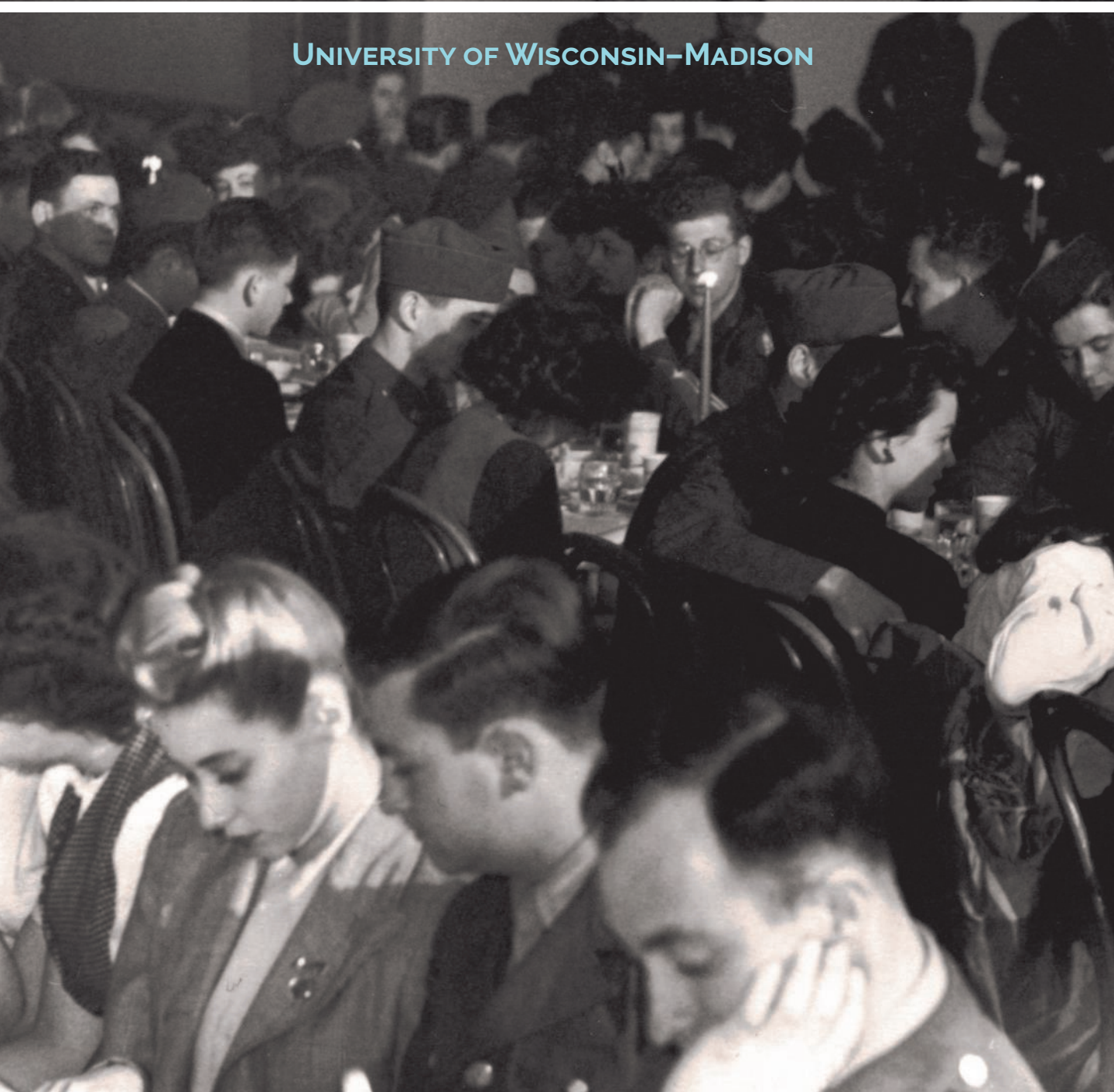

THE GEORGE L. MOSSE /
LAURENCE A. WEINSTEIN

CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



IN THIS ISSUE: The Class of 2020 | COVID-19 and the Transition to Online Instruction |
Must-Have Books in Jewish Studies | New Yiddish Lecture Series



George L. Mosse / Laurence A. Weinstein
Center for Jewish Studies
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

VOLUME 21, NO. 1 / SPRING 2020

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Amid crisis CJS stands on solid footing



Tony Michels, Director.
Photo: Snitow-Kaufman
Productions

ON THE COVER:

UW Hillel/Jewish
Welfare Board Seder, 1943

Photo from Jonathan
Pollack's *Wisconsin, The
New Home of the Jew*

Wisconsin Historical
Society, WHS-143297

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:
Gwen Walker

Dear friends,

To state the obvious, much has changed since the last newsletter. The current pandemic took us by surprise and compelled us to act quickly. I'm proud to report that the Center for Jewish Studies adapted well. The biggest, most immediate challenge was the need to move our courses online. Within two weeks, and with the indispensable guidance of the university's technical staff, students and faculty shifted from classrooms to virtual learning environments. There is no substitute for learning in class with peers and instructors, but the transition went smoothly, and our faculty quickly developed innovative ways to engage students.

Rest assured, CJS is continuing to operate much like before. I meet daily over the phone with our extraordinary Associate Director, Gwen Walker, to conduct the usual business of the Center. With the help of our able and resourceful Financial Specialist David Pettersen and Outreach Assistant Amie Goblirsch we continue to plan next year's curriculum, public events, and alumni relations. It is impossible to know exactly how UW-Madison will be changed by the current crisis, but CJS stands on solid footing and will continue to pursue our mission to advance the scholarly study of Jewish civilization.

While we were able to offer our Spring 2020 Jewish Studies courses online, we found we had no choice but to postpone the annual Greenfield Summer Institute until next year. This was a difficult decision, as this communal gathering of friends and colleagues is a highlight of our year. We look forward to July 2021, when we can welcome our many loyal Greenfield attendees back to Madison with the program "Jews and Politics: America, Europe, Israel."

In the meantime, pay a visit to our newly redesigned website at cjs.wisc.edu. You will find a number of lectures from last year's Greenfield Summer Institute and the entire online version of CJS honorary fellow Jonathan Pollack's *Wisconsin, the New Home of the Jew: 150 Years of Jewish Life at the University of Wisconsin-Madison*.

Sadly, a beloved UW-Madison alumnus and friend to many Greenfield participants will be missing in future years, and we pause here to remember him. Gerard H. (Gerry) Rosenberg, a Justice of the New York State Supreme Court, Kings County, passed away on April 6, 2020, due to complications from coronavirus. *Zikhrono livrakha*. May his memory be a blessing.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony Michels". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Tony Michels, Director
Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies
George L. Mosse Professor for American Jewish History

The Center for Jewish Studies is a small unit that depends on your generosity. Please consider supporting us by using the enclosed envelope or our online giving link: supportuw.org/giveto/jewishstudies.

ADAPTING TO CHANGE

Resilience and resourcefulness in the time of COVID-19

When UW–Madison students returned from winter break on January 21, they poured into lecture halls and dining halls, queued up at their favorite State Street cafes, and resumed their campus routines. The first hint of the coming crisis arrived in their inboxes the next day with a ping so small that few took notice: an email message from University Health Services welcoming students back, reminding them that this was the flu season, and introducing them to the new “coronavirus,” spread through close personal contact. As the world’s understanding of the disease rapidly grew, the UW suspended all study abroad programs, and CJS students returned from Italy, Israel, and elsewhere. By the end of spring recess, all UW students were taking their classes online from their homes.

In the space of a week or two, with support from IT staff, the entire faculty became proficient in videoconferencing and other technologies needed to continue instruction both “synchronously” (in real time) and “asynchronously” (by uploading content). They adopted a variety of methods.

Before COVID-19, Hebrew Lecturer **Judith Sone** sometimes had her students create recordings of their presentations and conversations. With the transition to remote learning, she increased the number of such assignments, and she ensured that students made the most of their time together by practicing certain language concepts on their own beforehand.

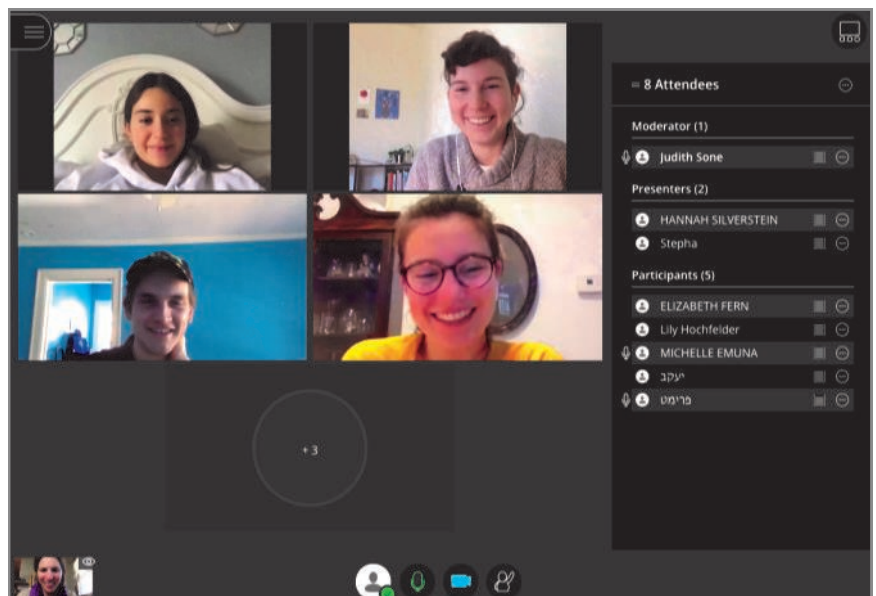
Adam Stern (Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies and German, Nordic, & Slavic Studies) included a mixture of lectures and discussions to “approximate the face-to-face seminary style that characterized the first half of the semester.”

Rachel Brenner (Elaine Marks Professor of Jewish Studies) was also able to cover the material “with some emendations, but basically as originally planned.” Students submitted their work by email, and thanks to “the scanner, the copier, and the incredible assistance from the IT staff

at LSS Techzone,” Brenner was able to return the assignments marked and graded.

Large lecture courses posed special challenges. According to **Jordan Rosenblum** (Belzer Professor of Classical Judaism and Max and Frieda Weinstein-Bascom Professor of Jewish Studies), research shows that most students stop paying attention to online lectures around the five-minute mark. For his Religion and Sexuality class, he recorded a series of brief videos and asked students to respond to each segment.

Sunny Yudkoff (Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies and German, Nordic, & Slavic Studies) taught a similarly large group in her course Yiddish Literature and Culture in America. Before the pandemic, she recalls, a highlight was a class trip to see a local production of the Tony-award winning play *Indecent*, presented by Music Theatre of Madison. She made the transition to online instruction, she explains, “with the support and creativity of the course TA, Matthew Greene (a graduate student in the Department of German, Nordic, & Slavic), as well as the patience and flexibility of the students.”



Judith Sone's Intermediate Hebrew, taught through videoconferencing technology

Congratulating our Jewish Studies Major

What Jewish Studies Means to Me

By Nesha Ruther, Double Major in Jewish Studies and English

The Jewish Studies classes I have taken at UW--Madison have been some of the most challenging, stimulating, and rewarding work I have done in my life. In my first semester I took Professor Amos Bitzan's Anti-semitism in European Culture. As the only freshman in a class of upper-classmen and graduate students, I would stay up late doing the readings and get up early to finish them. Although it was difficult, I had never felt so excited to learn. For the first time in my academic career, I felt I was studying something that was distinctly relevant not only to me and my identity, but also to how I interacted with the world.

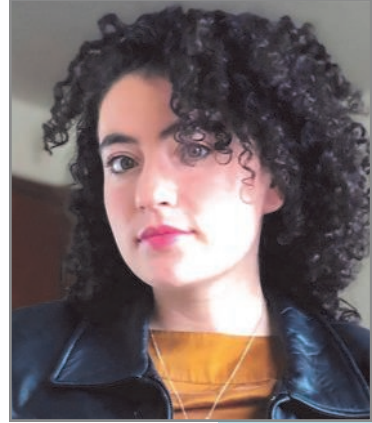
Being part of a smaller, close-knit program has allowed me to find incredible mentors and form lasting bonds with professors who truly care about and respect their students. Faculty in Jewish Studies have made the time to fully engage with me and my interests, and are committed to helping me further my studies. I have also been able to use the in-depth knowledge of Jewish history I have received to further my creative writing and explore my ancestry, myself, and how the two intersect.

I no longer consider anything in a vacuum. For every essay or book I have read for a Jewish Studies class, my professors have emphasized the importance of understanding the political, historical, and cultural context surrounding the work. This feels especially important now, in such challenging and unprecedented times. As a result of my coursework I have a better understanding of the forces that have influenced our current political and social climate. I also understand how my sense of self has been shaped by identity politics, what it meant for me to grow up where and when I did, and how and why my family has chosen to practice our Jewish identity in a contemporary American context.

Before choosing the Jewish Studies major, I would never have considered the ways in which my and my family's stories, identities, and cultural memories are part of larger social and historical developments. Jewish Studies has taught me that the past is not simply the past. It is not finite or sealed, but is constantly influencing how we investigate and understand it, and how we choose to shape our present and future.

It was this idea of historical interconnections that motivated me to spend a semester studying in Poland, researching my great-grandmother (my namesake) and her family. The Jewish Studies faculty wholeheartedly supported me in this project, whether by writing recommendations so I could obtain funding, or reading and editing my writing and research.

To have people so invested in my educational pursuits has taught me that my interests are worthwhile and have a place in the world. Because of CJS I know I am not just one individual. I belong to a lineage, yes, of blood-relatives, but also of intellectuals, scholars, artists, and Jews.



Nesha Ruther

Congratulating our Jewish Studies Certificate Students



Max Bibicoff

Max Bibicoff

Major in Journalism

When I first began college, I looked to Judaism and Jewish culture for answers about who I was. I was curious about the aspects of Jewishness that I hadn't previously had exposure to in my upbringing. Studying Jewish history and culture gave me a glimpse into my own familial lineage.

Lauren Greenberg

Major in Community and Nonprofit Leadership

I grew up going to Jewish sleepaway camp, and my experience led me to want to get a job in the Jewish community in my future. In my sophomore year I started volunteering at Neighborhood House, a local Madison community center, and have been working there since.



Lauren Greenberg



Dina Schulman

Dina Schulman

Major in Human Development and Family Studies

After studying abroad in Tel Aviv I realized I had a passion for Jewish life. I am thankful for the connections I have made within CJS. I was able to make some really great relationships with people I normally wouldn't have had the chance to socialize with. My favorite teacher in Jewish Studies? Judith Sone!

Heidi Weston

Major in Communication Arts

I became interested in Jewish Studies after taking one of Professor Rachel Brenner's Holocaust studies classes. It changed my life and was hugely influential for my future studies. I hope to apply to grad schools in a year. My area of study would be the rhetoric of genocide identity. As an Armenian woman, I'm highly invested in how genocide shapes both national and personal identity.

Congratulating our Jewish Studies Certificate Students



Diving into the Study of Israel

By Katelyn Metcalfe, Jewish Studies Certificate; Communication Arts Major

When I came to the UW–Madison I knew I wanted to study a group of people in depth and immerse myself to the fullest. For my major I needed three semesters of a language. I ended up taking Hebrew and I loved it. The language is very beautiful to me, and I am proud to say I can now read, write, and communicate in Hebrew. This was also the first class that introduced me to the subject of Israel. We would do "Israeli Culture Days," where each student would choose a topic and explain its significance. Topics included music, actors, food, history, etc. The knowledge I gained in this way caused me to dive more deeply into the study of Israel and its rich heritage.

A friend introduced me to UW-Hillel, and I started going every week to participate in Shabbat and activities. Every experience I had at Hillel was wonderful. Through Hillel

Katelyn Metcalfe I was a member of Hebrew Club and Israel Interest Group, and I helped put together the Israeli Film Festival in 2018 and 2019. It was incredible being a part of something that brought films from Israel to America to increase awareness and support.

In 2019 I went on the Student Leadership and Delegation trip to Israel. This was a life-changing experience for me. It was amazing to visit the country and learn more about its development and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I got to visit a kibbutz, speak to an IDF soldier, hear from college students, celebrate Shabbat in Jerusalem, and visit significant sites such as Dome of the Rock and the Western Wall. The atmosphere and people were breathtaking, and I could sense the strong connection people had with their identity, culture, and religion. This was my first interfaith experience, and it was awesome to see how strongly religion could bind people together. Israel demonstrates how important it is to stick to the land and one's roots and to make use of the resources you are provided with. My visit there has encouraged me to continue to learn about the history and lifestyles of people who are religiously different from one another.

JEWISH STUDIES COURSES AT UW–MADISON

Fall 2019

- The American Jewish Experience: From Shtetl to Suburb
- Jewish Law, Business, and Ethics
- Jerusalem: Conflict and Desire (Freshman Interest Group)
- Testimonies and Cultural Expressions of the Holocaust
- The Sabbath: History, Religion, Politics
- Holocaust: History, Memory, and Education
- Jewish Literatures in Diaspora
- Beginning Hebrew
- Intermediate Hebrew
- Introduction to Hebrew Literature
- Topics in Modern Hebrew: Israeli Literature and Culture

Spring 2020

- Religion and Sexuality
- Jewish Composers in the Early Modern to Modern Eras
- Yiddish Literature and Culture in America
- King David in History and Tradition
- Jerusalem: Holy City of Conflict and Desire
- Testimonies and Cultural Expressions of the Holocaust
- Moral Philosophy and the Holocaust
- German-Jewish Social Thought
- Beginning Hebrew
- Intermediate Hebrew
- Introduction to Hebrew Literature
- Topics in Modern Hebrew: Israeli Literature and Culture
- Research Colloquium for Majors: Readings in Zionism

In Search of Survivors: A 12,000-Mile Research Trip from Madison to Jerusalem and Back

By Chad S.A. Gibbs

As a graduate student conducting Holocaust research in Jerusalem last fall, I hardly expected that my findings would lead my work back to Wisconsin. That, however, was before I found a video interview of Ben Lerman, a Jewish man born in Poland who survived Treblinka and settled in Milwaukee after the war.

With support from the George L. Mosse Program in History and the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies, I moved to Israel in July 2019 to study Jewish resistance inside Treblinka. Historians currently believe only 67 people survived Treblinka, so finding new witnesses is a difficult and important challenge for my research. Locating interviews left behind by as-yet-unrecognized survivors allows me to provide long-overdue historical recognition of what these former inmates endured.

In the course of Lerman's interview, conducted in Milwaukee in 1987, he described his life before and during the Holocaust. He talked about family, the Warsaw Ghetto, and much more. Lerman also recounted how he was deported from Warsaw to Treblinka only to be sent on to Majdanek. He was one of a precious few to make it out of Treblinka after only a few hours. The overwhelming majority, including his sister, were not as fortunate.

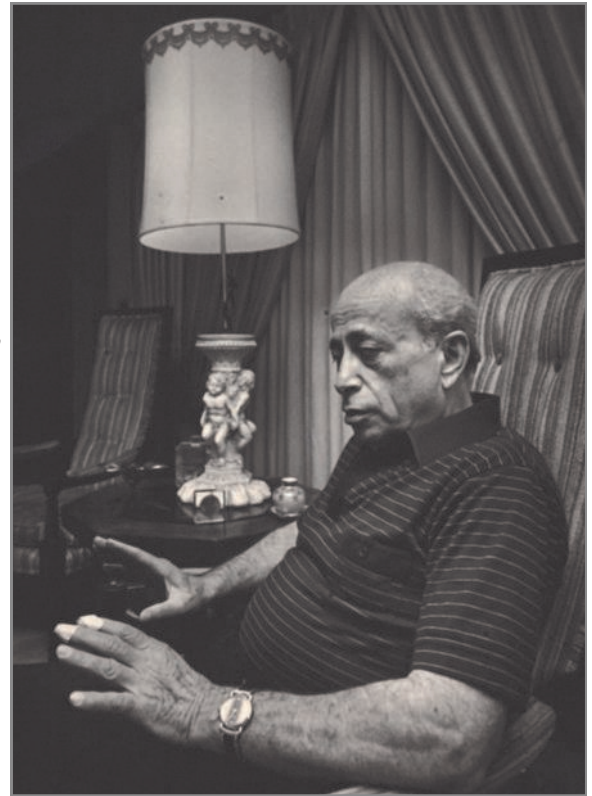
Interviews like Lerman's normally cover a survivor's entire lifetime. His story, though, ends abruptly just after the war, at which point the videotape ran out and his interviewers attempted to locate a new one. They apparently failed to find it.

To fill in this incomplete interview I've begun to look for more information on Lerman after the Holocaust. With the help of staff at the Jewish Museum of Milwaukee, I was able to find traces of his life in Wisconsin.

Lerman settled in Milwaukee some time before 1960, remaining there until his passing in 1998. Through these years, he appears frequently in the *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*. His dedication to the Jewish community shines through in articles on topics from education to Holocaust memory. In 1975 Lerman was elected president of Milwaukee's Temple Menorah. In 1982 one of his daughters graduated from UW-Madison, thus bringing my research on the Lerman family full circle.

Although the coronavirus outbreak in early 2020 curtailed my trip to Israel, I am now back in Madison continuing my work on Treblinka survivors. I'd like to learn more about Ben Lerman.

Chad S.A. Gibbs is a graduate student in the Department of History. He invites readers with information about Ben Lerman to contact him at cgibbs4@wisc.edu.



Ben Lerman in 1986

MASADA — Warsaw Ghetto survivor Ben Lerman speaks Sunday, May 16, 2 p.m. For more information, call 353-

Senior volunteers are lauded

Ben Lerman and Jean Rubin are the 1993 Kesselman Senior Service Award recipients.

Lerman was chosen for his assistance to families from the former Soviet Union making new lives in Milwaukee. Rubin was cited for her work on behalf of the Congregation Beth Israel Sister-synagogue.

Also nominated for the award honoring volunteerism by senior adults were: Paige Aronson, Jean



Jean Rubin

Ben Lerman

Atlas, Sidney and Lucille Atlas, Samuel and Birdie Ball, Norman Gill, Rita Gordy, Bess Holmstak, Leo and Bess Herman, Joseph Hirschberg, Leonard Mendelblatt and Mildred Ozman.

Also: Mildred and David Parr, Rachelle Pitt, Harold and Bernice Rosenthal, Jack Sanders, Harriet Schendlinger, Florence Schneidman, Carl Schulman, Diana Siegel, Helen Skumnick and Jeanne Zamo.

The award was established in 1977 by Fannie and William Kesselman. The May 7 awards luncheon was sponsored by the Jewish Community Foundation, the Milwaukee Jewish Federation's endowment-development program.

Helping to Protect Human Rights and Ensure Fair Treatment of Israel

Hilary Miller graduated in 2019 with a double major in History and Political Science and a certificate in Jewish Studies. She is now working with United Nations Watch in a yearlong fellowship named for civil rights activist Morris Berthold Abram (1918 – 2000).

What is UN Watch, and what do you do as a Morris B. Abram Fellow?

UN Watch is a human rights non-governmental organization based in Geneva, Switzerland. We monitor the United Nations by holding it to account by the yardstick of its own charter. In doing so, UN Watch calls out the hypocrisy and lies spouted by rogue countries within the UN system. UN Watch also works to ensure the fair and equal treatment of Israel at the U.N., where the delegitimization, demonization, and holding Israel to a double standard have become common practice over the last few decades. Through our advocacy and monitoring, UN Watch is at the fore of calling out bad actors who abuse their positions of influence within the U.N. to mask their transgressions, deflect criticism, and present a veneer of good conscience to the international community.

As a Morris B. Abram Fellow, I assist in monitoring UN plenary sessions and special mandate holders. I write briefings, press releases, and blog posts on current events and UN Watch campaigns, and develop content for UN Watch social media platforms that reach thousands of viewers from around the world each day. I also assist in writing opinion editorials and speech testimonials presented at the UN Human Rights Council.

How does your work draw on your training in Jewish studies?

A core understanding of Jewish studies has been fundamental to my work with UN Watch, especially in my capacity as a monitor of bias against Israel at the United Nations. I regularly draw upon lessons from Professor Amos Bitzan's seminar on antisemitism, where I learned to distinguish between hatred towards Jews and hatred towards Israel, as well as what constitutes legitimate criticism of Israel versus when criticism of Israel is a guise for anti-Jewish bigotry. Being equipped with these intellectual tools has prepared me well for this position and allowed me to do more in-depth analysis of the manifestations, motivations and appearance



Hilary Miller at the United Nations

of anti-Israel bias at the U.N. Furthermore, having a rich understanding of Israeli history has allowed me to contextualize outlandish claims made by country representatives who regularly derogate Israel's legitimacy and question its right to exist.

Last fall you addressed the UN Human Rights Council. What was that like?

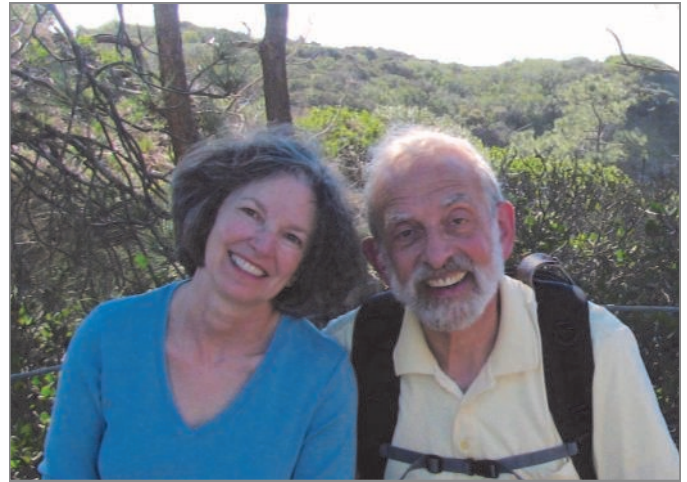
Although the UN Human Rights Council is flawed in many ways, being able to speak before the world's top human rights body was a privilege. I learned a great deal in preparing my testimonial, which required reading through extensive UN reports on Equatorial Guinea's human rights record and preparing a 90-second argument that was clear, concise, and included a call to action. I chose to call out the government's ongoing use of torture and violence against human rights defenders—a clear contravention of international humanitarian law used to stifle free speech and dissent.

Hebrew Studies Alumna and Her Husband Create Yiddish Lecture Fund

CJS thanks Phyllis Cytron (B.S. '69) and her husband Barry for their generosity in creating a fund to support lectures focused on Yiddish language, culture, and history.

Phyllis, a retired curriculum specialist, grew up hearing Yiddish spoken at home and went on to major in Hebrew at the UW, with minors in English and History. To this day she is grateful to the late Professor Menahem Mansoor (1911 – 2001), who founded the Department of Hebrew and Semitic Studies and helped prepare countless students for their futures. Barry, a rabbi, taught religious studies at Macalester College in Minnesota and served as a college chaplain.

The couple share their reflections on what Jewish studies has meant in their lives and what they hope to achieve through the new Phyllis W. and Rabbi Barry D. Cytron Lecture Series.



Phyllis and Barry Cytron

PHYLLIS: Because my mother's parents lived with us, I grew up hearing Yiddish spoken. When, as a youngster, I went off to religious school, I quickly realized how much the Yiddish vocabulary spoken every day in our home was in fact the Hebrew I was beginning to study: change an accent here, or the sound of a vowel there, and I found myself at home.

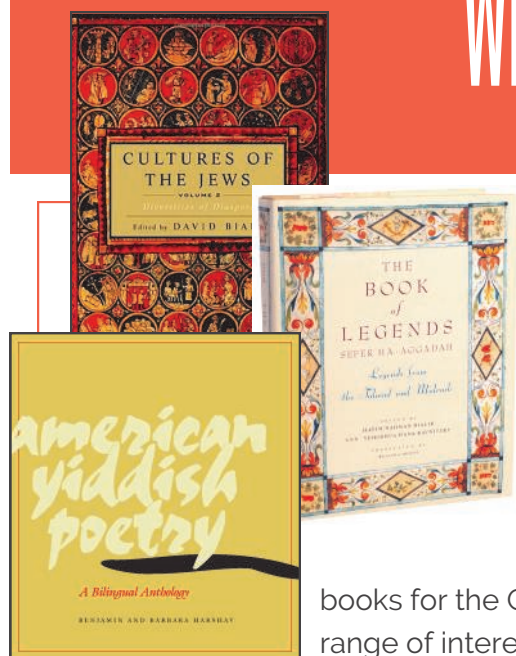
I have continued to study Yiddish as an adult learner. It's not just the remarkable diversity of Yiddish culture I appreciate. I especially value how Yiddish writers, immersed in the traditional idiom of the faith and its values, also contested it as they sought to redefine Jewish identity. From their struggles emerged the varieties of ways modern Jewish life found expression, whether through socialism, secular humanism, or types of Jewish national possibility. We anticipate that this lecture series will help sustain the University of Wisconsin in its commitment to Yiddish culture and language and widen the lens of the Jewish experience.

I am fortunate that the Jewish Day School of St. Paul, where I first taught and then served as its curriculum specialist, was committed to full integration of general and Jewish studies. Gifted colleagues in social studies, literature, art, and music were encouraged to develop lesson plans that incorporated the broad range of the Jewish historical and cultural experience into every facet of the discipline they were teaching.

BARRY: My years of rabbinic training, and the nearly 25 years it led me into as a congregation rabbi, was almost exclusively focused on the classical religious tradition and its texts. During my first stint as a rabbi, I had been able to obtain an advanced degree, which permitted my transition to the college classroom. During the two and a half decades I taught religious studies at Macalester College, I came to realize that my seminary's religiously centered training, invaluable though it was, reflected only partially the much larger world of Jewish history and culture. The sheer variety of ways Jews have lived, thrived, and survived – and the literature they created in response to their individual and collective experiences – has been at the heart of what I have studied and taught.

Increasingly, I have come to cherish the diversity of ways Jewish life and its ethical teachings find contemporary expression. And meeting, teaching, and working alongside bright young college students, who prioritize new ways of thinking about identity and culture, has been not only eye-opening, but career-defining. Increasingly, I think the Talmud gets it right when it teaches: *"I have learned much from my teachers, more from my colleagues, and the most from my students."*

WHAT ARE THE MUST-HAVE BOOKS FOR



This year saw the opening of a new space within Jewish Studies where our students can study and meet. Celebrating three generations of a family that has deep roots at the UW–Madison, the Bernie D. and Sandra K. Goldstein Family Lounge includes a library with groundbreaking scholarship and textbooks assigned in Jewish Studies courses.

We asked our faculty what they consider must-have books for the Goldstein library. Their recommendations reflect the wide range of interest and expertise at the UW–Madison.

Amos Bitzan, Frances and Laurence Weinstein Assistant Professor of History

Koren Talmud Bavli Noé edition
With translated commentary and explanations by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz

I believe that to understand Jewish history, including the modern period, one needs to have done at least some study of the Talmud. Its content and the modes of study that have been applied to it were and continue to be formative for Jewish culture. I recommend this particular set because it is an excellent and beautifully printed bilingual (Hebrew/Aramaic-English) edition that can help make the Talmud familiar to an uninitiated reader.

Marina Zilbergerts, Lipton Assistant Professor of Eastern European Jewish Literature and Thought

The Book of Legends/Sefer Ha-Aggadah: Legends from the Talmud and Midrash
Hayyim Nahman Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzky, translated by William G. Braude

This is a classic compilation of midrash and rabbinic literature, retold and organized thematically by two great Hebrew writers. Since it is organized by topics, it will serve as an excellent resource and starting point for students looking to draw on traditional Jewish texts for their research.

Adam Stern, Assistant Professor (German, Nordic, & Slavic)

Perceptions of Jewish History
Amos Funkenstein

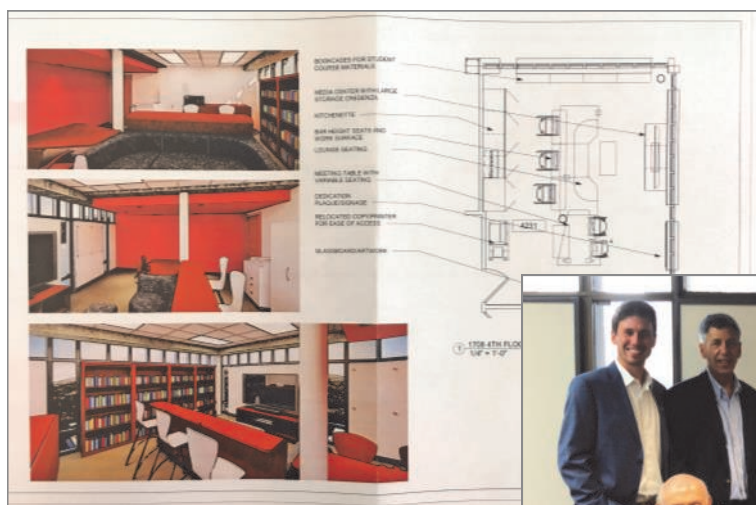
This is a collection of important essays by one of the most prominent and creative Jewish historians of the twentieth century. It includes reflections on a wide array of issues, ranging from the Bible to medieval Jewish exegesis to modern Jewish thought. It also contains Funkenstein's influential contribution to debates about Jewish history and Jewish memory. I assigned selections for my undergraduate course Moral Philosophy and the Holocaust, offered this spring.

Steven Nadler, William H. Hay II Professor & Evjue- Bascom Professor in Humanities

The Collected Works of Spinoza
Benedictus (Baruch) Spinoza, translated and edited by Edwin Curley

Spinoza is one of the most important philosophers in history. He is also a major (if controversial) figure in the Jewish intellectual tradition. These two volumes contain his main philosophical writings—the *Ethics*, the “scandalous” *Theological-Political Treatise*, and the *Political Treatise*—along with other writings and his complete correspondence.

STUDENTS IN JEWISH STUDIES?



Left: Goldstein Family Lounge from conception to completion

Sunny Yudkoff, Assistant Professor (German, Nordic, & Slavic; English)

American Yiddish Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology
Benjamin and Barbara Harshav

This collection changed the field of American Yiddish studies by opening up the world of modernist Yiddish poetry to English readers. Its massive scope—nearly 800 pages!—offers an immersive experience into the electrifying, political, avant-garde, and linguistically sensitive world of Yiddish verse of the twentieth century.

Rachel F. Brenner, Elaine Marks Professor of Jewish Studies

The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies
Martin Goodman, editor

Cultures of the Jews
David Biale, editor

The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Ethics and Morality
Elliot N. Dorff and Jonathan K. Crane, editors

These are very well written and flawlessly edited volumes which cover practically every aspect of Jewish thought, culture, religion, and history. The crystal-clear style of the articles makes them accessible to a wide range of students of Jewish studies, including undergraduates. They also provide an excellent source of knowledge to senior auditors of our courses.



Front row: Marvin Conney BS '50, Lenora Goldstein BS '69, Bernie Goldstein BBA '49. Back row: Joshua Goldstein BA '15, Stewart Goldstein x '82, Tony Michels, Jordan Rosenblum

Jordan Rosenblum, Belzer Professor of Classical Judaism and Max and Frieda Weinstein-Bascom Professor of Jewish Studies.

Maimonides: The Life and World of One of Civilization's Greatest Minds
Joel L. Kraemer

I read this book back when I started teaching Introduction to Judaism. I wanted to fill in some potential gaps in my knowledge, so I chose a few books to read each summer that focused on areas that weren't my specialty. I really liked this book because it is also a meditation on the craft of historical research and writing. Given the purpose of this library, I wanted to choose a book that not only taught facts but represented a pedagogical model for how we take texts—for example, letters written to and by Maimonides, or manuscript edits in his own hand—and turn them into a coherent narrative of historical events.

From Aspiring Virologist to Religious Studies Professor: Introducing CJS Faculty Affiliate Cara Rock-Singer

At the beginning of the Spring 2020 semester, Assistant Professor Cara Rock-Singer was teaching a course on Religion, Science, and Medicine when she started seeing reports about an outbreak of a new virus in China. Within weeks, the global reaction to the disease was unfolding in real time and illuminating many of the themes she had built into her course syllabus. As the U.S. and other countries began to announce travel bans, Rock-Singer's class was discussing ideas about contagion, borders, impurity, and foreignness. While the news media detailed the hazards faced by doctors, nurses, and caregivers, she and her students were talking about the meaning of care and connectiveness.

"I was very primed to be thinking about these things," says Rock-Singer. As a molecular biology major at Princeton, she had been an "aspiring virologist" with a longstanding interest in the flu. But while she loved biology, she did not relish the prospect of spending all her time in a laboratory. Prompted in part by a course on modern Jewish intellectual history, she began to gravitate toward the humanities. After college she went on to receive a Ph.D. in Religion at Columbia and a postdoctoral fellowship in the Jewish Studies Program and the Department of Science and Technology Studies at Cornell.

Rock-Singer is now an assistant professor in the Religious Studies Program and a faculty

affiliate in Jewish Studies, Gender and Women's Studies, and the Holtz Center for Science and Technology Studies. In her research she draws on her broadly ranging expertise to explore the intersection of religion and science. Using ethnographic and historical methods, Rock-Singer examines the ways in which Jews in the United States invoke religion, science, gender, and sexuality to define and transform Judaism. She is particularly interested in Jews' creative engagement with the ritual bath (*mikveh*), which she says some women are now reclaiming as a kind of feminist activism. Rock-Singer also studies how Jews today are combining public health campaigns, biomedical therapies, and Jewish ritual to facilitate healing and to cope with medical issues such as breast cancer and Jewish genetic conditions.

Many of her pre-med students in Religion, Science, and Medicine have remarked on how the course has changed their understanding of their future profession. She found their appreciation of the experience particularly gratifying. "It was incredibly intense," she recalls, "but it made undeniable the value of the humanities."



Cara Rock-Singer

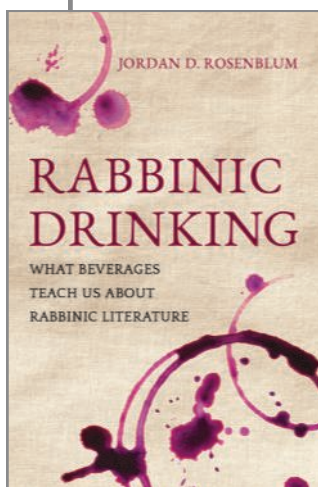
In conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, **Chad Goldberg** is co-organizing a preconference on the sociology of antisemitism, together with Arnold Dashefsky, Professor Emeritus of Sociology and Judaic Studies at the University of Connecticut. Later this year Goldberg's book *Modernity and the Jews in Western Social Thought* (University of Chicago Press, 2017) will be the focus of a special review symposium in the *Journal of Classical Sociology*.

In March **Tony Michels** delivered the Grass Lecture in Jewish History at the University of Florida on the topic "Is America 'Different?' Antisemitism and The Belief in American Exceptionalism." The previous summer he taught a three-week course on the immigrant Jewish experience in America, sponsored by the Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership in Chicago. Classes were held at the North Suburban Synagogue Beth El in Highland Park.

In February **Adam Stern** offered a "master class" at Wesleyan University on a key chapter of Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Earlier in the year he participated in a conference on Italian Jewish writer and Holocaust survivor Primo Levi (1919 – 1987). Stern presented a paper on Levi's poem "The Survivor" ("Il superstite").

This summer **Scott Straus** will teach an eight-week, online course on comparative genocide, with lectures delivered by podcast.

The forthcoming issue of *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* will carry an article by **Sunny Yudkoff** on the publication history of the poem "Siberia" (*Sibir*), written by Yiddish poet-partisan Avrom (Avraham) Sutzkever. Last fall Yudkoff published an article titled "Rabid Reading: Melancholia and the Mad Dog in S.Y. Agnon's *Temol shilshom*" in the journal *Jewish Social Studies*.



Jordan Rosenblum Publishes New Book

Professor Jordan Rosenblum has published a new book examining rabbinic literature through a focus on the religious laws associated with beverages. In *Rabbinic Drinking: What Beverages Teach Us about Rabbinic Literature* (University of California Press, 2020), Rosenblum offers close readings of representative texts about a variety of potables, including wine, beer, water, and milk. He also devotes significant attention to rabbinic conversations about breast milk and its relation to gender, health, and ritual purity. Regulations about which liquids can be produced and consumed, he explains, convey rabbinic values such as moderation and self-restraint, financial support of a husband for his wife, and interactions with non-Jews.

Designed as an introduction to rabbinic thinking, *Rabbinic Drinking* comes just a few months after *Feasting and Fasting: The History and Ethics of Jewish Food*,

which Rosenblum co-edited with Aaron S. Gross (University of San Diego) and Jody Myers (California State University, Northridge).

Rosenblum is the Belzer Professor of Classical Judaism and the Max and Frieda Weinstein-Bascom Professor of Jewish Studies. Tracing his first serious encounter with rabbinic literature to his freshman year of college, he compares the heady experience of reading these texts with another of his college discoveries: the sensation that came with drinking a little too much. Both activities, he jokes, produced "a feeling of euphoria and pleasant disorientation, followed by a splitting headache."

LECTURES AND EVENTS

CJS sponsored or co-sponsored these events in 2019 – 2020

October 2 – 3

The Kutler Lectures:

"Blind Justice: Jews and Hate Speech in the American 1950s"

"Beyond the Law: Jews and Antisemitism in the Global 1960s"

James Loeffler (University of Virginia)
Co-sponsored with the Department of History

October 15

"A German-Jewish 'University' in China During World War II"

Weijia Li, UW-Madison
Co-sponsored with the European Studies Program

October 28

"Desert in the Promised Land: The Politics and Semiotics of Space in Israeli Culture"

Yael Zerubavel (Rutgers University)
Co-sponsored with the Middle East Studies Program

October 29

Luncheon Seminar

"Re-enacting the Bible: Iconic Symbols and Subversive Narratives in Israel"

Yael Zerubavel (Rutgers University)

November 11 – 16

Auschwitz-Birkenau Exhibition

Co-sponsored with the Department of German, Nordic, & Slavic



James Loeffler



Avrom (Avraham) Sutzkever, from *Black Honey*

November 15

"Love Your Neighbor: Reconsideration of the Gospels at the Time of the Holocaust"

Rachel Brenner, UW-Madison
Co-sponsored with the Department of German, Nordic, & Slavic

November 19

Luncheon Seminar

"What to Do When Your Drunk Friend Pushes You into a River? What Beverages Teach Us about Rabbinic Literature"

Jordan Rosenblum, UW-Madison

December 5

The Pittsburgh Project: The Tree of Life Synagogue Shooting, a Year Later

Mark Oppenheimer
Co-sponsored with the Religious Studies Program
With support from the Kenneth and Adriana Wiseman Fund

February 24

Film Screening

Black Honey: The Life and Poetry of Avraham Sutzkever

Co-sponsored with Mayrent Institute for Yiddish Culture; Center for Russia, East Europe, & Central Asia; Department of History; and Department of German, Nordic, & Slavic Studies

March 10

Luncheon Seminar

"The Abrahamic Traditions: A Story of Braided Histories"

Charles Cohen, Professor Emeritus of History, UW-Madison

2019-2020 Fellowship, Scholarship, and Award Recipients

Andy Bachman Support Fund for Jews and Social Justice

Chagai Weiss

Robert and Lynn Berman Scholarship

Abigail Lewis

Jewish Civilization Award

Chagai Weiss

George & Sylvia Laikin Prize

Lotem Bassan

Ida and Isaac Lipton Essay Award

Chad Gibbs

Ida and Isaac Lipton Domestic Study Award

Samantha Crane
Erin Faigin
Ethell Gershengorin
Chad Gibbs
Dylan Kaufman-Obstler
Jacqueline Krass
Hannah Silver
Chagai Weiss

Ida and Isaac Lipton Major/Certificate Award

Nesha Ruther

Menachem Mansoor Award for Excellence in Hebrew

Samson Olanrewaju

Charles and Gayle Mazursky Student Support Fund

Jacqueline Krass
Abigail Lewis
Isabella Shaffer-Jaffery
Chagai Weiss

Robert and Beverly Natelson Family Award in Jewish Studies

Shai Goldfarb-Cohen

Richard and Debra Sincere scholarship in Israel Studies

Rachel Rosen
Chagai Weiss

David Sorkin Graduate Student Support Fund

Abigail Lewis

Marjorie and Harry Tobias Major/Certificate Scholarship

Hannah Silver

Lawrence A. Weinstein Distinguished Graduate Fellowship in Education and Jewish Studies

Dylan Kaufman-Obstler

Laurence and Frances Weinstein Undergraduate Award for Outstanding Academic Achievement in Hebrew

Jacob Henry
Azariah Horowitz

Weinstein-Minkoff Junior Year in Israel Scholarship

Samantha Crane
Hannah Silver




University of Wisconsin–Madison
Center for Jewish Studies
4223 Mosse Humanities Building
455 N. Park Street
Madison, WI 53706

(608) 265-4763

jewishstudies@cjs.wisc.edu

cjs.wisc.edu

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cjs.wisc.edu

