

University of Kentucky

Jewish Studies Program

Fall Newsletter

Volume 1 – Issue 1 – October 2013



Director's Welcome

It is with great excitement and enthusiasm that I step into my new role as Director of Jewish Studies 2013-2015. I first came to the University of Kentucky just four years ago, when the newly formed Division of Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Studies (WRD) hired five new colleagues to revise and implement a new first-year writing curriculum designed to foster written, oral, and digital literacy while also building and developing a new major. Although I'm relatively new to Lexington, my commitment to Jewish Studies and innovative undergraduate/ graduate education is longstanding and reflected in my research, teaching, and community commitments.

Before I joined the faculty here, I spent four years at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute where I taught writing and introduced their first-ever course about contemporary Israeli culture; one semester as a Hadassah Brandeis Institute scholar-in-residence at Brandeis University, where I worked to revise my first monograph *Stepping Into Zion: Hatzzaad Harishon, Black Jews, and the Remaking of Jewish Identity* (forthcoming from University of Alabama Press in spring 2014), and in 2000-2001, I spent the year living in Israel as a Dorot Fellow. These experiences have influenced and shaped the way I think about Jewish Studies as an exciting passport to learning about 4,000 years of Jewish history, culture, and diverse experiences. Working with our affiliate faculty housed in five separate colleges (Arts and Sciences, Fine Arts, Education, Medicine, and Engineering), I will use this vision to build and grow our historic Interdisciplinary Jewish Studies program, first established in 1996 by founding director Dan Frank.

Of course, the history of Jewish life at UK doesn't start in 1996—it dates back to at least 1942 when Zeta Beta Tau (a historically Jewish fraternity) opened the Alpha Iota chapter on UK's campus, the 25th chapter of ZBT in the nation! Working with students and faculty on campus, as well as alumni in the community, I'm hoping to trace and tell the story of this fascinating chapter of UK's Jewish past. Look for updates, as we gather more information. And mark your calendar for Nov. 1 when class of 1953 ZBT and Hillel



President, Gene DuBow will join us to celebrate Homecoming and the 60th anniversary of his graduation!

Jewish Studies at UK is undergoing an exciting period of growth. We've increased our faculty affiliates and advisory board members—extending our reach into five colleges. We've received more submissions for the Luckens Prize graduate essay competition than ever before. This year's annual lecture series is focused on the theme of "Redrawing the Boundaries of Jewish Identity," and we will have a minimum of eight speakers, lectures, and events this year.

And lectures aren't the only thing we're increasing. This semester we offered the most courses in UKJS history: lucky 7! Thanks to the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE) and the College of Arts and Sciences, Jewish Studies is hosting the 2013-2014 AICE Visiting Schusterman Scholar in Israel Studies, Professor Tikva Meroz-Aharoni, who has traveled all the way from Israel to join the faculty. Thanks to the AICE and Prof. Tikva Meroz-Aharoni's arrival, we've returned Modern Hebrew Language to the curriculum for the first time in more than a decade. The campus is so excited, the Kentucky Kernel ran a story about it! We are the only university in the Bluegrass to offer both modern Hebrew and Yiddish language courses simultaneously. In Spring 2014, we'll offer 8 courses with classes in Jewish/Muslim Encounters, the Bible as Literature, and the Jewish Graphic Novel among them. To stay updated as we continue to grow, please like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. I look forward to what promises to be an exciting year. See you at an event soon!

- Dr. Janice W. Fernheimer

Faculty News & Contributions



A Change of Pace and Fresh Scenery

I am teaching at the University of Kentucky for the 2013-2014 Academic School Year on behalf of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE) Program. The AICE Program is an excellent cooperation between Israel and the United States because it enables leading professors from Israel to come to the US to expose students to Israeli culture. Classes taught by AICE professors include various subjects covering Israeli art, translated literature, film, and political science. AICE professors maintain contact with each other throughout their tenure, and I am proud to represent the UK Jewish Studies Program on behalf of AICE.

I received a warm welcome from my colleagues upon arrival. I find my colleagues and students are both engaged in their studies. It is easy to teach Israeli culture classes to a group of curious students; it makes my teaching pleasant each day.

UK Jewish Studies is on its way to grow in the future. The program is reaching out to many students trying to promote interest in learning Hebrew and studying contemporary Israeli culture. I believe we will see an increase in the number of students enrolled in Jewish Studies courses.

Being active in the Lexington Jewish community is one of my top goals. On October 7th, I hosted an interview with acclaimed Israeli journalist and writer Ron Leshem. I will also speak at Temple Adath Israel on October 18th about the history of Ashkelon and the people who live there. I am very excited to see what the upcoming months hold.

- Dr. Tikva Meroz-Aharoni



“UK Jewish Studies is on its way to grow in the future...I believe we will see an increase in the number of students enrolled.”

Summer Spotlight: Sophie Roberts



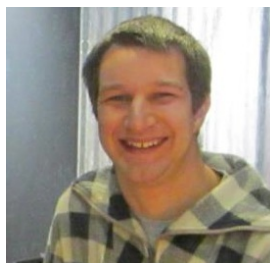
Professor Sophie Roberts spent her summer at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies.

Over the 2012-2013 academic year, Sophie Roberts was the Sosland Foundation Fellow at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington (USHMM), DC. During her time at the Center, she worked on her manuscript on citizenship and antisemitism in French colonial Algeria and researched her upcoming project, a comparative study of Jewish responses to Vichy in North Africa. While at the Museum, she presented her research in progress to the Museum staff and at a conference on Sephardim in the Holocaust at the University of Washington in Seattle. This summer, Dr. Roberts was a fellow in the Schusterman Summer Institute for Israel Studies at Brandeis University. She spent part of the summer in Israel as a program participant and extended her stay to conduct research on her new project. Dr. Roberts is excited to be back at UK after a year away. She is currently teaching a course titled "Jews, Citizenship, and Europe's Others: The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion in Modern Europe." In the spring, she will be

Hello, and thanks for reading the UK Jewish Studies Fall 2013 newsletter! I'm Scooter, and I'm honored to work with the Jewish Studies Program this semester. I am a Masters student in Diplomacy and Development, and even though I'm not enrolled in Jewish Studies courses I've found UKJS to be my second home at the university.

I grew up as a practicing conservative Jew here in Lexington. My Judaism became more important to me over time, long after my Bar Mitzvah. Imagine that: a Jewish student starts to identify after they are no longer forced to go to Hebrew School! I was an active member in the Hillel program at Butler University where I did my undergraduate studies, and that has led me to participate in the Hillel chapter here at UK.

I recognize that we do not have a large Jewish community here. Thriving, yes, but not dominant in absolute numbers. UK Jewish Studies enables me to connect the program with the Jewish community in Lexington. It is both a joy and challenge to strengthen both communities within the city, but by working together we are helping spread both academic and cultural Judaism within the Commonwealth's second largest city.



My name is Kate Hildabrand, and I could not be happier that you have taken time out of your busy schedule to read through our first Jewish Studies newsletter! This newsletter comes to you as the product of much love and toil since the beginning of the fall semester.

I come to the Jewish Studies Program with no religious or ethnic connections to Judaism. I am a Southern Baptist preacher's daughter and study Family Sciences, hoping to eventually pursue a career in cooperative extension through UK. What draws me to this program, however, is the inclusive vision that those in the program foster for it. It has great potential for growth and development, and I am so excited to not only expand my own personal knowledge of Jewish culture, but also to create an environment that connects students and community members to the rich, untapped history of Lexington's Jewish community.

My Life, as Told by Yiddish

Rafi Finkel

I first heard Yiddish at home, but my parents, both native Yiddish speakers, hardly ever used the language. My father would occasionally tell jokes to his childhood friends in English except for the Yiddish punchline. We did have some Yiddish folksong records: Mark Olf (on Folkways), Theodore Bikel (on Electra), Martha Schlamme (Vanguard).

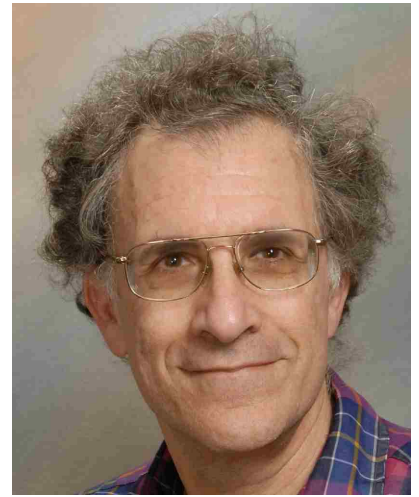
I actually started studying Yiddish around 1970 at the Hillel House at the University of Chicago; my principal teacher was Rabbi Max Ticktin. I continued studying under Shimke Levin when I was a graduate student at Stanford around 1972, and by 1975 I was teaching Yiddish as a Stanford credit course.

When my daughter Penina was born, I decided to speak with her only in Yiddish, a practice I continued several years later with my son Asher, and which I continue to this day. I brought Penina to one of the first Mame Loshn conferences, around 1995, at Circle Lodge in upstate New York, where I met the organizers of the yearly Yiddish Vokh retreat. Since then I have gone almost every year to Yiddish Vokh, a week of speaking only Yiddish; I have brought both Penina and Asher multiple times.

I try to enlarge my vocabulary by reading the Yiddish *Forverts* as well as various novels, including some by I. Bashevis Singer (*Der Sotn in Goray*, *Der Knekht*), his older brother I.J. Singer (*Di Mishpokhe Karnovski*), Sholem Asch (*Der Man fun Natseres*, *Ist River*, *Dos Shtetl*), and Der Nister (*Di Mishpokhe Mashber*), and Sholem Aleichem (*Gants Tevye der Milkhiker*, *Motl Peysi dem Hjazns*, *Yosele Solovey*, *Zumer-Lebn*, *Menahkem-Mendl*).

I have built various programs for entering Yiddish on the computer, most of which are available online at <http://www.cs.uky.edu/~raphael/yiddish/>, and which include a searchable dictionary.

This semester, I am teaching UK 300 – Elementary Yiddish to an enthusiastic class of six students. I'm also teaching programming language design, an advanced course in computer science. It's fun to switch between subjects, just as I switch between English and Yiddish in my daily life.



Raphael Finkel is a professor at the University of Kentucky and a faculty affiliate for the Jewish Studies Program.

Judeo-Spanish: A History and World Unto Itself



Dr. Haralambos Symeonidis is a professor in the Department of Hispanic Studies and an affiliate of the Jewish Studies Program.

Born and raised in the town of Drama in the Macedonia region of northern Greece, I began my lifelong foray into languages naturally enough, by learning my native tongue. From that beginning, though, there has been little pause in my acquisition of new grammatical forms and vocabulary lists.

In my youth, I decided to learn English after watching television shows broadcast in the language, and then I moved on to formal education and six years of studying French. During these school years, I was also required to take courses in classical Greek, and I also learned Latin.

Still, it took me some time to find just the right fit within this world of language exploration. I was taking both linguistics and language courses at the same time, but it wasn't until I followed a friend's suggestion that I learn Spanish that the pieces started coming together. Choices like this, followed almost on a whim, have opened up opportunities again and again throughout my academic career.

At this time, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Spanish culture was an unexplored novelty for me. I loved the whole philosophy of the language and the culture. In 1991, while working on my master's degree, I studied in Granada, Spain for a semester, an experience that improved my Spanish so much I sounded like a native

speaker. Spanish also played into my doctoral research on how contact with Greek had affected the Judeo-Spanish language of the displaced Spanish Jews who had lived in Thessalonica, Greece, for centuries. I came across this fascinating topic on Judeo-Spanish in a graduate course on "Spanish at the Time of the Discoveries." Immediately, I fell in love with a topic related to Spanish – I was planning to write my master's theses about – and Greek, my native language. So, when I was later asked by my professor about a possible topic to write my PhD thesis, there was no doubt from my side that Judeo-Spanish was going to play the main role. The professor who guided my thesis was also planning to propose this topic, so there was a positive surprise during our first meeting.

After four years of intensive research in Thessalonica, Greece and Granada, Spain I presented my PhD thesis with the title "Das Judenspanische von Thessalonika: Beschreibung des Sephardischen im griechischen Umfeld" (Judeo-Spanish of Thessalonica: description of ladino in the Greek context) at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Germany.

I love the teaching responsibilities that accompany research work in the academy. You have an opportunity to transmit your knowledge that you've been learning all these years. Students are wise to be transformed by that knowledge and by the love of languages that has been my passport to learning throughout my career.

New to the U: An Interview with Jim Ridolfo

Kate Hildabrand spoke to the newest affiliate of the Jewish Studies Program about his academic past, personal interests, and what brought him to the University of Kentucky.

Which university/ universities did you attend and for what program(s)?

Ph.D in Rhetoric and Writing. (2009). Michigan State University.

M.A. in Digital Rhetoric and Professional Writing. (2005).

Michigan State University.

B.A. in Philosophy, (2003). The University of Rhode Island.

I've also studied Modern Hebrew at the University of Haifa and Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

What is your specific area of interest in research?

In my research, I am interested in how texts move, and what the movement of texts means for the practice, theory, and study of rhetorical delivery. My first book, *The Available Means of Persuasion: Mapping a Theory and a Rhetoric of Multimodal Public* (Parlor Press 2012), explores the ways that public rhetoric has changed due to emerging technologies that enable us to produce, reproduce, and distribute compositions that integrate visual, aural, and alphabetic elements. My second book, *Digital Samaritans*, emerged from a 2008-2009 NEH Office of Digital Humanities Start-Up Grant to collaborate with the Samaritan community on a digital archive project at Michigan State University. The Samaritans, one of the smallest ethnic/religious groups in the Middle East, number only 760 and live in two communities with approximately 400 in Holon, Israel and 360 in Mt. Gerizim, Palestinian Authority. While the community itself is split into two non-contiguous geographic locales, a majority of its books and manuscripts are even further dispersed in over 70 archives and libraries across the world. This process of removal amounts to what Samaritan Studies scholar Jean-Pierre Rothschild characterizes as "a form of colonial appropriation," and this removal of manuscripts forms the basis upon which my collaboration with the Samaritans and book are based. In *Digital Samaritans*, I draw on interviews with Samaritan elders and archival materials to make the case for the place of rhetorical research in the digital humanities. I develop the rhetorical term *textual diaspora* to explain why some Samaritan elders prefer that their manuscripts remain in libraries, museums, archives, and private collections abroad. Beyond the fields of rhetoric and the digital humanities, this archival work has received attention in the *Lansing State Journal*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Tablet: A New Read on Jewish Life*, and



Jim Ridolfo is the newest member of the Jewish Studies faculty affiliates.

Hebrew editions of *Haaretz*, Israel's leading daily newspaper.

What other special interests/ hobbies do you have?

I enjoy baking, gardening, bicycling, hiking, and languages.

What led you to the University of Kentucky?

The University of Kentucky has been at the forefront of digital innovation in the humanities for some time. When I saw what UK had to offer in terms of exceptional faculty, top undergraduate and graduate students, and the quality of life in Lexington, UK was an easy choice.

What classes are you currently teaching?

WRD 112: Accelerated Composition and Communication

WRD 301: Style for Writers

What do you hope to bring to the university as a faculty member?

I a

m excited to work across two innovative programs and units: Writing, Rhetoric and Digital Studies (WRD), and UK Jewish Studies. I'm looking forward to growing both programs and providing students with new and exciting research opportunities.

What do you hope to contribute to the Jewish Studies Program as a faculty affiliate?

I'm very excited to be affiliated with the UK Jewish Studies Program. I have a range of scholarly interests that intersect with Jewish Studies and I am looking forward to participating in the program on curricula, speakers, and relationship building activities.

Student & Alumni Spotlights



A Comforting Place Jewish Studies minor Hadley Stein finds her home in this up-and-coming university program

I decided to become a Jewish Studies minor after I spent a year in Israel before coming to the University of Kentucky. I have lived in Lexington my entire life and have faced the difficulties of defining my Judaism within a small Jewish community. After living in Israel and being immersed in the most influential Jewish community in the world, I did not want those influences to end once I came back to Kentucky.

As a Jewish student, the Jewish Studies Program at the University of Kentucky offers a way to stay intellectually connected to your faith. You can learn about Judaism and Jewish history in a different and interesting way. I have now taken six different HJS courses and

they provide a breath of fresh air compared to my other, more traditional classes.

The Jewish Studies Program is a tight-knit group. There is always someone who is willing to answer any questions you may have about classes, scheduling, or about Jewish studies in general. This is what I believe makes us so unique on the UK campus: you become part of a family. Not only are the classes more interesting than most, the program offers many opportunities to get involved with the community. Furthermore, we sponsor many lectures and talks by renowned scholars in the field.

I am very happy with my decision to minor in HJS. It really has given me an experience that most students at the University of Kentucky do not get to have during their four years.



All Eyes on Alumni: Dorneshia Thomas

As a recent graduate from the interdisciplinary Jewish Studies Program, Dorneshia is keeping herself very busy! She is currently pursuing her PhD in Clinical Psychology at Howard University in Washington, DC, focusing her studies specifically on the psychology of religion and spirituality. When asked what her favorite thing was about being a member of the Jewish Studies family at UK, she responded, "What I enjoyed most about the program were the many great lectures I got to hear." We look forward to hearing a great lecture from you in the future, Dorneshia! Mazel tov!

October 21, 2013

Sarah Bunin Benor:

1:00 PM Niles Gallery

"Languages, Dialects, or Repertoires? Approaches to Ethnic Language with a Focus on Jewish English"

7:00 PM in W.T. Young Library Auditorium

"How Newcomers Learn the Language and Culture of Orthodox Judaism"

*Free parking available in the E lot next to W. T. Young Library

8:30 PM Public Reception and Book Signing at Tuska Center for Contemporary Art, Immediately following the lecture

465 Rose Street (Inside the Fine Arts Building)

November 1, 2013*Celebrate Homecoming with a Blast from the Past: Remembering UK's Jewish Heritage in Greek Life and Beyond*

2:00-3:00 PM

DMB Theatre in the Marksbury Building

Excited about Homecoming? Want to learn more about what it was like at UK 60 years ago?

Join class of 1953 President of Zeta Beta Tau and Hillel, Gene DuBow and the UK Jewish Studies for a trip down memory lane. Mr. DuBow will offer remarks on Jewish life at UK in the 1950s and there will be a brief film showcasing archival materials of UK over the years followed by open Q/A and light refreshments.

*Limited number of parking subsidies available for Structure 5 for off-campus attendees

November 12, 2013

Amy-Jill Levine

7:00 PM Transylvania University's Carrick Theater (Inside Mitchell Fine Arts Building)

*"How Jews and Christians Read Scripture Differently"***November 13, 2013**

Amy-Jill Levine

7:00 PM Transylvania University's Carrick Theater

"Hearing Jesus' Parables as Jewish Stories"

Amy-Jill Levine is University Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Professor of New Testament Studies, and Professor of Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School and College of Arts and Science ; she is also Affiliated Professor, Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations, Cambridge UK. Holding the B.A. from Smith College, and the M.A. and Ph.D. from Duke University, she has honorary doctorates from the University of Richmond, the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, the University of South Carolina-Upstate, Drury University, and Christian Theological Seminary. Her most recent books include *The Meaning of the Bible: What the Jewish Scriptures and the Christian Old Testament Can Teach Us*, co-authored with Douglas Knight, and the *Jewish Annotated New Testament*, co-edited with Marc Z. Brettler. A self-described Yankee Jewish feminist, Professor Levine is a member of Congregation Sherith Israel, an Orthodox Synagogue in Nashville, TN, although she is often quite unorthodox.

Have something that needs to be included in our next newsletter? Interested in getting more information about the program? Make sure to follow us on Twitter at @UKJewishStudies and to like us on Facebook to stay in touch!



Upcoming
Events for
Fall 2013

Jewish Studies Program

1303 Patterson Office Tower

University of Kentucky

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