
THE GEORGE L. MOSSE/
LAURENCE A. WEINSTEIN

CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN—MADISON



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The Spring 2017 Bragsheet



SIMONE SCHWEBER,
DIRECTOR

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Joan Hong &
Lauren Lauter

Dear Friends:
I write this final column with a combination of palpable excitement, substantive regret, real pride, and preemptive nostalgia. I am excited that the next Director of the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies will be **Tony Michels**: a tremendous scholar, fabulous teacher, and personal friend. If you haven't met Tony yet, you don't know that you will love him; if you have, you already do.

I have real pride in how the Center has grown and changed in the last three years. While keeping up all our regular activities, we now have a new and powerful academic exchange with Tel Aviv University's Moshe Dayan Center, and we've co-hosted three fascinating conferences with new friends there.

We've served as home to a marvelous post-doctoral fellow the last two years, **Tal Elmaliach**. We have a great new lecturer offering courses in Religious Studies and Jewish thought, **Adam Stern**. We have not one but two new intellectual powerhouse faculty members who have made us the place to go to study Yiddish literature and culture, **Marina Zilbergerts** and **Sunny Yudkoff**.

We have a new Yiddish language program about to launch, and we've purchased two new Yiddish book collections thanks to Harvard University's downsizing. We've hosted a new Jewish film series and have new art on the walls. Our faculty and students continue to do excellent teaching, research, and learning.

And we even have new office staff in place: the capable **Tracey Mason** at the financial helm, the uber-organized **Joan Hong** on events administration, the creative genius of **Lauren Lauter** on design, and the wonderful **Judith Sone** as our Hebrew language instructor and associate director.

These are not small accomplishments and I owe our successes to a whole list of folks but especially to our Board of Visitors and donors. These people allowed us to add faculty during a hiring freeze and offer new programs amidst budget cuts. I am already nostalgic for the fun I've had with them: telling Jewish jokes at the Greenfield Summer Institute, laughing with **Fran Weinstein** over breakfast at the Pancake House, and learning from **Richard Sincere** over and over again to remain relentlessly positive no matter what curveballs head your way.

To all of our Board members and donors, I can't thank you enough for what you've taught me and what you've enabled us to do for the next generation of Jewish Studies Badgers.

With great thanks and appreciation for your patience and guidance,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Simone A. Schweber".

SIMONE SCHWEBER, Director
Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies
Goodman Professor of Education & Jewish Studies

Conference Enriches Collaboration with Dayan Center & Tel Aviv University

BY BARBARA SANFORD

An exciting collaboration between American and Israeli scholars; a meeting of brilliant minds to discuss Muslim-Christian-Jewish relations, Zionism and research trends in Jewish history; and a behind-the-scenes tour of the Negev with a native Israeli: These were just three of the highlights of the third-annual collaborative exchange between UW-Madison's Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies (CJS) and Tel Aviv University's (TAU) Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies. The George L. Mosse Program in History also participated for the first time. The conference was held January 2-3, 2017, in Tel Aviv.

The two days of conferences focused on two different themes: "Israelis and Diaspora Jews: Confronting Secularism and Secularization" on one day, and "Place, Time, History: Celebrating International Scholarly Collaboration and Exchange" on the next. Former and current Mosse fellows were invited to present in honor of John Tortorice, director of UW-Madison's George L. Mosse Program in History. Having served as the face of the Mosse Exchange Program for almost 20 years, Tortorice is retiring this year.

The panels over the two days were exceptional and covered a wide range of topics, including: "Zionism Between East and West," "Re-visiting the Question of Christian-Jewish Relations," "Nations and their Ethno-Religious Others," and "Between Old and New: Modernization and Secularization in the Middle East." The discussions were lively and the interconnections close.

John Tortorice reflects on his experience at the conference: "Thanks to the instigation of CJS Board of Visitors member Richard Sincere (BA '75, history), we celebrated almost 20 years of enrichment and collaboration between the Mosse Program and Israeli scholars and three years of exchange between Tel Aviv University and CJS. I greatly appreciated the opportunity to see again some of the many Israeli students who have participated in the Mosse Graduate Exchange and are currently affiliated with Tel Aviv

University. Their first rate scholarship and excellence in teaching are a living and vital tribute to George Mosse's vision in endowing the program."

Simone Schweber, outgoing director of the Center for Jewish Studies, joined John in thanking Richard Sincere. "If not for Richard's risk-taking, big heartedness, and vigorous optimism, this kind of collaborative academic work wouldn't have happened.

We're tremendously lucky to have him on our board, pushing us to try out new partnerships and broadening our understandings of the world."

Prior to the conference, CJS visiting scholar Tal Elmaliach led conference attendees from CJS on a two-day tour of the Negev. The group visited the late Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion's grave, toured the Gaza border, and discussed very different imaginings of Israel. They had coffee on top of a mountain, drove jeeps on the sand dunes, and heard about how modern Israeli life threatens the Bedouins. They also met with the regional council mayor and an expert on Israeli/Palestinian military engagement from Haifa University.

Simone Schweber summed up the experience this way: "The conference enriched our on-going relationship with the Moshe Dayan Center and has already launched us into new possibilities for connection. It is my firm conviction that experiences like these enable us as academics to grapple more compellingly with complex subjects in complicated times."



Board members & faculty near the Gaza border: Richard Roberts, Tal Elmaliach, Anna Paretskaya, Richard Sincere, Gadi Yarkoni, John Tortorice, Rebekah Sherman, Chad Goldberg, Simone Schweber

STUDENT NEWS

Badgers in Action : Meet the Class of 2017



**STEFANIE
GEDAN**

A LOOK INTO WOMEN'S PRIESTLY ROLES AND STATUS

Originally from Minnetonka, a suburb of Minneapolis, Stefanie Gedan is excited to be the first graduate of the Hebrew Language, Literature, and Israeli Culture track of the Jewish Studies major.

It is fitting that the highlight of her college experience was studying abroad at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem during the 2015-2016 academic year. Stefanie knew that her study abroad courses would fit in well with her Jewish Studies major, and she was able to fulfill her life-long goal of becoming fluent in Hebrew, while also studying alongside people of different religions from all over the world.

Working with Professor Rosenblum, Stefanie's capstone project explores the question: Can women be considered *cohens* (members of the priestly class) in

modern society? She argues that, in modern society, women should not be excluded from priestly roles in a synagogue setting.

Stefanie's first course as a major was called "Prophets of the Bible," and it was during this course that she felt a deep connection to the texts and experienced a deeper desire to become a rabbi.

After graduation, Stefanie plans to study Jewish texts at a traditional egalitarian yeshiva in New York. As part of her program, she will also have a role as a Jewish educator in a local Hillel, a Jewish day school, and a nursing home. She intends to apply to rabbinical school in the fall, and hopes to attend the following year.

— Judith Sone



**HANNAH
KLEGON**

MA NISHTANA?: DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO TEACHING ABOUT PASSOVER

For Hannah Klegon, becoming a Jewish Studies major fit in perfectly with her passions and future plans of pursuing a career in Jewish education. Hannah is from Ripon, WI, a very small town where she and her brother were the only Jewish kids. Her interest in Jewish Studies began at camp, and has continued to grow throughout her time at UW-Madison, where her favorite course was about Holocaust literature, music, and memory.

For her thesis project, Hannah is working with Professor Schweber and researching how various Jewish educational institutions in a small Jewish community differ in how they teach their students about Passover.

She is examining the different curricula and materials used and the morals conveyed from the Passover story across different denominations.

After graduating, Hannah plans to move to Jackson, MS to be a Jewish education fellow for the Institute of Southern Jewish Life. Her role will be to help create a religious school curriculum and travel around the South to help implement it in small Jewish communities. She expects that her thesis project will be very useful in her new job, and she hopes to go to graduate school to get a Masters in Jewish education in the future.

— Judith Sone



ZOE
KELLNER

THE IMPACT OF RELIGION ON ISRAEL'S
DEMOCRACY

Zoe Kellner's interest in Jewish Studies was piqued at camp. She is from a small suburb of LA where she was one of the only Jewish students at her high school, and when she got to UW-Madison, she knew she wanted to be involved in the Jewish Studies program. She originally started out with Hebrew and then enrolled in more Jewish Studies courses, and she loved them. She decided to become a major and made plans to study abroad at Tel Aviv University in the spring of 2016. While pursuing her studies, Zoe also interned and raised funds for Hillel and served on the executive board of Badgers for Israel.

Zoe's passion for politics led her to take Professor Shelef's "Israeli Politics" course, and that was the best course she took in her undergraduate career. She decided to do an independent study with Professor Shelef and is currently working on a project about the impact of religion on Israel's democracy, examining the question: Does Israel have the ability to remain a stable democracy with the inclusion of religion in its government?

A dual major in Jewish Studies and Journalism, Zoe plans to work for an advertising agency in LA after she graduates. This coming summer, she is excited to lead a Birthright Israel trip.

— Judith Sone

CONGRATULATIONS
TO THE CLASS OF
2017!

Major in Jewish
Studies:

- Stefanie Gedan
- Zoe Kellner
- Hannah Klegon

Certificate in
Jewish Studies:

- Casey Bons
- Rachel Orbuch
- Jordana Karger
- Maya Strauss
- Jillian Weintraub

CONGRATS!

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FACULTY NEWS

A Mazel at Memorial Union Library: UW–Madison's New Yiddish Books Collection

BY LAUREN LAUTER

As winter thaws out Madison's frozen lakes and life blooms again, UW's Memorial Library unpacks and explores a newly acquired collection of Yiddish books purchased this winter from Harvard University. It has been an exciting and important acquisition, spearheaded by the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies and shepherded by Todd Michelson-Ambelang, a librarian who specializes in Scandinavian, classical humanities, Jewish, and South Asian Studies.

As Michelson-Ambelang explains, the collection is rather rare: "Harvard University and UW-Madison are the only institutions with these books right now." The first of the two shipments from

Cambridge, MA, included more than 1600 books and pamphlets that were published in countries as disparate as Poland, Germany, the USSR, the USA, Argentina, Mexico, South Africa,

Israel, and Lithuania. What ties them together is the diasporic language and culture of Yiddish.

Sunny Yudkoff, assistant professor of Eastern European Jewish Literature and Culture, is thrilled about the academic potential of this resource. "It's a staggering collection containing classics and reference works vital to research and several rare items that are particularly exciting to handle. Part of the collection includes a number of works published in Poland immediately following the war, by the Jewish Historical Institute. These works were heavily censored [in the postwar period] and have interesting redactions that tell you about how censorship worked."

Both Professor Yudkoff and Mr. Michelson-

Ambelang see this collection as crucial to perpetuating scholarship both on the contents of the works as well as on their physical forms. As Professor Yudkoff notes, "Yiddish sources by definition are rare and having immediate access to them changes the research process. When I have questions and ideas, it's a luxury to be able to pop over to Memorial Library and answer those questions right away with physical texts. Part of my interest is in the material culture of these books." When speaking about how the collection might interest her students, Professor Yudkoff's enthusiasm was contagious. "A number of the books are beautifully bound with modernist typography and gilded portraits. These are exciting to students and show the value of books to a community of readers."

Yudkoff and Michelson-Ambelang are concerned with the preservation of Yiddish through this assemblage, noting the fragility and uniqueness of the pieces within it. They see the procurement of these works as an important advancement of the university's dedication to Jewish and Yiddish studies. As a result of this acquisition, according to Professor Yudkoff, "UW has one of the preeminent collections of Yiddish books in the Midwest and it can now become a destination for scholarship."

Michelson-Ambelang concurs and is motivated to find ways to make the collection accessible to scholars, students and the public, while keeping them safe. "In interwar Germany, the Jewish community was very literate," he explains. "But then [the Nazis] began getting rid of so many books... so much was destroyed in the war; gems that are really hard to find are in this collection." He is very pleased that these materials now have a home. And he is happy to show the collections off to anyone who may be interested, though he asks that you make an appointment via email first:

Todd Michelson-Ambelang
UW–Madison Memorial Library
todd.ambelang@wisc.edu
(608) 262-3193



Henry Sapoznik, Todd Michelson-Ambelang, Sunny Yudkoff, Marina Zilbergerts, and Tony Michels peruse the new Yiddish books collection.

Introduction to College Through Jewish Studies

BY LAUREN LAUTER

Mina Kianovsky is a 17-year-old senior at Columbus High School in Columbus, WI. When she was 16, she took a Jewish Studies course at UW-Madison, and she is currently taking a Hebrew course. We asked Mina about her experiences and how the Center for Jewish Studies has played a role in shaping her education.

How did you end up taking a college course as a high school student?

There is a state mandated program called "Youth Options." This program says that if there is a course you want to take that isn't offered through your high school, your district can pay for you to take any course at a nearby college.

What course did you choose and why?

Last semester, as a junior, I took "Food and Rabbinic Judaism" with Professor Jordan Rosenblum. This semester I'm taking first semester Hebrew with Haya Yuchtman.

I chose Jewish Studies courses and was excited to have this opportunity. Students in bigger cities like Chicago or New York have classes like Hebrew and Middle Eastern Studies in high school. Columbus is so small and not diverse enough for those to be offered.

I relate to Judaism through culture and food, so this course was created for me! It was structured through lectures and note-taking, readings, and critical reflection through essay writing. It was an amazing challenge for me to learn to write essays and take notes at the college level. Professor Rosenblum was also really helpful, accommodating, and available. I feel ready for college completely at this point and have him to thank for that.

Tell me more about the courses you have taken.

In Professor Rosenblum's course, the laws of *kashrut* were intriguing for me. They're incredibly complex and detailed. We spent a lot of time talking about them because that's what Jewish food laws are based on. I really liked learning about them and connecting their meanings to Jewish philosophy and thought. One of our textbooks was called *The Bagel* and was about the history of the bagel. It was a fascinating way to begin to understand and map a Jewish cultural history and geography. Now I know why bagels are so important to us.

Right now, I really like the Hebrew class I'm taking. I had a little Hebrew experience from Hebrew school, but this class is taught by a native Israeli and is fast paced which keeps me challenged. I have always wanted to improve my Hebrew but didn't have the space to do that in a formal classroom setting.

Do you think this experience will have an impact on your future in some way or has it already?

I could have only taken AP (advanced placement) courses in high school. AP and IB (international baccalaureate) courses might prepare you for college in some way, but my experience has given me the opportunity to actually *be* in college courses and do the kind of work and thinking that will prepare me to be successful at that level. I don't think I could have had a better first college experience.



Mina Kianovsky will be a freshman at UW-Madison in the fall.

"My experience has given me the opportunity to do the kind of work and thinking that will prepare me to be successful."



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