and Sarah Cushman, examined the development of Holocaust studies as an area of scholarly attention and the purpose of courses on Holocaust history and representation at universities, colleges, and high schools. For additional information about this event and the retirement and career of Phyllis Lassner, please see page 5.

Manfred H. Vogel Memorial Lecture in Judaic Studies

Tony Michels, the George L. Mosse Professor of American Jewish History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, delivered the 2017 Manfred H. Vogel Memorial Lecture on April 26, 2017. Titled "The Jewish Encounter with American Freedom: A New Variation on an Old Theme," Michels' talk addressed the overwhelming tendency among historians

of American Jews to assume that the United States is the exception to every other place Jews have lived over the length of their history. That is, historians have generally argued that because American Jews enjoyed equal rights by law from the beginning and because there have been no major political or legislative anti-Semitic movements, America has provided Jews with the freedom to flourish in a way they never enjoyed before. Michels argued that this paradigm must be reexamined against a broad panorama of Jewish history that includes both a variety of states (democratic and otherwise) and a variety of time frames.

Philip M. and Ethel Klutznick Lecture in Jewish Civilization

In her talk titled "Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State" visiting professor of Israel studies Ruth Gavison suggested that the State of Israel's Jewish and democratic identities together with its commitments to human rights should be understood as existing within a relationship of mutual reinforcement and creative tensions. Gavison made a forceful case for understanding the state's identity in light of political and legal philosophy and historical realities. For additional information on Ruth Gavison's tenure as visiting professor of Israel studies, please see pages 6 and 7.

Water in Israel and the Middle East Symposium

On May 24, 2017, six scholars visited Northwestern for a public discussion of issues related to water scarcity. Their talks addressed technological solutions to water scarcity such as desalination and precision; the socio-political aspects of water security in the Middle East and strategies for international cooperation to achieve water security, peace and health in the region; and added complications related to climate change. This interdisciplinary symposium is part of a wider collaboration between the Northwestern Center for Water Research and the Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies.



The Place of Holocaust Studies panelists Sarah Cushman and Penny Hirsch



Tony Michels at the Manfred H. Vogel Lecture

Faculty/grad student colloquia

Under the direction of David Shyovitz, the Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies hosted lunchtime colloquia with local and visiting scholars.

December 12, 2016

“Composing a New Self: Assimilation and German-Jewish Identity in Post-Emancipation Musical Circles”
Amanda Ruppenthal Stein, PhD candidate at the Bienen School of Music, Northwestern University

January 9, 2017

“Sins of the Parents in Rabbinic and Early Christian Literature”
Dov Weiss, University of Illinois

February 1, 2017

“The Talmud and the Two-Headed Man”
Sarah Wolf, PhD candidate in the Department of Religious Studies, Northwestern University

February 13, 2017

“Media and Collective Memory in Israel and Beyond”
Noam Tirosh, Ben Gurion University

March 3, 2017

“Yiddish Drama & the Aftermath of the Holocaust”
Joel Berkowitz, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

May 22, 2017

“The Wandering Jew between the Middle Ages and Modernity”
Galit Hasan-Rokem
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Student and faculty workshops with distinguished Visiting Professor Ruth Gavison

During her visit to Northwestern in spring 2017, Professor Ruth Gavison spoke at three workshops for faculty and students. For more information about Professor Gavison’s visit, please see pages 6 and 7.

April 20, 2017

“Human Rights and Democracy”

April 27, 2017

“The Justification for a Jewish Nation State”

May 11, 2017

“The Role of Religion in a Liberal Democracy”

Cosponsored events

October 20, 2016

“Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning”
Timothy Snyder
Sponsored by Buffett Institute for Global Studies

November 16, 2016

Israel Story Podcast – Live
Sponsored by JCC Chicago

March 8, 2017

“Challenges for U.S. Middle East Policy under the Trump Administration”
Ambassador Dennis Ross
Sponsored by Northwestern Hillel

May 4, 2017

“Holocaust Denial and Alternative Facts: The Continuing Assault on Truth”
Deborah Lipstadt
Sponsored by Northwestern Hillel



Speakers at the Water in Israel and the Middle East Symposium with Elie Rekhess, Associate Director of Israel Studies, and Aaron Packman, Director of the Northwestern Center for Water Research

Day of Study brings the public on campus to learn with Northwestern faculty

On Sunday, October 30, 2016, more than 80 members of the local community joined us for the second annual Allan and Norma Harris Day of Jewish Study.

Hosted by the Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies, this event was a unique opportunity for the public to enjoy a free morning of education and discussion with Northwestern faculty affiliated with the Crown Center. The morning's classes covered varied aspects of Jewish studies ranging from philosophy to literature and gave participants a small taste of the research and teaching happening on campus every day.

The Day of Jewish Study honors the memory of Norma and Allan Harris who helped create the Jewish Studies Program at Northwestern. Today, the Crown Family Center, home of the Jewish Studies Program, is a vibrant community of teachers and scholars dedicated to expanding and sharing knowledge, both in the classroom and through numerous lectures, symposia, and other events of interest to the general public as well as the campus population.

Please check our website for information on the next Day of Study in October 2017. www.jewish-israel-studies-center.northwestern.edu



David Shyovitz teaches about Jewish ideas of the afterlife at the Harris Day of Jewish Study

Classes at the 2017 Harris Day of Study

Marcia Gealy, "The Short Stories of Bernard Malamud"

Marcus Moseley, "Queering Sholem Aleichem: Tevye and Arnold"

Ken Seeskin, "Is Judaism Really Monotheistic?"

David Shyovitz, "Till Death Do Us Part? Family Life and the Afterlife in Jewish Thought and Practice"

Claire Sufrin, "The Theology of Elie Wiesel"



Clockwise from top: Attendees at the Harris Day of Study; Claire Sufrin; Marcia Gealy; Marcus Moseley; and Ken Seeskin

2016-17 Undergraduate Courses

Jewish Studies: An Overview
 Introduction to Judaism
 Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed
 Jewish History 750-1492
 Jews and Muslims in the Islamic Middle Ages
 Jews in Poland, Ukraine and Russia
 Jewish Argentina: Jewish Gauchos to Contemporary Culture
 The Pen and the Sword: Israeli Literature of War
 The Other in Israeli and Palestinian Literature
 Exploring Hebrew Literature
 Modern Jewish Literature
 Storytelling in American Jewish Literature
 Job's Tears: Jewish Response to Suffering
 Imagining Modern Jewish Culture in Yiddish and German
 The Holocaust and Education
 Representing the Holocaust in Literature and Film
 Yiddish Culture and the Holocaust
 History of the Holocaust
 Origins of Zionism
 Collaboration and Complicity in the Holocaust
 Gender, Race and the Holocaust
 Ethnic Communities in Contemporary Israel
 Religion and Politics in the State of Israel
 The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
 Arabs in a Jewish State: The Arab Minority in Israel
 Historical Background to the Establishment of the State of Israel
 The Israeli Economy
 Water in Israel and the Middle East
 Gender and Sexuality in Judaism
 Music and the Jewish People
 Hebrew I, II and III

**Jewish Studies minors
Class of 2017**

- Grant Klein
- Noah Perkins
- Alexander Rubin
- Adina Nadler (Hebrew Studies)



Undergraduate News

**Jill Stacey Harris Prize
in Jewish Studies**



Alex Duner

The 2017 Jill Stacey Harris Prize in Jewish Studies has been awarded to 2017 Medill School of Journalism graduate **Alex Duner** for his paper “People of the Book: How Media Innovations Shape the Textual Authority of the Talmud.” Written for professor Barry Wimpfheimer’s Talmud course, Duner’s essay traces the transformations of the media of talmudic learning from the oral period of its early composition to its present day internet reality. The paper targets three important transitions: the shift from oral production and consumption to handwritten codices, the shift from codices to printed editions and the contemporary shift from printed books to various forms of digital media.

Responsibly documenting the historical details of each transition, the paper ruminates on the ramification each shift has for the Talmud’s cultural authority and what is lost and retained with each transition. It closes by predicting that the successful digitalization projects will be the ones that can balance: 1) orality and textuality, 2) tradition and innovation and 3) classic and contemporary design.

The Jill Stacey Harris Prize has been awarded annually since 1991 for the best undergraduate essay in Jewish studies.

Graduate News

**Crown Graduate Fellowship
in Jewish Studies**

The 2017-18 Crown Fellowship has been awarded to **Grace Kessler Overbeke**. A PhD candidate in the Interdisciplinary Program in Theatre and Drama, Overbeke is writing a dissertation on the stand-up comedienne Jean Carroll. Though Carroll was voted “The Nation’s #1 Comedienne” by *Variety* in 1950, she has been largely forgotten by historians of comedy and, in particular, by historians of Jewish comics. Overbeke is employing historical methods, performance analysis, and ethnographic research to explore how Carroll used and defied stereotypical ideas of what it meant to be a Jew and a woman in mid-20th century America.

The Crown Center annually awards the Crown Graduate fellowship to a Northwestern graduate student or group of students whose work bears on an aspect of Jewish history, culture, or religion.



Grace Kessler Overbeke

Every year, the Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies, in partnership with Tel Aviv University and the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago, hosts two postdoctoral fellows in Israel studies. The 2016-17 fellows were Yael Dekel and Joseph Ringel.

Yael Dekel

Yael Dekel studies Israeli literature and, specifically, its relationship with discourse, social norms, power dynamics, ideology, and the State. Dekel taught three classes during the 2016-17 academic year: *The Other in Israeli and Palestinian Literature*; *Israeli Literature of War*; and *Exploring Hebrew Literature*.

In the past year, Dekel also co-organized a panel on “Canon, Nationality, Experience: Hebrew Literature in Translation” and gave a presentation titled “Origin and Translation in Canaanite Literature: A reading of a Story by Eitan Notev” at the National Association of Professors of Hebrew annual conference. In addition, she presented a program entitled “The Jewish Arab War of 1948 in Canaanite Fiction” at the 17th World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem.

Dekel’s most recent research was accepted for publication in the *Journal of Jewish Identities and Hebrew Studies*.

Joseph Ringel

Joseph Ringel researches the reconstruction of Sephardic/Mizrachi identity in Israeli Sephardic yeshivas and the Shas school system. His work seeks to define the Sephardic rabbinic tradition 60 years after the creation of the State of Israel.

During the 2016-17 academic year, Ringel taught a course titled “Religion and Politics in the State of Israel” and another on ethnic communities in contemporary Israel.

Ringel attended both the Association for Jewish Studies annual conference and the Association for Israel Studies annual meeting, where he presented aspects of his past research about the development of religious humanism within Israeli settlements.

Beyond his teaching, Ringel spoke at a MENA Monday program hosted by Northwestern’s Middle East and North African Studies Program on the rejuvenation of Hispano-Eastern Jewish culture in Israel. He presented twice at Northwestern Hillel: first to students on the topic of the development of Mizrahi and Sephardic identity, culture, and politics, and then to faculty on Shas religious culture.



Yael Dekel



Joseph Ringel

At the intersection of Jewish studies and Theatre studies

Three graduate students reflect on their shared interest in the history of Jewish performance

The Graduate Cluster Program in Jewish Studies offers Northwestern students enrolled in a wide variety of doctoral programs the opportunity to attain an additional credential in Jewish Studies. The Cluster also functions informally as a chance for students to connect with Jewish Studies professors and with one another. For the first time, the Cluster program includes three students enrolled in the Interdisciplinary Program in Theatre and Drama in the School of Communication. **Assistant Director of Jewish Studies Claire Sufrin** sat down with them to learn more about their research.

Claire Sufrin: Please tell us how you became interested in studying theatre.

Tova Markenson (3rd year student): I have always cared a lot about theatre and performance, but took an indirect route to Jewish theatre history. As an undergrad, I wrote my senior thesis on how we narrate experiences of trauma. After graduation, I started working with Jewish domestic violence survivors as a paralegal. Listening to so many women describe their experiences of trauma, I saw how embodiment was central to their experiences. I started looking for more creative ways to support people in expressing their embodied experiences, and got involved with a Theatre of the Oppressed organization in New York. That setting made me feel alive and energized and I thought, this is it, I want to keep doing this work, asking these questions, and being with people who care about these issues. I thought about becoming a teaching artist or working for a nonprofit, but was ultimately most drawn to researching, writing, and teaching.

Rachel Merrill Moss (2nd year student): I have a performance background and studied acting and dance while an undergrad, but since the historical aspects of performance and theatre interested me the most, I completed a theatre history and criticism Master's program at Brooklyn College. After I completed that program, I lived in Vietnam and taught at a university. While I was there, I decided that I wanted to teach university students for a career, and it had to be in theatre because there has never been anything else for me besides theatre and a passionate desire to understand how performance history defines various cultural moments.



Clockwise from upper left: Poster for "The Mama's Daughter," Teatro Excelsior in Buenos Aires 1938 (New York Public Library); Poster for "Tevye the Milkman," Warsaw Jewish Theatre, 1956 (National Library of Warsaw); Jean Carroll, Variety (Archive: 1905-2000) 177, no. 6 (Jan 18, 1950): 56. <https://search-proquest-com.turing.library.northwestern.edu>



Grace Kessler Overbeke, Tova Markenson, and Rachel Merrill Moss

Grace Kessler Overbeke (4th year student):

Similar to Rachel, there has never been a time when I haven't been a theatre person. I have always compared it to a religion in that it gives me a community, a set of values, and a code of behavior that form my daily life. And, so just as children would have gone to *cheder*, I would spend 4-6 hours a day in a studio, whether that was dance classes or rehearsal or whatever. My pivot into academia came from numerous practical considerations. I worked in theatre after I graduated from college and discovered that most people who wanted to both work in theatre and also have a family did a combination of making theatre in the industry and also teaching theatre. I saw that universities were doing the most exciting work both in terms of traditional theatre—going to a building with a curtain to see a play—and in terms of making theatre in less conventional settings like prisons, halfway houses, or soup kitchens.

CS: How is Jewish Studies related to your dissertation research, and what materials you are using?

TM: My dissertation is about Yiddish theatre in Buenos Aires during the early 20th century and its alleged connection to Jewish prostitution, specifically the experiences that Jewish women had at the Yiddish theatre in Argentina both on

stage and in the auditorium. I'm focusing on plays that provoked controversy within the community because they critiqued Jewish involvement in prostitution, and am interested in what these performances might tell us about the embodied experience of attending the Argentine Yiddish theatre. I'm also looking beyond the theatre, specifically at the legal testimonies of women who described their experiences of forced prostitution in the Argentine courtroom. Part of my research will address how Jewish involvement in the sex trade has become overblown because of anti-Semitic stereotypes. At the same time, there is evidence that there was some sort of connection. So far, I've found newspaper articles and theatrical ephemera such as posters, playbills, and photographs as well as memoirs from actors, audience members, and impresarios that are providing rich insights.

GKO: My parents were huge comedy buffs, and they named me Grace after their favorite comedian, Gracie Allen. They felt a lot of pride in the Jewish contributions to American comedy, and I grew up with George Burns and Gracie Allen being my key as to where I would fit into the world. As I got older, I began to notice that the history of Jewish comedy was distinctly male-biased and I became more interested in female Jewish comedians. I was looking for them and asking, "Where are my role

models?" During college, I wrote a thesis surveying Jewish female comedians that captured my sense of Jewish identity in America and Jewish female identity as well as the traits of outspokenness and subversion that come with that.

My dissertation is on the very first Jewish female stand-up comedian, Jean Carroll, who was one of the most famous comedians in the country in the 1950s. She was on the Ed Sullivan Show around 30 times, and she was one of the biggest names in the nightclub world. Today, however, few know her. I'm looking at her story through her own scrapbooks, reviews, and archives for what her story can tell us about being Jewish, being an immigrant, being a mother, and being the first female stand-up comic in the country.

RMM: When I was growing up, it was important to my parents that I attend Jewish day schools. I remember not always understanding where I fit in with the history and the narrative that I was taught in school. I never understood why we were learning Hebrew when my grandmother spoke this other language, Yiddish. Why did I call my parents Mama and Tata while many of my friends called theirs Imma and Abba? At the University of California, Santa Cruz, I did theatre throughout my undergraduate years and took a Yiddish theatre course my senior year with Shelley Zer-Zion, a visiting professor from Tel Aviv University. That's when I knew that this was really my cultural legacy and my work and where my family belongs. It was my lightbulb moment.

My dissertation looks at entwined Yiddish and Polish culture from the interwar period to the post-Soviet period. I am already planning to look at the Polish premiere, and before that the Yiddish premiere, of "The Dybbuk" in interwar Warsaw. I am also looking at a joint Polish and Yiddish production of "The Tempest" in 1939, and at the 1954 premiere of a Polish play about Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, which was then also performed in Warsaw in Yiddish by the remains of the Yiddish theatre. I am also looking at the Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow.

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