

University of Kentucky

# Jewish Studies Program

Fall Newsletter

Volume 2 – Issue 1 – August 2014



# Director's Welcome

Dear Friends,

It is with great excitement and enthusiasm that I write to share the growth and development of Jewish Studies at the University of Kentucky. It was just two years ago that I began my work with program, first as Interim Director in 2012-2013, and last year in my role as Director of Jewish Studies. In that time, the program has already begun to expand in exciting ways—increasing our programming, course offerings, student participants, and social media presence.



Last year, we received an American Israeli Cooperative Enterprise grant, which enabled us to hire Prof. Tikva Meroz-Aharoni as the 2013-2014 Visiting AICE Scholar of Israel Studies to reintroduce modern Hebrew into the curriculum after more than a decade hiatus. In addition to teaching modern Hebrew language, Prof. Meroz-Aharoni also taught courses in contemporary Israeli literature and film and the Bible as literature. Alongside Hebrew, we also offered introductory Yiddish language courses for the first time ever, making us the only university in the Commonwealth to give students the opportunity to study both Hebrew and Yiddish language. Both Hebrew and Yiddish were such a success that both are being offered again this year. We are fortunate to be able to have Prof. Meroz-Aharoni here for another year, this time teaching Hebrew 201 as well as 101.

Our programming focus last year highlighted the diversity of Jewish people and was themed around “Redrawing the Boundaries of Jewish Identity.” Some of the highlights included a lecture from Shais MaNishtana Rishon, who is African American and Jewish and a performance from Sarah Aroeste who graced the stage at Natasha’s Bar and Bistro downtown and the Kentucky Foreign Language Conference with her contemporary take on Ladino rock.

This year will be just as exciting as we travel intellectually overseas to the Middle East. The College of Arts and Sciences has chosen the Middle East to be the focus of its Passport programming series, and Jewish Studies is cosponsoring numerous events to support this effort. Some of the highlights include performances from Vanessa Paloma (internationally acclaimed Ladion/Judeo-Arabic musician and researcher from Casablanca, Morocco) and Divahn (an all female middle eastern rock band), a focus on food from Afroculinarian Michael Twitty and cookbook author extraordinaire Claudia Roden, an emphasis on Israel from Prof. Ilan Troen (of Brandeis and Ben Gurion Universities) and Prof. Shaul Kelner, author of *Tours that Bind* and Samaritan community leader Benyamim Tsedeka, and an exploration of Jewish life in Iraq from journalist and author Ariel Sabar. We hope you’ll join us for some of these exciting events.

In addition to these fabulous programs, this year we are launching the Jewish Heritage Fund for Excellence Scholars program, which enables us to offer scholarships to three very talented and intellectually engaged undergraduates who are minoring in Jewish Studies. If you’re interested in contributing to the growth and development of Jewish Studies at UK, please don’t hesitate to be in touch; I’d be happy to share more about our goals for the future. Email me at [jfernheimer@uky.edu](mailto:jfernheimer@uky.edu). Every contribution helps us to continue the great heritage of Jewish Studies and life at UK.

It’s going to be a wonderful year, and we look forward to seeing you at a program soon!

Best wishes,

Janice W. Fernheimer, Ph.D.

# Faculty News & Contributions



## Faculty Focus – Summer 2014 Edition

We have an amazingly talented faculty that is always ready to excite and surprise! Here is some of what they have been up to this summer.



**Jim Ridolfo**, Assistant Professor of Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Studies, traveled this summer to the Samaritan communities in Israel and the West Bank to complete revisions on his book, “Digital Samaritans” (advance contract with University of Michigan Press) and completing final proofs of the collection “Rhetoric and the Digital Humanities” (forthcoming from University of Chicago Press). While visiting the Samaritan communities, Ridolfo met with Samaritans about his ongoing work to digitize Samaritan manuscripts abroad. In the spring, he digitized three Samaritan manuscripts at Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati and has made copies of those manuscripts available to the 760 member Samaritan community. In the fall, he will be teaching WRD 112: Accelerated Composition and Communication for A&S Wired, and WRD 205: Intermediate Composition.

**Jeremy Popkin** spent a month in France, doing research in Paris and attending a conference in Strasbourg, where he was impressed by the large local synagogue, located on one of the city's main public squares. Popkin will teach History 323: The Holocaust, in spring 2015. He is also organizing a conference comparing Asian and Jewish notions of obligations to strangers, which will be held at UK on Feb. 26-27, 2015, in conjunction with an exhibition about the Jewish refugees from the Holocaust who were sheltered in Shanghai during World War II. The exhibition and conference are being sponsored by the Confucius Institute.



**Haralambos Symeonidis** spent his summer in Buenos Aires, where he taught two graduate courses for Middlebury College. His unique cultural experiences enabled him to teach classes on “Spanish in the World” and “Bilingualism and Language Contact.” He is also currently working on an article on the vocabulary of Judeo-Spanish which is going to be published in a volume on Judeo-Spanish in Germany.

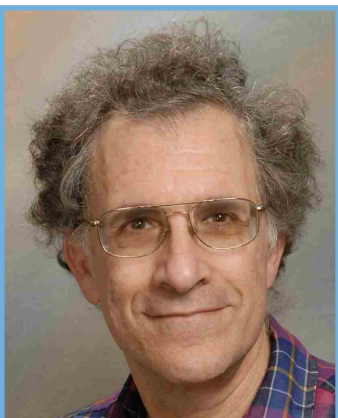
## Faculty Focus, continued

During the summer and for the academic year 2014-2015, Professor **Sophie Roberts** was a Visiting Scholar in the Jewish Studies Program at Stanford University in California. While there, she finished her manuscript in progress on citizenship and antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria. She also began writing her next manuscript, which is on Jewish responses to Vichy in North Africa.



**Gretchen Starr-LeBeau** used some of her time this summer to research inquisitorial prosecutions of Jewish converts in the 1630s. She is also excited about the opportunity to teach the second half of Jewish Civilization again in Spring 2015. She is already preparing some new materials for student projects on the Inquisition, and adding more movies to her collection for the evening extra-credit film series that accompanies the course.

This summer, in addition to being chair of the History Department, **Karen Petrone** worked on a number of research projects. The first of these took her to Italy for an editorial meeting with the other co-editors of the Palgrave Handbook of Mass Dictatorship. While in Italy, she toured the synagogue in Siena and saw the breathtaking Florence synagogue, but alas, only from the outside. She is currently proofreading a volume that she is co-editing to be published by Indiana University Press this fall: *Everyday Life in Russia Past and Present*. She and her husband, Ken Slepian, are planning to write the last chapter of their textbook for Oxford University Press: *Pages From History: Russia and The Soviet Union*. The original plan was to end in the year 2000, but then Putin invaded Ukraine and both the authors and the editor decided that it was necessary to add a Putin chapter!



**Raphael Finkel** is helping organize the 16th Conference of the International Association of Yiddish Clubs, which will take place in November 2014. He will be presenting a workshop there entitled: "lomir lernen a blat sholem-aleykhem" (Let's study a page of Sholem Aleichem). Conference details are at <http://yiddishclubs.org>. He is also registered to attend the "yidish vokh" (Yiddish Week) in mid-August. One of his Yiddish students from Fall 2013, Jeremy Brown, is currently attending the Yiddish Farm Summer Program (details at <https://yiddishfarm.org/summerprogram.html>). He is also beginning to learn Syriac, which closely related to Aramaic. And, as always, he is conducting a weekly Talmud study group on Friday mornings at Ohavay Zion Synagogue. They are studying Bavo Metsio. Newcomers are always welcome!

In addition to continuing her work as Director of Jewish Studies and Associate Professor of Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Studies and working in her new role as Co-Chair of the College of Arts and Science's Passport to the World: Year of the Middle East, **Janice Fernheimer** worked on several research projects this summer. She proofed the manuscripts for two forthcoming books: her monograph *Stepping Into Zion: Hatzaad Harishon, Black Jews, and the Remaking of Jewish Identity* (available from University of Alabama Press in October) and an edited collection, *Jewish Rhetorics: History, Theory, Practice* (available from University of Brandeis Press in November) which she and Professor Michael Bernard-Donals of University of Wisconsin-Madison co-edited and completed with the help of many talented contributors, including UK's very own Jim Ridolfo. She continued research on a new project, tentatively titled *America's Chosen Spirit*, a historical-fiction graphic novel she and co-author JT Waldman are writing. The project investigates the historical influence of Jewish people on the Kentucky Bourbon industry and tells the story from the point of view of a plucky, innovative Jewish female distiller/rectifier and her family. She began work on an article that investigates the valuable voice North American graphic narratives about Israel offer to the Jewish public sphere, and traveled to Israel to interview and collect oral histories from Israeli Black Panthers such as Charlie Biton, Cochavi Shemesh, and Koko Deri who paved the way to greater recognition and rights for Mizrahi Jews in Israel. She also worked with the Jewish Heritage Fund for Excellence and Jewish Studies Affiliate faculty member Beth Goldstein to create an application process for the first cohort of JHFE Undergraduate Scholars, who will begin their work in Jewish Studies this fall. In the fall she will be teaching two courses related to the Year of the Middle East: WRD/ENG 401: Comics and Conflict in Israel/Palestine and AS 100: Visualizing War and Peace in the Middle East: Focus on Israel/Palestine.



**Jonathan Glixon** had the pleasure of returning to Venice (Italy, not California) for his usual research trip to work on Venetian music before 1800. Although his research doesn't involve Jewish topics, he always takes the opportunity to spend time with the Venetian Jewish community, which traces its history, and even some of its current families, back more than 500 years. He attended services in the beautiful 450-year old Spanish synagogue, studied torah and talmud with the locals, and joined them all for daily meals on Shavuot. He also had the privilege of being there for the first two shabbats with their new rabbi. Next spring he will be teaching a class in the Honors Program on a Jewish topic: HON 151: Jews and Christians in Medieval and Renaissance Europe.

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Good luck to all of our faculty members for the 2014-15  
academic year!

# 2013 - 2014: The Year in Review



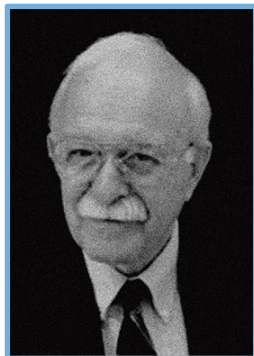
The 2013-2014 academic year was one of much excitement for the University of Kentucky and for the Jewish Studies Program! From hosting a visiting scholar from Israel to collaborations with campus organizations such as The Martin Luther King, Jr. Cultural Center to hosting Lexington's first-ever Ladino rock concert, there has never been a better time to be a Wildcat or #seebluehebrew!



**August 2013** – UK Jewish Studies welcomed Dr. Tikva Meroz-Aharoni as a visiting professor for the 2013-2014 school year. Tikva joined us through the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE), and was an invaluable resource to our students and faculty. She will continue to serve on our staff through the 2014-15 school year.



**November 2013** – In honor of Homecoming at UK, the Jewish Studies Program hosted Gene DuBow (1953), former Zeta Beta Tau and Hillel President, for a trip down memory lane. Students, staff, and alumni enjoyed hearing personal stories of what our university looked like at a different time in history.



**THANKSGIVUKKAH**  
ONCE IN A LIFETIME

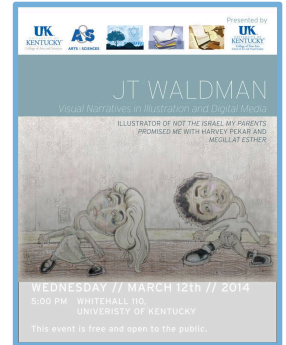
**November 2013** – In a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence, the first day of Hannukkah fell on Thanksgiving. Social media users were quick to dub this new holiday “Thanksgivukkah” and expelled a lot of effort into crafting a celebration thousands of years in the making. Y2K had nothing on



**February 2014** – In conjunction with the MLK Center at UK, Jewish Studies hosted Shais “MaNishtana” Rishon and Gilienne “Shoshana” Rollins-Rishon for our first-ever Night of African-American Culture. The Rishons shared about the complications and triumphs they have experienced in embracing their biracial identities and held a Q&A session with the audience after their lectures.



**March 2014** – Graphic novelist JT Waldman visited UK as an artist-in-residence. His visit was sponsored by the Division of Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Media as well as Jewish Studies, during which he gave three separate presentations and conducted research with Dr. Jan Fernheimer for the Jewish Bourbon Project.



**April 2014** – Jewish Studies hosted international Ladino rock superstar Sarah Aroeste for a short lecture on campus and a concert at Natasha's Bistro in downtown Lexington. Sarah raved about many great experiences during her visit, from tasting bourbon to chatting with UK President Dr. Eli Capilouto. She wrote, “Who would have thought! Being in conversation with him and Dr. Fernheimer was certainly a highlight of my visit. It was very special to hear how connected and proud the President is of his Sephardic roots.”



**May 2014** – Congratulations to our graduates!

**June 2014** – The Jewish Studies Program was awarded an \$85,000 grant through the Jewish Heritage Fund for Excellence that enabled students minoring in Jewish Studies to apply for one of five available scholarships to assist with their academic studies. This is the largest grant our program has received since its inception in 1996. What a way to ring in the 2014-2015 school year!

# Student & Alumni Spotlights



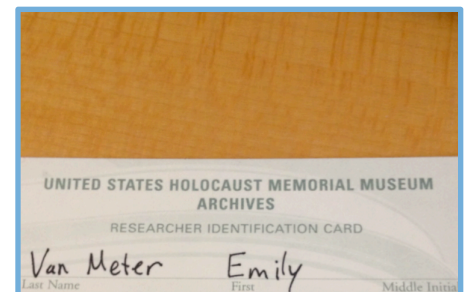
## Algerian Jews in France: My Summer Research Project

Summer 2014 Research Award recipient **Emily VanMeter** shares a few experiences from her time at the United States Holocaust Museum

I recently conducted a research project on Algerian Jews' immigration to France after the Algerian War of Independence, which spanned from 1954-62. Prior to the conflict, there were 140,000 Jews in Algeria, and by the end of the conflict, there were fewer than 5,000—Jewish life in Algeria was abolished completely in the 1970s. When Prof. Sophie Roberts made me aware of this situation, I was perplexed. The plight of these Jewish quasi-refugees seems to be completely overlooked by all, even Jewish historians. However, through my research, conducted just as much in French as in English, I learned that this was not always the case, but rather that there was a collective forgetting of the French population. This severing of ties from historical colonialism led to the neglect of Algerian immigrants as a whole, not just the Jewish population. African Jewry had a huge impact on French Jewish society despite these conditions, however. France is now the only state outside of Israel to have equal Ashkenazi and Sephardic populations. This merging of two previously separate Jewish identities has created a French-Algerian-Jewry within France, and this distinct identity perpetuates the Algerian Jewish heritage, even as Jews are no longer welcome in the Muslim state of modern Algeria.

Last semester, I formulated this idea completely unaware that one of my professors, Dr. Sadia Zoubir-Shaw of the French and Francophone Studies department, was actually Algerian, having immigrated to France after the War of Independence. I was able to meet with her and talk about the notions of religion/cultural identity in colonial Algeria and the roles that those identities might have had in the decision to leave. That was an amazing and informative few hours that gave me better context for beginning my project.

I was then, thanks to the research grant I received, able to study at the United States Holocaust Museum, using their archives and audio recordings to peruse documents and interviews that I might otherwise have not been able to access. It was amazing being able to go through roll after roll of microfilm and access their digital archives. Their research library is nothing short of impressive, and being able to experience first-hand the documents that I had read so much about made the context of conflict and decolonization so much more real to me. It was, to say the least, a life-changing experience, and definitely made me value historical research that much more.



A snapshot of Emily's official identification card to the US Holocaust Museum



## Touring Jewish History

Zolondek fellow **Sibel Solagan** remembers her favorite parts of a summer spent traveling and absorbing cultures

This past June, I was absolutely honored to receive the Zolondek Summer 2014 Travel Grant in order to study about the Holocaust. The travel grant allowed me to visit five main cities: Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin, Vienna, and Prague. In each city, I was required to visit certain monuments, museums, and synagogues with many sharing information about the horrors of the Holocaust.

The most surprising thing that I learned in my trip was how a majority of the synagogues in Berlin weren't necessarily destroyed during World War II, but rather they were simply taken down to make more living space for the growing population after the war. Many memorials commemorating these synagogues are scattered throughout Berlin. I was able to visit the New Synagogue, which was one of the only synagogues to survive the war. Today, however, it has been turned into a museum of Jewish history in Berlin.



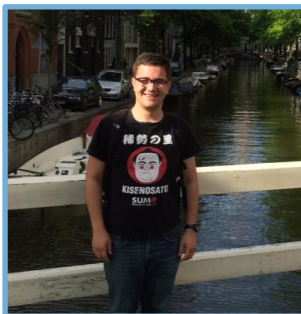
In addition, I was impressed particularly with Amsterdam's Dutch Resistance Museum. The Dutch Resistance Museum was intriguing simply because unlike other sites, it gave a glimmer of hope for its visitors to see how a people tried to fight against the Nazi oppression. This museum really focused on the questions that Dutch citizens were asking themselves at each step of German occupation throughout Holland. What was most fascinating was the innovation of the Dutch people to try to protect their friends, neighbors, and family from the atrocities that possibly lay ahead. Dutch citizens worked hard to create underground newspapers that were produced in their own homes to spread information among the resistance movement. Others recreated identical fake identification cards for their fellow Jewish citizens. For me, remembering that this was a time when today's technology was nonexistent made all of the work even more impressive.

Overall, this trip was a wonderful learning experience. The places that I saw and the people that I met in my travels will forever stay with me. I hope that by partaking in this experience, I will be able to continue to educate others about the Holocaust and that I can be motivated by the words of one of the most innocent victims of the Holocaust:

*"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." – Anne Frank*

## The Traumatic Reconciliation of Memory and Reality

**Evan Sweet**, 2014 Zolondek Fellow, recounts memories from a long journey



The minibus ride is uneventful; it's still quite early (we left at 9:00am) but the bus is full of all sorts of people, all going to the same destination, and listening to the same Polish Top 40 hits the bus driver is playing on the radio; oblivious or desensitized to the harrowing emotional journey his passengers will embark on after they leave his coach. Largely silent low conversations can be heard between travel companions. Sometimes laughter would escape the silence and an annoyed glare would be sent in their direction. Already a full three weeks into our journey across Europe visiting sites of the Nazi oppression and of former Jewish civilization, my travel partner, Jonathan, and I had become hyperaware that the presence of others frequently interrupted the importance or "sacredness" of the spaces we visited.

When one arrives in Krakow, offers of full package tours of Auschwitz are advertised by guides on the street as well as in every hostel at check-in. At least 15 different flyers advertise trips for around 100 PLN (about \$33). These groups provide transport, food, (*cont.*)

## Traumatic Reconciliation, cont.

and guided tours of the camp; but also have you back on the bus at a comfortable hour regardless of your desire to stay longer. (Jonathan and I declined an organized tour in favor of an independent trip). Disembarking from the minibus, you must walk through a large parking lot full of private cars, but more notably chartered tourist busses. School children filed out of coaches, lined up in front of the main office to be counted by their teachers and pushed through turnstiles and into a staging area where tour leaders who will guide them through the camp's horrors meet them. Independent travelers like Jonathan and myself are required to join guided tours to combat the overcrowding and large numbers of visitors to the death camps. You are quickly given a headset, and placed with a group of about 20 other individuals, with the only commonality between you and the others being language. Our group was a mix of Americans, some Australians and Brits; an unfriendly Canadian woman who had stayed at our hostel, two Japanese hipsters, and a mix of other English speakers. As far as Jonathan and I could tell, we seemed to be the only Jewish members of our tour group.

The tour begins and the voice of our tour leader comes through the headphones that dangle around our necks. Although she is informative, very quickly I lower the volume and keep her as a somber voice in the back of my head. Walking towards the entrance of Auschwitz, I notice the faces of those returning from the tour are markedly different than the faces of those just entering. Clearly, walking through the camp changes one's emotional state: a profound experience for all who visit. Soon the tour arrives at the infamous gates "Arbeit Macht Frei" or "Work Will Set You Free" (Important: Many confuse this gate to the gate of Auschwitz-Birkenau, which has the rail line entering it and the "juden-ramp" where selection was done.) This is where the cameras first come out. Phones get pulled up as visitors begin framing the gate in front of the stark military barracks, which was the work camp of Auschwitz. Most people are taking photos just of the gate, but some travel partners take the gate with their companion in the foreground. I don't notice anyone taking a "selfie," but everyone knows how to be sneaky taking them. I did not take a photo of the gate, although the thought did cross my mind; but others taking photos of this important piece of Nazi oppression did not cross my mind as odd.

My opinion of the appropriate use of photography steadily changed as our tour progressed. The first portion of the tour went through the official State exhibit, which appears to have been created in the 1950's at the latest. The exhibits are largely mass collections of objects in large glass cases: thousands of suitcases labeled with family names piled on top of each other, a swimming pool sized mass of pots and pans, a pile of wire framed glasses, all brought by Jews and others killed in the camp's gas chambers. Jonathan points out how one can't really understand the vastness of the Nazi tragedy by looking at these cases upon cases of personal items because they are more like the "guess the number of marbles" charity games, the number is so abstract and vast it becomes inconceivable, precision is not the goal, but a gut feeling tells you how many marbles there are. In these exhibits, cameras are again pulled out and these vast collections of children's dolls are digitally catalogued, even while they lack context, as they are purely a fraction of the real number of glasses, which no longer have eyes to serve.

Only in one of these exhibits is photography banned. It's a narrow hallway on either side full of dirty/dark blonde to black hair, shorn from mostly Jewish women as they entered the camps and sent to Germany for use in cloth manufacturing. As this was the hair of victims, it was deemed sacred enough to be preserved from the photographic lens. Interestingly, this distinction acknowledges that there is a context for photography and that in certain places photography should be limited or banned. ■

*- The full version of Sweet's account will appear in a later publication.*

## Life on the Yiddish Farm

Summer Research Award recipient **Jeremiah Brown** gets a home-grown education in New York

I would like to begin this brief reflection by thanking the Jewish Studies department at the University of Kentucky for the financial aid that allowed me to participate in the Yiddish Farm program. I would also like to thank Dr. Raphael Finkel for bringing the program to my attention as well as providing me with the opportunity to learn the poetic language of the Ashkenazic Jews.

Yiddish Farm was a truly unique experience. Although many immersive language programs exist, the chance to learn Yiddish in an immersive environment is seldom found outside of Hassidic communities, such as Kiryas Joel. Yiddish Farm is unique in that it brings together a wide variety of individuals all of whom have a passion for learning and speaking Yiddish. Although there are opportunities to learn Yiddish in a classroom environment, Yiddish Farm allows students to speak and use Yiddish in day to day interaction. Yiddish Farm allowed me to learn Yiddish from an entirely different perspective as well as develop an appreciation for Yiddish as a living and evolving language, not just the literary language of Sholem Aleichem or Isaac B. Singer.

Located in Goshen, New York, Yiddish Farm offers not only language but also a chance to work and live in an immersive environment all while learning and using Yiddish. Growing up on a farm in rural Kentucky, I felt much more at ease in an agricultural environment. The farm grew wheat, garlic, as well as garden variety vegetables, all of which the students helped to grow and harvest. The program attracted a wide variety of students from many different places and backgrounds. The daily interaction we had with each other did not feel like students in a class together, but more like a small make-shift community. We all worked on a schedule that consisted of three work sites: Kitchen, Courtyard, and Field. Although the farm work was not the easiest, it provided us with an appreciation for the environment as well as the labor that goes into growing and harvesting crops. It also showed us that Yiddish is still a living language and can still be used for daily interaction from the home to the workplace.

The program is open to all that have an interest in learning and using Yiddish. Although I had studied Yiddish for two semesters prior to the program, the immersive environment allows even beginners to quickly become accustomed to and comfortable using Yiddish. Yiddish Farm allowed me the opportunity to learn Yiddish at a quick pace as well as retain what I learned due to the immersion aspect of the farm. I feel this once in a lifetime opportunity has greatly improved my Yiddish knowledge and ability, as well as giving me insight into Jewish cultural and religious customs and practices. I believe that the experience and knowledge I have acquired through the Yiddish Farm program will further benefit me in my independent studies on the Yiddish Language as well as Ashkenazic culture. I would highly recommend the program to anybody who also has an interest in learning Yiddish from a fast paced and hands-on approach. The program succeeds in not only teaching Yiddish to participants but also creating a community all connected by a passion for the Yiddish language. Although I will continue my studies in Yiddish, I feel that this has been the best opportunity to become comfortable speaking and using the language as a living language and not solely a literary one.



A sign at the entrance to Yiddish Farm, warning motorists to slow down

## The Metaphor: A Manuscript

Zolondek fellow [Jonathan Sarfin](#) shares an excerpt of a work composed during his summer of research and learning

A sea of corpses. Or, no, simply wave after wave of shorn hair swallowing up the beach. Coral reefs, suitcases stacked haphazardly one on top of the other, leather shoes dart like fish among them, and oh, it is so quiet here. It was, as always, a long fifteen minutes...

Those are the words of a fragment of a document written by a Sonderkommando that I executed this morning, prisoner number 304805, sentenced to death as part of camp-wide reprisals due to the activity of camp resistance. Twice I was unlucky – first, to have been picked to carry out the judgment and second, to have been ordered to oversee the disposal of the body. It is my own fault, for we choose our own misfortunes in this world, but I still feel unjustly burdened.



The execution of a prisoner is not uncommon, and, in fact, it was a fine morning – the sun was out and there were only a few clouds, wisps, in the sky. Roll call went quickly. The man did not put up a struggle as my comrades selected him from the mass of striped shirts which clothe empty slaves. He walked forwards, slow, strong, towards the wall. He began to speak, but I could not make out what he was saying; his gait, which I first perceived as deliberate but relaxed was perhaps meant to prolong his time in hell. My comrade struck him with the rifle butt. The prisoner opened his mouth but did not utter a cry as he fell to the ground. My comrade cursed him and then tried to drag him by the collar. The man, like some sort of watery mirage, returned to his feet and resumed his walk, and to me, he was shimmering, nearly translucent. His mouth was still open as though he was crying out in pain or transfixed by an unassailable horror, but he continued to approach me. This man was probably fifty and I think that once he must have been quite prosperous, for his body looked like fat and meat had been shaved off him. Now he was only bones and a round, protuberant stomach.

I chambered a bullet. He looked at me with his open mouth and I remember shivering, suddenly cold. I saw in my mind an image of a field, covered with snow, it must have been nearly five meters of snow, and I could see the wind blowing and resettling the top layer of snow, but yet it never looked any different. The plants were choking and dying, slowly, but they were helpless underneath the sea of snow.

I was engrossed in this image even as I remained aware of the prisoner kneeling down. The sound of his mouth closing dissolved the snow and the plants; the whole image floundered and disappeared. He turned his head and looked up at me and I, faithfully and without blinking, met his gaze. He turned away and began to speak. At first I thought he was saying the Shema, which I know by heart now, having heard it countless times, but as I began to recite it with him, as is my custom, I realized I was mistaken. Of the words he uttered, which were quiet enough so only I, I am convinced, could hear, I only recognized three: adonai, Yahweh, and gott, and only the last one is in my own tongue; it elucidated all his other words<sup>1</sup>. My ears grew very warm and my heart began to beat rapidly. He continued speaking as I leveled the gun at him, but I heard a little gasp, a minute pause, as the muzzle touched the base of his skull.

He spoke faster and faster, but more quietly, until I could barely tell that words were leaving his mouth. I turned to the commandant, who gave a curt nod. What was going through my mind in that moment? Now I cannot remember, but I suspect that it was a banal nothing. I pulled the trigger.

There was a flash of light and for an instant I ceased to exist. I felt my shoulders tense as though I was carrying a great load and I heard the prisoner whisper a word, one last word, with empty serene serenity. The word took his life with him as it escaped (*cont.*)

## The Metaphor, continued

into unreality. The light was gone and his lifeless corpse pitched forward, brainless, into the cobblestones, which, as a last indignity, shattered his nose. A great noise issued from hundreds of mouths, and I could not tell whether it was one of joy for the one who had served his plenitude and then escaped, or one of misery, a lamentation. Several rounds from a machine gun cut short the burst; I am still unclear about its nature.

The commandant signaled for the dismissal of the prisoners and they dispersed like a river of gray mud. The Sonderkommandos remained still; there were no trains arriving until the afternoon. I stepped over the body, the capacious stomach which dwarfed the rest, even in shrunken death, and called for two of the Sonderkommandos to take the body to the crematorium. The two thin, tall men with sunken eyes that were nearly black struggled to pick up the body. At first, they dragged him by the legs across the square, leaving a trail of blood. I did not like this. I told them to carry him. They hoisted him on their shoulders, a cold arm slung on each man's shoulder, as though he were still alive, merely wounded.

We walked towards the crematorium. I was fortunate that one of the Sonderkommandos collapsed – a brief respite for me. As I screamed at them, they began to walk again, but they did not have the strength to carry him – instead they dragged him, one holding his arms and the other, his legs, so that prisoner 304805 bent like a misshapen crescent, his swollen belly dragging on the ground. We walked very slowly, I could not help it – a grotesque procession, Sonderkommando, corpse, Sonderkommando, me; in my mind, an Arabian caravan navigating an infinite labyrinth, up to the knees in sand; me, bent double by the weight of my pack, carrying a secret treasure plundered from a neighboring kingdom; I do not even know what it is. ■

*- The full version of Sarfin's manuscript will appear in a later publication.*

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## All Eyes on Alumni: Congratulations, Graduates!

The interdisciplinary program in Jewish Studies is very pleased to congratulate **Danielle Kaye**, **Samuel Perry**, **Suzanna Mills**, and **Hadley Stein** on their graduation from the University of Kentucky last spring! Each student was presented a copy of the Norton Anthology of Jewish-American Literature as a parting gift and reminder of what they contributed as unique individuals in our small community. Join us in extending good wishes to these newest members of our alumni base. Mazel tov!



Danielle Kaye



Samuel Perry



Suzanna M. Mills



Hadley Stein

# Special Feature: Year of the Middle East



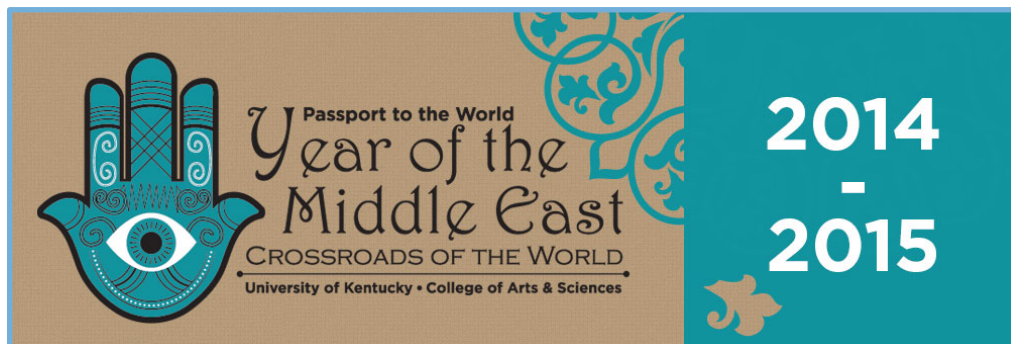
## Kosher/Soul? An Evening With Michael Twitty

Maggie Haskett

Michael W. Twitty, African American Jewish culinary historian, will present a program entitled **Kosher/Soul? Black Jewish Identity Cooking** Monday September 8, at 7pm in the Martin Luther King Center. Join the African American and Africana Studies and Jewish Studies programs, as well as the MLK Center for an “exploration of taste” as Twitty discusses the ways in which the Jewish and African Diasporas have shaped culture, identity and cuisine.

“Being African American and Jewish is for many a combination that many can’t wrap their heads around,” Twitty says. “However for thousands of Jews of color; having heritage, faith and family in both Diasporas—African and Jewish—and their many intersections means creating material, social and ideational lives that interweave identities and histories.” A self-described “historic interpreter interested in African, African American, African Diaspora, Southern, and Jewish foodways,” Twitty will showcase the ways in which Jewish and African American people have, “mediated otherness and oppression using what they eat as well as the global stories Diasporic foodways have to offer.”

Twitty has spoken and published widely on the culinary history of enslaved Africans in America, as well as on topics related to preserving traditional foods and cuisines. His work spans genres and his recent writing touches on everything from the unrest in Ferguson, MO to the reviving of heirloom pepper strains. From soul food hacks to the emotional impact of the ongoing Ebola outbreak in west Africa on African Americans newly discovering the details of their African ancestry, Twitty is an astute and focused observer of and participant in many aspects of American African Jewish culture. Twitty’s work, “includes substantial activism in the fields of social justice, food and culinary justice, environmental awareness, intergroup peace work and racial reconciliation.”



## UK Welcomes Vanessa Paloma

Maggie Haskett

Vanessa Paloma, Ladino musician and scholar, will visit the University of Kentucky for three performances on September 3rd and 4th. Accompanying herself on medieval harp and percussion, Paloma will present a variety of traditional Ladino music during her time in Lexington. Ladino is the hybrid Spanish-Judeo language of the Sephardic Diaspora. The UK Jewish Studies and International Studies programs and the departments of Gender and Women's Studies, Music, Modern and Classical Languages, Literatures and Cultures, along with Natasha's Bistro and Bar are pleased to welcome Paloma to town and to have her help kick off this year's Passport to the World program, "Year of the Middle East".



Ladino is the traditional Judeo-Spanish language of the descendants of the Jews expelled from Spain in the 15th century. It is primarily a mixture of Old Spanish and Hebrew, but Ladino also incorporates vocabulary from the many communities to which its speakers immigrated after the Spanish expulsion in 1492. Originally written in the Hebrew Rashi script, today Ladino is written in Latin, Hebrew, or Cyrillic scripts. Ladino helped communities across the Sephardic Diaspora to communicate with each other as well as to preserve culture and survive oppression and expulsion. Today, Ladino sustains rich segments of Sephardic culture, preserving tradition as well as incorporating cultural elements from the many places Sephardic Ladino speakers have settled over the centuries. Ladino language and music still permeates communities throughout the Mediterranean, across the Middle East, and around the world. Our very own President Eli Capilouto's grandparents spoke! We hope you will join us for one of Vanessa Paloma's performances and experience for yourself the beauty and power of the Ladino music Paloma shares with the world.

On September 3, Paloma will speak and perform at a special meeting of Dr. Ron Pen's Appalachian Music class. "While it may sound like a stretch to pair Ladino music with Appalachian music, they complement each other in remarkable ways, locally and globally as traditional culture sings through the haze of generic popular culture," says Dr. Pen, UK professor of Music, Director of the John Jacob Niles Center for American Music and Coordinator of the Division of Musicology and Ethnomusicology. The presentation will take place in the Niles Gallery of the Lucille Little Fine Arts Library, from noon until 12:50 and is free and open to the public.

Later that evening join us at 8pm at Natasha's Bistro and Bar for "Vanessa Paloma: 'Sepharad at the tip of Africa'". Paloma will share Judeo-Spanish Romances, Judeo-Arabic piyyutim and Hebrew prayers, bringing the intimacy of private singing and synagogue prayers to Lexington.

Finally, Paloma will help kick off this year's Passport to the World program, "Year of the Middle East". From noon until 2pm the entire community is welcome to join us on the lawn of the Student Center to listen to Ladino music and enjoy cultural food tastings from around the Middle East as we celebrate the beginning of the "Year of the Middle East".

Specializing in Judeo-Spanish women's music, Paloma has performed and lectured on five continents, including multiple appearances at the World Festival for Sacred Music in Los Angeles. Paloma currently resides in Casablanca, Morocco and is completing a doctorate at the Sorbonne's Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales as well as serving as Research Associate of the Hadassah Brandeis University. Paloma was a Senior Fulbright Research Scholar in Morocco during 2007-2008 and has studied in the US, Puerto Rico, and Colombia.

## September

**4<sup>th</sup> - Year of the Middle East Kick-off – Student Center Lawn**  
12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

**8<sup>th</sup> – Kosher/Soul? Black-Jewish Identity Cooking – MLK Center**  
7:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Michael W. Twitty, African American Jewish culinary historian, will present a program entitled **Kosher/Soul? Black Jewish Identity Cooking** Monday September 8, at 7pm in the Martin Luther King Center. Join the African American and Africana Studies and Jewish Studies programs, as well as the MLK Center for an “exploration of taste” as Twitty discusses the ways in which the Jewish and African Diasporas have shaped culture, identity and cuisine.

**10<sup>th</sup> – The Future of Islam – Singletary Center Recital Hall**  
6:30 PM

Professor John L. Esposito of Georgetown University joins us for an intriguing lecture on the future of Islamic faith and culture. He is the author of 45 books and monographs and is the Founding Director of Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown.

**30<sup>th</sup> – Start-Up Army: Military Entrepreneurs and the Evolution of Israel’s Special Operations Forces – W.T. Young Library Auditorium**  
7:00 PM

A lecture with Ami Pedahzur. Check the Jewish Studies website for more information as this event approaches.

## October

**27<sup>th</sup> – Pilgrimage in a Tourist Age: The Case of Birthright Israel – W.T. Young Library Auditorium**  
7:00 PM

A lecture with Shaul Kelner. Check the Jewish Studies website for more information as this event approaches.

**30<sup>th</sup> – Papirosen: Una Pelicula de Gaston Solnicki – Worsham Theater**  
7:00 PM

Join us for a free screening of “Papirosen” as a collaboration between UK’s Late Night Film Series, Jewish Studies, and Hispanic Studies. Matt Losada writes, “It’s a very interesting work, a kind of home movie/documentary that mixes footage from various decades to explore the Jewish experience in Argentina through several generations of a single family.” We look forward to seeing you there for the free screening!

## November

**10<sup>th</sup> – The Significance of Being First; Competing: Jewish and Arab Discourses – TBA**  
7:00 PM

A lecture with Ilan Troen. Check the Jewish Studies website for more information as this event approaches.

**17<sup>th</sup> – My Father’s Paradise: How a Jewish Kid from Los Angeles Traveled to Wartime Iraq in Search of Roots, Identity, and His Father’s Improbable Life Story – TBA**  
7:00 PM

A lecture with Ariel Sabar. Check the Jewish Studies website for more information as this event approaches.

For more details on the Year of the Middle East at UK, check out this podcast on our website:  
<http://jewishstudies.as.uky.edu/podcasts/get-your-passport-ready-professors-year-middle-east>

We hope to see you soon!

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 like us on Facebook to stay in touch!



Upcoming  
Events for  
Fall 2014

Jewish Studies Program

1303 Patterson Office Tower

University of Kentucky

Lexington, KY 40506