

THE CROWN FAMILY CENTER FOR JEWISH AND ISRAEL STUDIES

2024-2025
Annual Report



Northwestern

THE CROWN FAMILY CENTER FOR JEWISH AND ISRAEL STUDIES

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Solsona, Spain 1384.
Source: British Library

Northwestern

Crown Family Center for
Jewish and Israel Studies

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends:

Each time I've met someone new over the past two years—chatting with fellow parents at my daughter's basketball games, making small talk with a neighboring passenger while waiting for a plane to take off, trying to think of something to say to the friend-of-a-friend I'm seated next to at a dinner party—I've learned to anticipate variations on the same conversation, often repeated nearly verbatim:

"So what do you do for a living?"

"I'm a History professor."

"At which university?"

"Northwestern."

"What kind of history?"

"Jewish and Israeli. These days I focus quite a bit on teaching about antisemitism."

"Wow. I'm so sorry. What a tough job. This must be a really hard time to teach those subjects. I know university campuses are incredibly hostile and tense these days, and I've heard that things at Northwestern are particularly bad."

This response isn't terribly surprising. There is a widespread view these days that universities are either cesspools of anti-Jewish harassment, or "woke" indoctrination centers, or repressive neo-liberal institutions bent on quashing academic freedom and non-Zionist political views. Each of these generalizations is wildly exaggerated, even if none is invented entirely out of whole cloth. American universities, including Northwestern, have had a challenging two years, and difficult debates over Jewishness, Israel, and antisemitism have been front and center—sometimes serving as microcosms of broader arguments about the limits of diversity and inclusion, the value of academic freedom, and the very purpose of a university education.

And so, sometimes, I'll accept my interlocutors' kind wishes and try to gently change the subject. But at other times I can't help but push back. "Actually," I'll say, "I really love my job, and this is the best time I can remember to be teaching about Judaism, Jewish history, and Israel on campus." At this point, it is my conversation partner who sometimes changes the subject, doubtlessly (correctly) anticipating that a rant is incoming. But my "well, actually" reaction is not (or at least not *only*) an attempt on my part to be a contrarian. The educational work I've done over the past two years really has been the most rewarding of my career—and I know many of my Jewish and Israel Studies colleagues here feel similarly. Educators who are passionate about, say, the literary qualities of biblical poetry, or medieval Jewish economic history, or

the political theology of modern Jewish philosophers will gladly teach about these topics no matter the circumstances. But when core questions about Judaism, Jewishness, antisemitism, Zionism, and the history of the State of Israel are driving the international news cycle, being debated in the halls of power and on every streetcorner, the importance and urgency of our teaching becomes impossible to ignore. That feeling of relevance—that one cannot understand the current political and historical moment without deep grounding in the Hebrew Bible, the scope of Jewish history, and the vicissitudes of antisemitism; that familiarity with the Talmud and Maimonides and Hannah Arendt and Edward Said is the *sine qua non* for understanding the currents of modern politics—has drawn record student enrollments to our classrooms, and infused our pedagogy with increased vibrancy, enthusiasm, and rigor.

At the Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies, we have long believed that the academic resources we provide should not be limited to only those students who have the privilege of studying on our campus. As you will see in what follows, in 2024-25 we continued to provide robust and creative programming aimed at both the campus and broader communities. In the 2025-26 year, we aim to continue building on our successes. At a time when the value of higher education has been subject to unprecedented scrutiny, and when many universities have responded to social and political pressures by shrinking programs and cutting back on humanistic inquiry, we have been fortunate to continue expanding and reaching greater numbers of Northwestern students and audiences around Chicagoland, the United States, and the world. The support and participation of alumnae, community partners, and other donors has been an invaluable component of our success. Please stay in touch with the Crown Family Center by joining us on campus for programs, following us online and via social media, and considering a



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David Shyovitz



David Shyovitz presenting at the “City Talks: Prayer for the French Republic” series of events. See page 2 to read more.

gift of any size that will ensure we can continue to advance *mi-hayil el hayil*—“from strength to strength.” For my part, I will continue trying to advocate for the importance of Jewish Studies one student, one colleague, and one contrarian dinner party conversation at a time.

David Shyovitz
Director, Crown Family Center
for Jewish and Israel Studies,
Northwestern University

2024-2025 EVENTS

The Creation of Sound, and the Sound of Creation with Victoria Hanna

September 26, 2024

Co-sponsored by Northwestern Hillel

Victoria Hanna, a celebrated Israeli vocalist, performer, and recording artist, headlined a unique concert that fused together ancient Jewish texts, contemporary beats, and her own striking voice. She was joined onstage by Northwestern undergrad and Jewish Studies minor Jonah Rosenberg, who accompanied her on cello.



Victoria Hanna accompanied by cellist
Jonah Rosenberg '27.

October 7 One Year Later: Currents in Israeli Society

October 9, 2024

Panel discussion with Professor Yael Aronoff, Michigan State University; Noa Barak, Tel Aviv University and the October 7 Archive; Professor Arnon Herschkovitz, Tel Aviv University and Bring Them Home Now; Amir Reicher, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Israel & Palestine: War, Forever War, or Prospects for Peace?

October 30, 2024

Co-sponsored by University of Chicago

Israeli political scientist and journalist Dahlia Scheindlin provided a deep analysis of the politics and policy, past and future, that have yielded the ongoing Middle East conflicts.



Shira Schwartz showing the 19th century Moroccan composite Torah scroll, restored for teaching purposes by Northwestern University.

Library Collection Series

Part I

The Body is the Book: Jewish Artists' Books and Rare Judaic Materials

February 27, 2025

*Co-sponsored by the Northwestern
University Library*

Shira Schwartz, assistant professor of Religious Studies; Cara List, head of the Art Library; and Jason Nargis, special collections librarian for instruction and curriculum highlighted rare Judaic materials in the Northwestern University Library collection, exploring their textual, material, and artistic dimensions.

Part II

Rare Hebrew Books and Where to Find Them

March 12, 2025

*Co-sponsored by the Northwestern
University Library*

Hanna Seltzer, director of the Hebrew Program and associate professor of instruction, and her student Jonathan Mazor '25 introduced students and community members to several rare Hebrew books that the Northwestern University Library had recently acquired and discussed the ways that modern literary and political currents helped transform Hebrew from an ancient religious language to a literary, secular, modern one.

City Talks: Prayer for the French Republic— from the Bean to the Brasserie: Conversations on Assimilation, Antisemitism, and Culture

March 26, 2025 – May 8, 2025

*Co-sponsored by Theater Wit and
Northlight Theatre*

A series of ten talks on themes from the Tony-nominated show *Prayer for the French Republic*.

March 26 "Rebuilding Jewish Life in France After the Holocaust: American Jewish Aid and the Choice to Stay" with Laura Hobson Faure, Paris I Pantheon-Sorbonne University

April 9 "Jewish Resistance in France during the Second World War: Lessons for Today?" with Sally Charnow, Hofstra University

April 11 "Antisemitism in France: Past, Present, and Future" with Maurice Samuels, Yale University

April 24 "The Arc of Memorial Vernacular: Holocaust Memory and the Evolution of Public Memorials" with James Young, University of Massachusetts at Amherst

May 1 “Assimilation After Revolution: Jewish Emancipation in Post-Revolutionary France” with Adi Saleem, University of Michigan

May 2 “Off Book: Faith, Culture and the Playwright’s Pen: A Conversation with Joshua Harmon and Itamar Moses”

May 3 “Yiddish Paris: Jewish Cultural Pluralism and Antifascism in Interwar France” with Nick Underwood, The College of Idaho

May 4 “French Intellectuals and the Jewish Question: Antisemitism, Universalism, and the Shifting Politics of Jewish Identity” with Jonathan Judaken, Washington University in St. Louis

May 7 “Medieval Jewish Paris: A Virtual Tour” with David Shyovitz, Northwestern University

May 8 “American Jews, the Melting Pot, and Cultural Pluralism: Then and Now” with Daniel Greene, Northwestern University and US Holocaust Memorial Museum

Ottoman Jewry: Leadership, Charity, and Literacy — A Conversation with Author Yaron Ayalon and Orit Bashkin

April 9, 2025

Co-sponsored by the Keyman Modern Turkish Studies Program, Buffett Institute for Global Affairs

Yaron Ayalon, associate professor of Jewish and Middle Eastern Studies at the College of Charleston, presented his new book, *Ottoman Jewry: Leadership, Charity, and Literacy*. Ayalon explored how Jewish everyday life in the Ottoman Empire was shaped by a mix of social and cultural forces beyond religious authority, and how charitable and educational initiatives gradually shifted from communal oversight to private practice. His presentation was followed by a lively conversation with Orit Bashkin, University of Chicago, and a vigorous Q&A session with the audience.



Maayan Hilel introducing Yaron Ayalon and Orit Bashkin.

The Philip M. and Ethel Klutznick Lecture in Jewish Civilization

“Reading Herzl in Beirut: The PLO Effort to Know the Enemy”

May 12, 2025

Co-sponsored by the Jewish United Fund

Jonathan Marc Gribetz of Princeton University shared elements of his groundbreaking research on the ways the Palestinian Liberation Organization sought out, translated, and studied some of the canonical works of modern Jewish scholarship.



Jonathan Gribetz presents the annual Klutznick Lecture.

The Manfred H. Vogel Lecture in Judaic Studies

“Unsettling Histories: Colonialism, Zionism, and Anti-Zionism,” with Ethan Katz

May 19, 2025

Professor Ethan Katz of the University of California, Berkeley provided a nuanced historical perspective on the contested ways “Zionism,” “anti-Zionism,” and “colonialism” have been (mis-) understood in relation to one another over the course of the past century-plus.



Ethan Katz delivers the annual Manfred H. Vogel Lecture.



Author Etgar Keret in conversation with Hanna Seltzer for a large public audience.

Is Reality Overrated? An Evening with Acclaimed, Prize-Winning Author Etgar Keret

May 29, 2025

Etgar Keret, one of the most acclaimed voices in Israeli literature and film, addressed a packed auditorium for a public presentation—and also joined undergraduate students studying modern Hebrew for an intimate seminar on his works, and Israeli literary culture more broadly.

2024-2025 EVENTS



Guy Ehrlich discussing his research with Phyllis Lassner.

Faculty and Graduate Student Colloquia

"A Jewish History of Slavery in the Medieval Islamic World"

November 21, 2024

Craig Perry, Assistant Professor in the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies and in the Tam Institute for Jewish Studies, Emory University

"New Horizons in Jerusalem Studies: An Integrative Framework for the Analysis of the Development of Jerusalem from the Late Ottoman Period to the Present"

January 15, 2025

Noah Hysler Rubin, Helen Diller Institute Visiting Professor, Geography Department, UC Berkeley; Senior Lecturer, Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem

"Vernacular Encyclopedism in the Mediterranean: The Case of Meir Aldabi's Sh'vile Emunah"

February 26, 2025

Uri Zvi Shachar, Department of History, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev



Omri Senderowicz speaking to faculty and graduate students.

"Loss, Bereavement, and Otherness: The Poetics of Yehudit Hendel"

March 4, 2025

Guy Ehrlich, Postdoctoral Fellow in Israel Studies, Northwestern University

"Trouble in Utopia: The End of Socialism in an Israeli Kibbutz (1975-2020)"

April 24, 2025

Omri Senderowicz, Visiting Assistant Professor in the Jewish Studies Department at the University of Kansas and an Israel Institute Teaching Fellow

Graduate Cluster Events

Book Review with Grace Overbeke

April 4, 2025

Grace Overbeke, an alumna of Northwestern's Interdisciplinary Theater PhD program and the Jewish Studies Graduate Cluster, delivered a talk on her recently published book, *The First Lady of Laughs: The Forgotten Story of Jean Carroll, America's First Jewish Woman Stand-Up Comedian*.

Jewish Studies Cluster Symposium

May 13, 2025

The Jewish Studies Graduate Cluster held its third annual symposium, at which PhD students from different departments presented their latest research to an audience of their peers and Crown Center faculty.

Co-sponsored events

"Accidental Author of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion? The Case of Elie de Cyon"

April 22, 2025

The story of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* is often told as the rise of an obscure 1903 Russian newspaper text into the most influential conspiracy theory of the modern era. In this talk, Professor Faith Hillis of the University of Chicago explored the text's lesser-known prehistory through the case of Elie de Cyon, examining how literary figures shaped the Protocols and how some may also have fallen victim to its legacy.

Co-sponsored by the Northwestern Holocaust Education Foundation and the Northwestern Russian, Eurasian, and East European Studies (REEES) Research Program

Jordan and Jean Nerenberg Family Foundation Annual Speaker Event: "Antisemitism, the Middle East, and our Turbulent Political Moment"

April 29, 2025

Dan Shapiro, former US Ambassador to Israel, and Yair Rosenberg, a staff writer at *The Atlantic*, analyzed Middle East policy and antisemitism in the United States in a panel moderated by Danielle Gilbert, assistant professor of political science, Northwestern University.

Co-sponsored by Northwestern Hillel and Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism, Media, and Integrated Marketing Communications

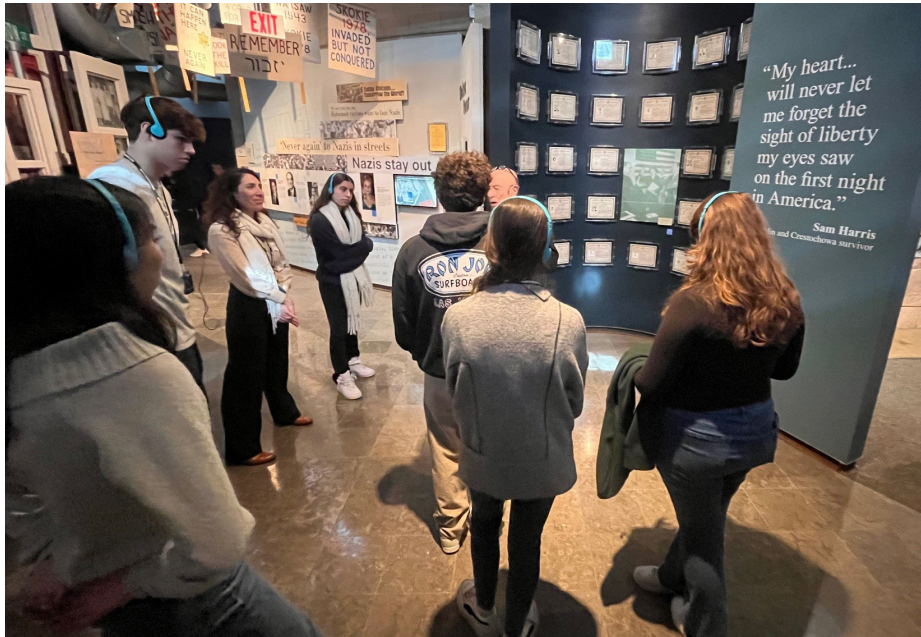
"Rescuing Ansky's Ethnographic Expedition into the Pale of Settlement During a Time of Crisis"

May 14, 2025

Jonathan Brent, director of YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, discussed the origins and mission of YIVO's work in discovering, preserving, digitizing and disseminating materials of Eastern European Jewish heritage.

Co-sponsored by REEES, History, Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities, Habad of Evanston, Kyiv Mohyla Foundation of America

UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS AND EVENTS



Maayan Hilel and students listening intently to their guide at the Illinois Holocaust Museum.

Diving into The Magic of the Alphabet September 25, 2024

Victoria Hanna, a Jerusalemite voice artist, dedicated a special workshop for students interested in experiencing and learning about the Hebrew language, its origins, and the connections between the form and sound of the letters, the words, and their meanings.

Holocaust Museum Field Trip February 20, 2025

Students from Maayan Hilel's winter course "Holocaust and Its Memory in Israel" attended a guided tour of the Illinois Holocaust Museum and had the opportunity to hear from and ask questions of the daughter of a Holocaust survivor.



Etgar Keret discusses his writings in Hebrew with Hebrew III students.

Celebrate Black History Month and the Ethiopian Community in Israel February 26, 2025

Hadas Daniel, the Israeli fellow at Northwestern Hillel, shared her unique life experience as the daughter of an Israeli Ethiopian mother and a Muslim-Bedouin father in Israel. Hadas spoke about her mother's trying journey to Israel in the 1980s, as well as her own upbringing in a Bedouin village in Southern Israel. Students enjoyed Ethiopian food and created posters about the Israeli Ethiopian community, its history and culture.

A Conversation with Yoni Avitan, Co-CEO of IGY April 7, 2025

Yoni Avitan, the co-CEO of IGY, an Israeli organization that supports and promotes the empowerment of LGBTQ+ youth and young people, shared the history of the organization as well as the successes and the challenges of IGY and the LGBTQ+ community in Israel.



Hadas Daniel speaking about her upbringing.



Ibrahim Miari working with students and faculty at his theater workshop.

Ibrahim Miari Theater Workshop and "Ibrahim Miari, a Man in Between" May 19 and 20, 2025

Ibrahim Miari, an actor and playwright, performed his one-man play about his life experience as the son of a Jewish Israeli mother and a Muslim Palestinian father. Miari also led a theater workshop for students and faculty from the Hebrew and Arabic programs prior to his performance.

Etgar Keret Class Visit May 28, 2025

Israeli author Etgar Keret met with students in Hanna Seltzer's Hebrew III course "Between Two Writers: Sayed Kashua and Etgar Keret" for a conversation in Hebrew about his texts and movies. The next day, he met with interested students for a conversation in English about his books and movies.

2024-2025 Undergraduate Courses

Hebrew I

Hebrew II

Hebrew III: Fun Stuff

Hebrew III: Parents and Children in Israeli Society

Hebrew III: Between Two Writers: Sayed Kashua and Etgar Keret

Hebrew IV: Biblical Stories and Poems; Canonical Biblical Texts through The Lens of Modern Hebrew Poetry

Jerusalem: History, Memory, Fantasy

Jewish Material Culture

Jews and Muslims: Intertwined Worlds

Daily Life in Israel/Palestine

We're Here, We're Queer: Queer Narratives in Hebrew Literature and Culture

Yiddish, Our Setting Sun: Yiddish Literature and Culture in the 20th Century

Leisure and Popular Culture in 20th Century Palestine/Israel

Holocaust Education Design

The Holocaust: Psychological Themes and Perspectives

Shattered Worlds: Representation after the Shoah

The Holocaust and Its Memory in Israel

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Competing Narratives

Introduction to Judaism

Rabbinic Sex Stories

Introduction to Talmud

Holocaust Memory, Memorials, and Museums

Magic, Monsters, and the Holocaust

Economic History of Israel

Christians and Jews

History of the Holocaust

Gender, Race, and the Holocaust

Introduction to Jewish Studies

Exploring Hebrew Literature: Past, Present, and Future

Jews and Arabs in Palestine/The Land of Israel, 1880-1948

Otherness and Othering in Israeli Film

Introduction to Hebrew Bible

Jewish Texts

Ancient Jewish and Christian Narrative

Undergraduate Student News

CONGRATULATIONS TO GRADUATING JEWISH STUDIES MAJORS AND MINORS

Talya Braverman

Jewish Studies Minor

Lanie Liebovitz

Jewish Studies Minor

Jonathan Mazor

Jewish Studies Major

Lena Parnassa

Jewish Studies Minor

Madeleine Stern

Jewish Studies Minor



L-R: Lanie Liebovitz, Madeleine Stern, Jonathan Mazor, Lena Parnassa. Not pictured: Talya Braverman.

JILL STACEY HARRIS PRIZE IN JEWISH STUDIES



This year's Jill Stacey Harris Prize in Jewish Studies was awarded to Joel Braunstein.

Braunstein's paper "The 'Golden Age'

of Judaism Through the Lens of al-Andalusian Poetry" was selected for its outstanding combination of historical depth, literary insight, and analytical clarity. Elegantly argued and thoroughly researched, the essay situates Hebrew poetry within the broader dynamics of Jewish-Muslim cultural exchange in medieval al-Andalus.

The Jill Stacey Harris Prize in Jewish Studies has been awarded annually since 1991 for the best undergraduate essay in the field of Jewish Studies. Student papers are nominated by the faculty in Jewish Studies, and an independent committee evaluates and judges the nominated submissions.

“As a Jewish student studying history, I was extremely excited to discover the 'Golden Age of Judaism' in 10th through 12th-century Muslim-ruled Iberia, a period that challenged my preconceptions about Jewish historical experience. My research under Professor Jonathan Brack's mentorship revealed an extraordinary convergence of my dual passions for history and literature and contributed to the ongoing historiographical debates on the applicability of the term 'Golden Age.'

By exploring the remarkable poetic works of medieval Jewish poets, scholars, and rabbis, I discovered literary achievements that represent not merely historical artifacts, but living evidence of unprecedented Jewish creativity.”

AN EXCITING EXPANSION FOR HEBREW AT NORTHWESTERN



Margo Oganezov and Ronit Alexander with students from Hebrew I.



Hebrew students enjoying a meal at Café Ivrit.

Over the past several years, the Hebrew language program at Northwestern has undergone a dramatic and exciting expansion.

Run jointly by the Crown Family Center and the Middle East and North African Languages Program, and overseen by the indefatigable Prof. Hanna Seltzer, the program has seen growing student enrollments, an expanded academic staff, and a wide array of diverse and engaging co-curricular programs. We now offer students four full years of Hebrew instruction, including opportunities for advanced students to engage with Hebrew literature and Israeli media, cinema, and culture in

the original. And our Hebrew instructors collaborate closely with both their Jewish Studies colleagues and with those who teach Arabic, Turkish, and Persian—allowing students to approach Hebrew as both a classical Jewish language as well as a modern Middle Eastern vernacular.

In 2024-25, Prof. Seltzer and our second full-time instructor Ronit Alexander were joined by Margo Oganezov, a Fulbright teaching assistant from Tel Aviv, who augmented the formal classroom instruction and helped spearhead numerous fun and meaningful activities outside of the classroom: a restaurant night at the five star-rated “Café Ivrit,” a performance night where first-year student Ansel Pierson sang Hebrew songs to live musical accompaniment, a Hebrew game show activity at the university-wide foreign language fair, and a program marking the anniversary of October 7, where students shared their experiences and

learned about Hebrew poetry and film that has been produced to commemorate the attacks. Students also welcomed a diverse array of visiting speakers into their classes for intimate in-person discussions, from Israeli vocalist and performance artist Victoria Hanna to Israeli LGBTQ activist Yoni Avitan to celebrated novelist Etgar Keret.

For members of the broader non-Northwestern community, the Hebrew program hosted a public event marking Black History Month featuring Hadas Daniel, the Israel Fellow at NU Hillel, who shared her unique life experience as a daughter to an Israeli Ethiopian mother and a Muslim Bedouin father. We also welcomed actor and playwright Ibrahim Miari, who performed his acclaimed one-man show about his experience growing up with a Jewish Israeli mother and a Muslim Palestinian father.

Graduate Student News

GABRIEL BEN-JACOB (History) completed his third year of his PhD. He successfully defended his dissertation prospectus, titled “A New Covenant: Restorationism and the Rise of American Zionism.” His dissertation project uncovers Americans’ belief in the Jews’ messianic return to Palestine during the 19th century, decades before the rise of the Zionist movement, and explores how restorationist theology and Jewish nationalism shaped American Jews’ relationship to modern citizenship, Christianity, and the Holy Land. In the spring, he also received the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Fellowship from the American Jewish Archives, where he will conduct archival research during the summer and fall.

LIZA BERNSTEIN (Religious Studies) finished her fifth year of her PhD. She spent the year conducting interviews and drafting the first five chapters of her dissertation, “Fluid Boundaries: Niddah as a Site of Ritual Exploration.” In the winter, she presented a paper at AJS titled “Menstruation and Ritual: Is Niddah Inherently Gendered?” She also participated in a panel on contemporary experience of mikveh immersion. She is especially excited and honored to have received the Crown Graduate Fellowship in Jewish Studies for the 2025-2026 year and is looking forward to spending the year completing her dissertation and applying for jobs in Jewish Studies.

SAVOY CURRY (History) had the pleasure of working with the research group “Contending with Crises: The Jews of Fourteenth Century Europe” under the direction of Elisheva Baumgarten this past year. With the support of the Crown Fellowship for Jewish Studies, Savoy also continued work on her dissertation and had the opportunities to present the following conference papers: “Crises in Public: Navigating Shared Spaces in Late Fourteenth-Century German Lands” (Medieval Academy of America, March 21-23); “Sex and the City: Jews, Christians, and Daily Encounters in Late Medieval

Ashkenaz” (Berlin, May 7-9); “Jewish Women, Christian Men, and Illicit Sex in Late Medieval Ashkenaz” (World Congress for Jewish Studies, August 4-8). Savoy will continue her work in Jerusalem in the upcoming year through the support of a Fulbright-Hays research grant.

EMMA DAVIS (Political Science) finished archival research in Jerusalem, funded by a Fulbright-Hays award, for her dissertation, “International Relations and the Jewish Question.” She presented findings from her research at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and at the annual conferences of the International Studies Association and the European International Studies Association.

PAUL FELLER (Musicology) will join the University of Oklahoma, Norman, as assistant professor of musicology. His recent scholarship includes the publication of *The Virgin Mary’s Essence in New Spanish Song* (WLSCM 40), a critical edition that explores Marian devotion in colonial New Spain. He also published an article in *Min-Ad*, titled “Sounding the Nação: Eighteenth-Century Italianate Music, Aural Conversion, and Acoustic Community Formation at the Amsterdam Sephardic Synagogue.”

DANYLO LESHCHYSHYN (History) completed the second year of his PhD. He specializes in the history of interethnic relations and nationalism in 20th-century Ukraine. In September, he had the privilege of presenting his research on wartime relations between the Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the 14th Waffen-SS “Galicia” Division at the University of Ottawa’s Danyliw Seminar on Contemporary Ukraine. In November, he presented a paper on the relationship between the East Galician Jewish National Council and the West Ukrainian People’s Republic of 1918-1919 at the 2024 Association of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies Annual Convention in Boston. He later had the honor of presenting an edited version of this article at the Third Annual Jewish Studies Cluster Symposium.

NOAH MARCUS (Interdisciplinary PhD in Theatre and Drama) passed his qualifying exams and is now officially a PhD candidate.

SARAH MARKS MININSOHN (Interdisciplinary Theatre and Critical Dance Studies) completed her first year of coursework. She also developed her research ideas related to World War II memorialization practices in Italy, and in May, she attended and documented a walk commemorating the anti-fascist resistance in the region of Abruzzo. This walk was joined by a Holocaust survivor whose escape to safety was aided by a local Italian partisan brigade. Mininsohn is currently working to edit a documentary using the footage and interviews from this experience. She also received the TGS Summer Language Grant to return to Italy and learn Abruzzese dialect in August and September.

ANASTASIYA NOVATORSKAYA (History) continued work on her dissertation, which investigates the roles of intimate partners of prominent radical nationalist leaders—wives, companions, and mistresses—in shaping nationalist thought. She demonstrates that these women were not merely supporters of radical nationalist movements but active ideologues who mobilized women, reinforced ideological frameworks, and expanded nationalist discourses across diverse contexts. Employing a transnational methodology, her research draws on Austrian, Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian case studies to show that women’s influence on radical nationalist ideology was a recurring and structurally significant phenomenon rather than an isolated occurrence. She was awarded the Northwestern Buffett Institute for Global Affairs Dissertation Writing Fellowship (2025–2026) and the CCHS Breen Global Exchange Fellowship (2025–2026, declined), the Central European History Society Research and Travel Grant, the REEES Research Grant, and the Buffett Institute International Dissertation Research Travel Grant.

IDIL OZKAN (Anthropology) has authored several essays built on her dissertation research for publication this academic year, including “Jewish Heritage, Memory, and Visibility in Contemporary Turkey” for the forthcoming volume *Everyday Life in the Middle East* (Indiana University Press, 2026). This piece draws on ethnographic data to demonstrate how Sephardic Jewish heritage in Turkey becomes legible only within depoliticized, folkloric, and tokenized frameworks of multiculturalism that simultaneously reproduce state narratives of tolerance and obscure ongoing inequalities. Another forthcoming chapter in the *Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Neoliberalism* analyzes how neoliberal governance transforms ancestry into a commodifiable legal asset, shifting the burden of historical justice onto entrepreneurial subjects. In addition, her article manuscript “Genres of Reckoning: Curating Ancestral Narratives in the Context of Historical Reparations,” (currently under review at the journal *American Ethnologist*), argues that Spain and Portugal’s Sephardic citizenship laws compelled descendants of Turkey’s Selanikli (Sabbatean) Jews to confront long-silenced Jewish ancestries, showing how bureaucratic demands for proof of lineage generate “genres of reckoning” in which individuals narrate, reinterpret, or resist their hidden heritage—revealing the entanglement of governmentality, affect, and identity in contemporary Turkey. She independently designed and taught the seminar “Constructing Ancestry in the Middle East” (MENA 390), which explored constructions of ancestry through analytical lenses including race, ethnicity, law, religion, and language, with a focus on historical and ethnographic examples from the Middle East. She also taught “Studying Culture Through Language” (ANTHRO 215) in summer 2025. Beyond writing and teaching, she presented her work at multiple conferences and workshops.

MOLLY SCHIFFER (Political Science) will be working on her dissertation project concerning the development of Jewish American political consciousness in the United States, presenting at the American Jewish Studies conference in Washington, D.C., and teaching classes in the political science department.

ANASTASIIA SIMFEROVSKA (Slavic Languages and Literatures) presented at the plenary session of the Lessons and Legacies XVII Conference at Claremont McKenna College in November 2024. Her article “Jewish Business, Polish Nationalism, and Art Collecting in Habsburg Lviv: Naftula and Michal Toepfer” was published in vol. 20 of the *Ars Judaica* annual peer-reviewed journal. From June 1 to July 31, she conducted research at the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. as the Kurt and Thea Sonnenmark Memorial Fellow of the Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Research.

OMRI TUBI (Sociology) defended his dissertation in April 2025, titled: *Un/Healthy Conflict: Elite Struggles and Institutional Development*. The dissertation examines the contribution of three American-Jewish public health organizations—the Malaria Research Unit, Hadassah, and MALBEN—to the development of Israel’s medical infrastructure between 1920 and 1960. Tubi pays close attention to the relations between American Jews and Zionists-Israelis as well as how medical facilities developed by American Jewish organizations eventually became (quasi-) state institutions.

REBECCA TURNER (Interdisciplinary PhD in Theatre and Drama) completed her second year of coursework. Her research interests focus on Yiddish women playwrights from 1900-1940. Rebecca had the honor of participating in the Farbindungen Yiddish Studies Conference: Bad Yiddish and the 3rd annual Jewish Studies Cluster Symposium on the subject of Jane Rose’s provocative contraception play “Nit mit alemen.”

KALIA VOGELMAN-NATAN (Media, Technology, and Society Program) completed and successfully defended her dissertation titled “The YouTube Generation: An Exploration of Young Children’s Experiences with Online Video Consumption” in April 2025. This fall, she will begin a postdoctoral fellowship at the School of Communication at Ariel University in Israel. There, her research will focus on exploring children’s engagement with streaming technologies from a cross-cultural perspective, as well as within the context of the October 7 Hamas terror attacks on Israel and the ongoing conflict. Additionally, she is working on various manuscripts related to her research on children, religion, and media.

ARIEL WEINER (Comparative Literary Studies & German) received a summer research fellowship from the American Friends of Marbach to examine the Siegfried Kracauer Nachlaß at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach, Germany.

AVIVA WALDMAN (English) graduated from the YIVO zomer-program.

CROWN GRADUATE FELLOWSHIP

The Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies awards the Crown Graduate Fellowship annually to one Northwestern graduate student whose dissertation research bears on an aspect of Jewish history, culture or religion.

Liza Bernstein, a doctoral candidate in Religious Studies, is the 2025-26 recipient.

Her dissertation, “Bleeding Boundaries: Niddah as a Site of Ritual and Identity Exploration,” uses the lens of *niddah* to explore the tensions that emerge when people adapt traditional Jewish ritual to their modern lives. The *niddah* ritual declares that a person who experiences a discharge of uterine blood—most commonly through menstruation—is impure and must observe a set of rules throughout this period of impurity. While *niddah* structures life around menstruation, most of the extant traditional discourse around *niddah* has been produced by men and is oriented towards male identities and ritual practices. Her dissertation recenters *niddah* by bringing the entirety of its lived experience into central discursive consideration.



At the core of her research are questions around meaning-making, social identity, gender, and ritual. Bernstein demonstrates how contemporary practitioners of *niddah* sift through tangled systems of Jewish law, lived experience, and their own values to craft their *niddah* observance. In this way, she argues that *niddah*—and ritual more generally—emerges as a site for negotiating and constructing identity. Her research is in conversation with ritual theory and lived religion, asking questions such as: *how* are rituals adapted and observed? How do observers mediate between different obligations when applying ancient rituals to their own modern lives? How is ritual lived, not according to the authorities, but according to its practitioners? This research on *niddah* is a broader investigation into the way ritual, and religious life, is experienced. To complete this research, she spent a year conducting in-depth

At the core of her research are questions around meaning-making, social identity, gender, and ritual. Bernstein demonstrates how contemporary practitioners of *niddah* sift through tangled systems of Jewish law, lived experience, and their own values to craft their *niddah* observance.

interviews with over 20 *niddah*-observant interlocutors while simultaneously conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Chicago Jewish communities.

Ultimately, the dissertation uplifts the complexities of *niddah* practice by teasing out the way *niddah* practitioners weigh different obligations, decisions, and values throughout their *niddah* observance. Through negotiating their *niddah* practice, her interlocutors thus also explore their own ritual identities. In this way, *niddah* unfolds as a site where larger ritual questions are played out. What does it mean to observe *niddah* quickly opens up a realm for also asking what does it mean to observe Jewish ritual? What does it mean to live Jewishly?

MEMORIALIZING THE ITALIAN RESISTANCE BRIGADE WITH A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

In May 2025, Interdisciplinary Theatre and Drama PhD student **Sarah Marks Mininsohn** secured research funding from the Crown Family Center to travel to Italy for “Il Passaggio del Fronte” (“Passage of the Frontline”), a walk that memorializes the Italian resistance brigade in Guardiagrele, a small city in the south-central Italian region of Abruzzo.

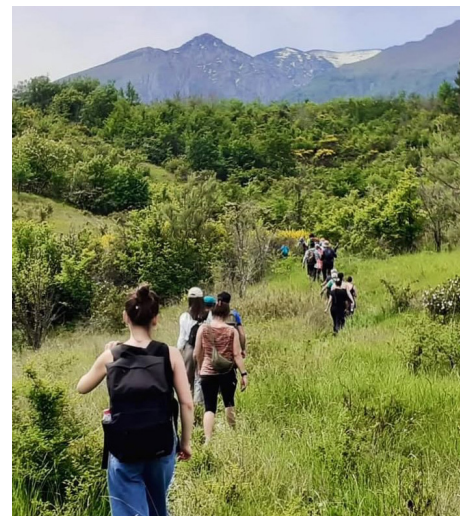
The 10-kilometer hike commemorates the refugees who escaped from the Nazi-occupied north to the British-allied south of the “Gustav Line”—which cut across the Italian peninsula during World War II, dividing the two sides—and the help provided by the local resistance brigade. Sarah first learned about this commemoration while she was a Fulbright fellow in Italy in 2022-23, working on a project mapping the Jewish ghetto of Bologna.

This year’s walk was particularly special due to the presence of 87-year-old Jewish Holocaust survivor Doris Schechter, who escaped across the Gustav Line with her family in 1943. Doris, who now lives in New York City, learned about “Il Passaggio del Fronte” from Sarah, and traveled to Italy with three of her granddaughters to participate. With the help of a local film crew, Sarah recorded video and audio footage of the walk, capturing moments of trekking, singing, reflecting, and of course, eating. She also interviewed Doris, her granddaughters, and local historians, and will assemble the footage and her extensive research into a documentary recounting the story of Guardiagrele and the Italian resistance through the lens of Doris’s experience.

Mininsohn’s film project will inform her dissertation, which explores embodied and performative acts of memorialization in Italy. In addition to writing about the event, she looks forward to sharing the future documentary project with Schechter’s family, the Guardiagrele community, and wider audiences.



Schechter and her granddaughters are interviewed in the Guardiagrele library, in a section featuring books about fascism and anti-fascist resistance.



Walking the challenging trails through the hills of La Maiella.

RONIT ALEXANDER, Lecturer in Middle East and North African Languages Program

Over the past year, Alexander continued to teach both novice- and intermediate-level Hebrew courses, integrating cultural themes and current events into the curricula. Her classes had the honor of hosting Yoni Avitan, Co-CEO of IGY, the Israeli LGBTQ+ youth and young adult organization and the largest LGBTQ+ community organizer in Israel. Students appreciated the opportunity for direct engagement and meaningful conversation about marginalized communities in Israel. Alexander delivered a talk at a national Hebrew teachers' conference titled "Assessment of Hebrew Language Knowledge in the Age of Artificial Intelligence," which addressed evolving assessment strategies in response to advanced artificial intelligence tools. The presentation highlighted both adaptive evaluation methods and opportunities for technological integration—practices she has been implementing in her own classes. She is currently working on her doctoral research proposal, which focuses on foreign language attrition and language maintenance.

JONATHAN BRACK, Assistant Professor in the Department of History

In the fall, Brack taught a new history seminar, "Jews and Muslims: Intertwined Worlds," in which students explored the vibrant lives of Jews in the Middle East and North Africa. The course aimed to offer a nuanced understanding of the historical dynamics that shaped the relationships of Jews to their predominantly Muslim environment. Students wrote research papers on a variety of topics such as Jewish poetry in medieval Muslim Spain and the impact of the expansion of Jewish trade into the Indian Ocean on gender relations in the Jewish communities of medieval Cairo. In the winter, Brack's article on Muslim-Jewish polemics and manuscript exchanges at the Mongol court of early 14th-century Iran was published. The article is part of Brack's new book project, tentatively titled *Ever Closer Encounters: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*

in the Mongols' Middle East. For this project, Brack has been awarded a Humboldt Research Fellowship for Experienced Researchers, which will allow him to spend next spring working on the project at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich.

DANNY M. COHEN, Professor of Instruction; Charles Deering McCormick Distinguished Professor of Instruction

Cohen continued to take his Holocaust educator teacher trainings and Unsilence youth workshops on the road to a number of schools, communities, and audiences, including for students at Eric Solorio Academy High School in Chicago; high school students at St. Joseph's Academy in St. Louis, Missouri; middle school students and teachers at the Donna Klein Jewish Academy in Palm Beach County, Florida; teachers and informal educators training with the Museum of Holocaust and History Education at Kennesaw State University and the Breman Museum in Georgia; and communities affiliated with the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center (HERC) in Milwaukee. In the School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern, Cohen continued to teach his courses on Holocaust museum and memorial design, Holocaust pedagogy and marginalized memories, and Holocaust film and fiction as vehicles for informing public learning and social change.

SARAH M. CUSHMAN, Director, Holocaust Educational Foundation; Senior Lecturer, Department of History

The Routledge Handbook to Auschwitz-Birkenau, which Cushman co-edited with Joanne Pettitt and Dominic Williams, was published in September. In addition to serving as co-editor in chief of *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History*, Cushman is now co-editor of the new series Cambridge Elements in Genocide Studies.

GUY EHRLICH, Postdoctoral Fellow in Israel Studies

In 2024-2025, Ehrlich continued his postdoctoral fellowship at the Crown Center. As part of the fellowship, he taught two courses on Hebrew literature and Israeli culture: "We're Here, We're Queer: Queer Narratives in Hebrew Literature and

Culture," which received the Israel Institute Teaching Supplement Grant, and a new course titled "Exploring Hebrew Literature: Past, Present, and Future." His book, *The Empty Places of Yehudit Hendel*, which focuses on the works of Israeli writer Yehudit Hendel (1921-2014), was published by Haifa University Press. Another related project is a book he edited that collects Hendel's early, uncollected, and shelved works. This book, for which Ehrlich also contributed a comprehensive scholarly afterword, was recently published by Hakibbutz Hameuchad Press. In addition, two of his articles were published in *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, and in a special collection of essays titled *Queer Kinship and Comparative Literature*.

PETER FENVES, Joan and Serapta Harrison Professor of Literature

In April, a volume that Fenves has been working on for several years—and conceived of producing some 20 years ago—finally appeared. It is an edition of Walter Benjamin's writings on Goethe, the earliest of which were written during World War I, the last when he was living in exile. A significant stratum of German Jewish thought from this tumultuous period can be found in these writings.

PETER HAYES, Professor of History and Theodore Zev Weiss Holocaust Educational Foundation Professor of Holocaust Studies Emeritus

Hayes continues to publish extensively, highlighted most recently by the appearance of his book *Profits and Persecution: German Big Business in the Nazi Economy and the Holocaust*.

BENJAMIN FROMMER, Associate Professor in the Department of History

In 2024-2025, Frommer continued to serve as the faculty director of the Jewish Studies Graduate Cluster. Together with the student co-leaders, he organized the third annual cluster symposium, where five graduate students presented on their latest research. This past year, Frommer also served as the associate chair of the Department of History. In addition to an advanced lecture on the "History of the Holocaust" and a first-year seminar on "Holocaust Testimony," in winter



CONGRATULATIONS TO NANCY GELMAN ON HER WELL-DESERVED RETIREMENT after almost 21 years of service at Northwestern University.

Nancy's unwavering dedication, deep institutional knowledge, and generous spirit have not only supported but truly shaped the Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies. Her hard work, warmth, and guidance have left a lasting imprint, and we are profoundly grateful for her enduring impact.

quarter 2025, Frommer taught his "Global History of Prisons and Camps" course to both undergraduates on the Evanston campus and students in Northwestern's Prison Education Program at Sheridan Correctional Center. Beyond presenting at conferences, organizing workshops and talks, and working towards completion of his book manuscript, Frommer managed to cross three items off his bucket list: Devil's Tower, Tikal, and the New York Marathon.

MAAYAN HILEL, Assistant Professor of Instruction and Assistant Director of the Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies

This past year, Hilel continued to serve as the Crown Family Center's assistant director as well as the Jewish Studies director of undergraduate studies. Hilel published a new article titled "Screening Identity: Palestinian National Culture and Intercommunal Dynamics in Haifa's Cinematic Landscape" in the *Palestine/Israel Review*. In October 2024, Hilel organized and moderated an event titled "Oct. 7 One Year Later: Currents in Israeli Society," and in April 2025, organized a book event, "Ottoman Jewry: Leadership, Charity & Literacy," with professors Yaron Ayalon and Orit Bashkin. That same October, Hilel delivered a public

lecture at the Chicago Humanities Festival titled "Cultural Entwinement and Transformation." Over the past year, Hilel also served as chair of the Jewish Studies Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, Advisory Board Member of HEFNU, chair of the Undergraduate Jill Stacey Harris Prize, a member of the search committee for a postdoc in Israel Studies at the Crown Family Center, and a first-year advisor at Weinberg College. Hilel also joined the editorial board of the peer-reviewed journal *Israel* and gave several public talks in Jewish congregations throughout the Chicagoland area. Over the course of the year, Hilel taught five courses on the modern history of Israel/Palestine.

JACOB LASSNER, Professor Emeritus

Lassner has completely revamped a book on Judaism and Islam into two studies. The first deals with the formative centuries of Islam, in which he argues, as do others, that Islam is not a medieval civilization, although medieval is a useful term of convenience, but the last great civilization of late Antiquity. The major contribution of the work is a hitherto unexplored effort to establish the rules by which Muslims integrated Jewish *Materia Biblica* into their own traditions and world view. In sum, a study of the transfer and absorption

of Jewish cultural artifacts. The second part of the original manuscript dealing with modern times has been published separately as journal issue of *Middle East and African Studies*. The issue is devoted entirely to Lassner's work. It features an introduction by the editor, an 86-page essay of Lassner's, and six responses to the essay and his work as a whole. Lassner also read a paper at the most recent and last meeting of the American Oriental Society (the name Oriental was changed at the meeting) titled "The Challenge of Area Studies to Philology in the 1950s." Being 90 years of age, Lassner was the only one in the audience with knowledge of the subject. The paper will be published electronically by the society.

PHYLLIS LASSNER, Professor of Instruction Emerita

Phyllis Lassner published her essay "Liana Finck's Re-Creation Story Let There Be Light" in the collection *The Story's Not Over: Jewish Women and Embodied Selfhood in Graphic Narratives*.

ANNA PARKINSON, Associate Professor in the Department of German

In summer 2024, Parkinson was selected to participate in the 2024 Curt C. and Else Silberman Seminar for Faculty on the topic of "Refugees and the Holocaust" at

the Mandel Center of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. In winter 2025, Parkinson taught an advanced German-language undergraduate course titled “Shattered Worlds: Meaning and Representation After the Shoah.” This spring, she discussed a work-in-progress, titled *Re/sounding Silence: Harun Farocki’s Critical Remontage of Footage from Westerbork Transit Camp in his film essay Aufschub/Respite*, at the Newberry Library’s German Studies Seminar Series. This article is currently undergoing revisions for publication in the next issue of the journal *Nexus: Essays in German/Jewish Studies*. A second essay on contemporary German-language literature in Berlin by Jewish diasporic writers is also in preparation for *The Oxford University Press Handbook of Jewish Literature*. This past year, she began a second term as a faculty representative on the advisory board for the Holocaust Education Foundation of Northwestern University.

YOHANAN PETROVSKY-SHTERN, Crown Family Professor of Jewish Studies and Professor in the Department of History

Petrovsky-Shtern was awarded the Israel Institute Grant for studying Arabic and developing a new course on the 3,000-year-old history of Jerusalem, which he taught in fall 2024. His interview “Stand up and See” about the Holocaust-based movie “Zone of Interest” appeared with Kyiv/Harvard *KRYTYKA* journal. He gave invited and key-note presentations at Evanston Township High School, Dartmouth College, Lviv-based Old Lion Publishing House, Shtetl Routes Conference in Lublin, Prof. Paul Robert Magocsi jubilee symposium, and the International Metropolitan Sheptytsky Conference. He organized, moderated, and presented at the “Building and Belonging” symposium/panel at the Ukrainian National Museum in New York. The Shevchenko Scientific Society of America elected him as its vice-president, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine recognized his contribution for “spreading the knowledge about Ukraine in the United States.”

ELIE REKHESS, Crown Visiting Professor in Israel Studies, Director of the Northwestern Israel Innovation Project (IIP), and Israel Liaison in the Office of the Vice President for International Relations

Rekhess remained deeply engaged in scholarship and public dialogue throughout the 2024–2025 academic year. In October 2024, he participated in the Johns Hopkins University conference “The Impact of the Israel-Hamas War on Israel’s Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy,” delivering a talk titled “The Arab Palestinians in Israel – and the 10/7 War.” That same month, he moderated an IIP-hosted webinar with David Horowitz, founding editor of *The Times of Israel*. In November, he co-sponsored Wayfarer Theater’s Directors Double Feature, honoring filmmaker Dani Menkin with a screening of *Colleyville*, and hosted Israeli author and screenwriter Noa Yedlin for a public talk at Northwestern Hillel. In March 2025, Rekhess held a breakfast discussion with Tel Aviv University President Ariel Porat and moderated the panel “The Other,” featuring filmmaker Joy Sela. He also hosted the Ninth Annual Symposium on Water in Israel, the Middle East, and Africa, including the panel “The Value of Experiential Data for Advancing Water Security” in collaboration with the Northwestern Center for Water Research, Buffett Institute for Global Affairs, and the Institute for Policy Research. The event included nine international speakers from the Middle East and Africa. Rekhess’s article on Jacob Lassner’s “Modern Europe and Traditional Islamic Views of Jews and Judaism” appeared in *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*. He also co-authored “Palestinian Arabs in Israel and the 10/7 Gaza War” (with Idan Franco), published in Robert O. Freedman (ed.), *The Impact of the Israel-Hamas War on Israeli Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy*.

SHIRA SCHWARTZ, Assistant Professor in the Department of Religious Studies

Schwartz was named a Kaplan Faculty Fellow for 2025-26. Prof. Schwartz was awarded a grant from SPAN for the project “Hormonal Havruta” and was also awarded team funding through NICO for a project called “Diagnosing Deservingness.” Schwartz was invited to present at the Frankel Institute Symposium, University of Michigan and the Jews and Health Symposium at Fordham.

DAVID SHYOVITZ, Associate Professor in the Department of History, Director of the Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies

Over the course of the 2024-25 year, Shyovitz taught an undergraduate course on the history of Jewish-Christian relations and offered a newly designed “Jewish Studies: An Overview” that introduced undergraduates to the fields of Jewish history, thought, literature, ethics, and political theory through the lens of the “Binding of Isaac” story. He lectured at the Association for Jewish Studies annual meeting and at the University of Wisconsin, and offered intensive seminars on medieval Jewish history to Jewish lay leaders in Los Angeles and Vancouver. Early in the summer of 2025, David co-led a two week “Interfaith Pilgrimage” to Spain with Catholic and Muslim colleagues from the Catholic Theological Union, and educated a group of lay leaders about the history and legacy of Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations in medieval Spain.

HANNA TZUKER SELTZER, Associate Professor of Instruction in the Jewish Studies and the Middle East and North African (MENA) Languages Programs; Director of Hebrew Program at Northwestern

Tzucker Seltzer created a memorial event for October 7, where students who were in Israel during that time shared their testimonials with the audience. After reading a poem and watching a clip of a song created by students of Tamar Kedem Siman Tov, who was killed on October 7, the evening was concluded with each participant receiving a flower and making a wish for a better future. For Black History Month in February, Tzucker Seltzer initiated an evening with Hadas Daniel Altshuler, the Israeli fellow at Northwestern Hillel, to share the story of her mother, who immigrated from Ethiopia to Israel, and her own personal story, after her mother married a Bedouin man and moved to a Bedouin village in Israel. Tzucker Seltzer co-presented with her student Jonathan Mazor a collection of the rare Hebrew books Northwestern library holds. Through presenting manuscripts from the 19th and early-20th centuries, Tzucker Seltzer showed how Hebrew literature paved the way to modern Hebrew and how these texts transformed Hebrew from an ancient and religious language to a spoken, current, and secular language. On May 28, Tzucker Seltzer

hosted acclaimed Israeli author Etgar Keret for a conversation with the students in her third-year Hebrew class titled “Between Two Writers: Sayed Kashua and Etgar Keret.” To enable students who are not Hebrew learners to meet Etgar Keret, Tzucker Seltzer created, through the generous support of Hillel Northwestern, an additional gathering with the writer and students, where Keret spoke to the students in English. Tzucker Seltzer also interviewed Etgar Keret in “Is Reality Overrated?” an evening hosted by the Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies at Northwestern on May 29, where Keret read from his books and spoke about his writing. Tzucker Seltzer also invited Ibrahim Miari to Northwestern to teach a theater workshop and to perform “In Between,” the play he created about his life as a son to a Jewish Israeli mother and a Muslim-Palestinian father.

BARRY SCOTT WIMPFHEIMER,

Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies and the Pritzker School of Law

Wimpfheimer taught a new seminar in spring 2025 titled “Early Jewish and Christian Narrative” that both introduced a literary approach to the Bible and rabbinic literature and spotlighted the emergence of Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism out of earlier Judaism. In March, Wimpfheimer traveled to New Haven to present a talk titled “The Literary Mishnah and the Transformation of the Seder” at the Brodie Center for Jewish and Israeli Law at Yale Law School, where he is an affiliated scholar.

İPEK KOCAÖMER YOSMAOĞLU,

Associate Professor of History

Kocaömer Yosmaoğlu was named Crown Senior Chair in Middle East Studies. She continues to serve as the director of the Keyman Modern Turkish Studies Program at the Buffett Institute and as the president of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association. She was invited to present her work on Jewish Migration into the Ottoman Empire in the late 19th century in a workshop at Vanderbilt University, cosponsored by the Department of Jewish Studies and the East Europe and Eurasia Seminar and the Ottoman History Workshop group in November 2024. She continues her work on a book manuscript on the same theme.

ANONYMOUS DONATION TO NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY JEWISH STUDIES WILL EXPAND UNDERGRAD CURRICULUM



Over the course of the 2024-25 year, the Crown Family Center received several substantial donations that will significantly strengthen the Jewish Studies Program and ensure students and community members have access to robust and rigorous Jewish Studies programming both inside and outside the classroom.

The largest gift, donated by an anonymous supporter, will be particularly game-changing: it will allow us to expand our faculty roster, bolster our undergraduate curriculum, provide co-curricular opportunities for student travel and research projects. In addition to deepening the opportunities available to existing Jewish Studies students, the gift promises to benefit the entire student body by expanding learning opportunities and encouraging thoughtful academic engagement with Jewish history, identity, and culture.

As the Crown Family Center marks its 25th year, this support will further its mission of promoting education, research and collaboration around Judaism and modern Israel.

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