

FRANKELY SPEAKING



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Joshua Scott at the Huqoq
Excavation project in Israel.

Lessons from the Ancients

By **Jeffrey Veidlinger**, Director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies and Joseph Brodsky Collegiate Professor of History and Judaic Studies

What can we moderns learn from the ancients? This is one of the many questions the Frankel Center will be investigating this year through the Frankel Institute’s “Jews and the Material in Antiquity” theme year. Eleven scholars from around the world will be in residence at the University of Michigan to examine how ancient Jews and those in their orbit understood the physical world around them. We will also be using this opportunity to look afresh at the world around us.

I am not a historian of ancient Judaism myself, but I have learned a lot reading applications for the year. I learned that ancient Jews were very aware



that they functioned in a multicultural world. They certainly would never have used that term, but they were in constant conversation with other cultures, adapting foreign technologies and wrestling with different ideas.

Cultural boundaries in the ancient world were fluid—no matter how high the walls of Jerusalem were built, they could not block out new ways of looking at the world.

At the same time, the ancients, like us, were eager to draw boundaries between themselves and those they considered different. Improved technologies like the codex, for instance, caught on quickly. But many Jews insisted on continuing to use the scroll, because that’s just who they were. In time, the scroll came to define Jewish difference. Like the hipsters who have helped bring about a revival of vinyl records, ancient Jews saw something of value in the older technology.

But the ancient sages also believed that many boundaries were artificial—they struggled intensely in defining gender boundaries, for instance, recognizing that gender identification was more fluid than the laws imagined. The rabbis were also engaged in efforts to demarcate the borders between human and beast, and between human and divine. They were interested in understanding how we as humans fit into and impact our physical environment.

The ancients were also interested in the production of knowledge. They endeavored to figure out which sources of information were real and which were fake. Eventually whole new sets of texts emerged that were regarded as authoritative

No matter how high the walls of Jerusalem were built, they could not block out new ways of looking at the world.

by some and rejected by others. Even the ancient sages struggled to get it right every time. The information bubble they constructed was intended to be impervious to foreign ideas, but, again, constant contact with new and different worldviews had its impact, leading to the diverse and ever-changing traditions we cherish today.

Over the course of the year, the Frankel Center will be sponsoring a series of public events and exhibitions on the theme of Jews and the Material in Antiquity. I hope this gives us an opportunity to reflect on what the ancients can teach us about the modern world.

Art Spiegelman

Pulitzer Prize-winning Artist/Illustrator & Author

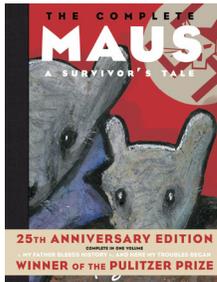
Cartoonist and author Art Spiegelman will be visiting the University of Michigan campus this fall for a lecture co-sponsored by the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, Stamps School of Art and Design, and the Conflict and Peace Initiative. The lecture is part of both the Frankel Speakers Series and the Penny Stamps Distinguished Speaker Series. His talk takes place November 9th at 5 pm at the Michigan Theater.

Spiegelman has been drawing since he was 15 and has been creating innovative and provocative comics since the 1960s.

“As a kid I would go to the newspaper library to avoid being dragged into a baseball game after school,” he explained in an interview with *Frankly Speaking*. “I would look at what was in the bound newspapers and read these old comics and really think about what they were, who made them, and why and so on.” Besides publishing many graphic novels, Spiegelman has held a wide variety of positions, ranging from creative consultant for Topps Bubble Gum Co., to teacher of history and the aesthetics of comics at the School for Visual Arts in New York. With his wife, Françoise Mouly, he co-founded *RAW*, the comics magazine, and was also a staff writer and artist for *The New Yorker* from 1993 to 2003.

In 1992, Spiegelman won a Pulitzer Prize for *Maus*, his graphic novel about the Holocaust that portrays Jews as mice

and Nazis as cats. Spiegelman has continued to be active since the publication of *Maus*, producing several works, including *The Ghosts of Ellis Island*, *Be a Nose*, *The Wild Party*, and *Co-Mix*. But he is aware that *Maus* will be a big part of his legacy. “I’ve got an obituary coming and it talks about a Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel called *Maus*. So I’m aware of that, and I’m grateful I suppose for it. But I haven’t fully internalized that I’ve been in rebellion against that fact ever since and haven’t found anything that has the same purchase on people’s brains that *Maus* does.”



Maus is considered a turning point in the legitimizing of comics as an art form; and today, the graphic novel has become a mainstay of contemporary literature. (The University of Michigan even offers a course on the Jewish Graphic Novel, taught by Maya Barzilai.) Spiegelman can take a lot of credit for these developments. “I think I can proudly say that comics as a medium has moved on to the point that it’s just like every other medium like fiction and film and theater, which is most of it is really shit. I think back in the day I was just hoping comics would achieve a higher level of mediocrity and they have.” Spiegelman’s talk, Comics is the Yiddish of Art, will focus on the history of comic art and how Jewish artists have influenced the form. “I guess what I would like people to take away once we go



through this is some of my love for a medium that I really think has not just been sold short for most of its life, but still hasn’t been appreciated for what it is, a circuit board of brain activity. The things that happen from the way those words and pictures are deposited, I think is much richer and denser...than almost any other medium I can think of.”

Maus remains a best seller today, more than 30 years after its original publication. It is also widely considered one of the most important and accessible reflections on the Holocaust: “The fact that it managed to navigate through [the sensitive subject of the Holocaust] and tell a story without the usual ceremonial violin music behind it maybe helped,” Spiegelman noted. Today, He is concerned about the continued relevance of *Maus*: “Us humans haven’t gotten any smarter ultimately; if we have, it’s gone very slowly. So, sadly, it remains relevant... We certainly don’t want to make it more relevant.”

Mark Your Calendar: Art Spiegelman, November 9, 5 pm, Michigan Theater

New Faculty

Bryan Roby

Assistant Professor of Judaic Studies



The Frankel Center announces the addition of Bryan Roby as Assistant Professor of Judaic Studies. Professor Roby is the author of *The Mizrahi Era of Rebellion: Israel's Forgotten Civil Rights Struggle, 1948–1967*, which was published in 2015 by Syracuse University Press. He received his PhD in Middle East Studies from the University of Manchester in 2013, and has since held fellowships at New York University's Taub Center for Israel Studies and at the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies. He previously taught at the Aardvark Israel Program in Tel Aviv. Professor Roby's current research focuses on the relationships between the civil rights movements in Israel and America. He will be teaching courses on the social and political history of Israel and on Jews in the Middle East and North Africa. *Frankely Speaking* had some questions for Professor Roby.

Tell me something interesting about your background:

I grew up on the Southside of Chicago and, after attending UMass Amherst for undergraduate studies, moved to Manchester, England and earned a PhD in Middle Eastern Studies. I've traveled a lot and lived in Israel and countries throughout Europe, and really love learning new languages. I speak (Judeo-) Arabic, French, and Hebrew. I'm slowly learning German and hope to pick up Esperanto one day.

What is most interesting about your research?

In my research, I focus on the modern history of Middle Eastern and North African Jews, who are often referred to as "Mizrahim," or Arab Jews. In my first book, I provided the first comprehensive

history of Mizrahi social justice protests in Israel during the 1950s and 1960s. I scoured through over a decade of declassified police reports documenting rebellions and protests against discriminatory practices affecting them and Palestinian citizens. What I found most surprising was how much Mizrahi Israelis felt affinities with the Black Diaspora and looked to the African American Civil Rights Movement for inspiration. My current research goes further along these lines by exploring how Middle Eastern Jewry embraced notions of Blackness in Israel. I think that situating Mizrahi history within both Judaic and Black Studies traditions will produce a fruitful conversation about race in Israel and will allow scholars to look at new ways of examining race relations outside the Americas.

Can you tell me about your teaching plans?

I will be teaching courses on Jewish history in the Middle East and North Africa as well as courses on Israeli history. My courses will focus on the subject matters of social justice; Jewish literature in the Middle East; (post)-colonial Jewish struggles in North Africa; and the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality in various geographic and historical contexts. I hope students learn about the different levels of diversity found within Jewish history and leave the classroom with an understanding of the significance of Middle Eastern Jewish contributions to world music, literature, culture, and intellectual production.

What are you most looking forward to about U-M?

I chose Michigan because the Frankel Center is quickly positioning itself as an intellectual powerhouse in my field.

The scholarship being produced by my colleagues is innovative, intellectually rigorous, and simply fascinating. I look forward to contributing likewise during this exciting time of growth for the University.

My favorite thing about the University of Michigan is the ease of access to a multitude of resources and university-led cultural initiatives. I was pleasantly surprised by the student-led Palestine Film Festival and watched some amazing films. I also really loved the "Stumbling Blocks" art installations during the bicentennial celebrations. It was inspiring to see how much the University of Michigan values its student body and understands the importance of diversity in changing history (on and off campus) in positive ways.

What are some of the things you enjoyed about being a Fellow at the Frankel Institute?

As an Institute Fellow, I had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to spend a year engaging with some of the top junior and senior scholars who are tackling similar issues from a variety of angles. I particularly enjoyed the sense of camaraderie, which allowed for a frank discussion of issues like migration and memory that can be quite challenging for scholars of Israel. One of the main takeaways I had from my year as a Fellow was the sense of urgency in looking at the study of Israel from a comparative perspective. This pushed me to implement some of the issues discussed into my second book project, which I hope will make it more rich and insightful.

Visiting Faculty

Sarra Lev

Louis and Helen Padnos Visiting Professor in Judaic Studies



We are pleased to welcome to campus Sarra Lev, the 2017 Louis and Helen Padnos Visiting Professor in Judaic Studies. Professor Lev is Associate Professor of Rabbinics at Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and Affiliate Associate Professor at the University of New Hampshire. She is also an ordained rabbi.

Professor Lev will be bringing her talmudic expertise to the University of Michigan to teach two courses in the fall semester: Judaic 260: Introduction to the Talmud and the Rabbis and Judaic 417: Ethics and the Rabbis.

As Padnos Visiting Scholar, Professor Lev will also be delivering two public talks, one in Ann Arbor on October 24 and one in Grand Rapids on November 5 in Temple Emanuel.

The Padnos Visiting Professorship is made possible by a generous donation from Stuart Padnos, who in 1988 established the Professorship in commemoration of his parents, Helen and Louis Padnos. The Padnos' endowment enables the Frankel Center to annually bring a distinguished scholar to campus to teach at the University of Michigan.

Frankely Speaking asked Professor Lev some questions about her plans for the semester and her career trajectory.

Can you tell me a bit about your scholarly research?

My current research focuses on two categories of intersexuality in rabbinic literature, the *androgynos* and the *tumtum*. I have always had an affinity with others who do not match cultural and social expectations, especially regarding sex, gender, and sexuality, which drew me to the topic. What I love about this topic is that the rabbis of the first five centuries CE actually talk about intersexuality as if it is the most natural phenomenon, which, in fact, it is, rather than trying to cover it up, as we do today through surgery and silence.

What can audiences expect to hear at your two public lectures?

The two lectures that I am presenting will be on the subject of androgynos, someone who ostensibly has male and female genitals. What I would like people to learn from these lectures is how the rabbis manage the contradiction between their binary gender system and the existence of bodies that confound that system.

Can you tell us about your teaching plans for the semester?

I am teaching "Introduction to the Talmud and the Rabbis" and an upper-level undergraduate/graduate course titled "Ethics and the Rabbis." These actually fall into the category of courses I love to teach, each for a different reason. Teaching intro courses is one of my favorite things to do, because it allows me to build up students' knowledge from the start, and it is the place where most light bulbs go off.

The course "Ethics and the Rabbis" is an experiment for me. I did not want to call it "rabbinic ethics" or some such title, because I am interested in thinking not only about the ethical system of these texts themselves, but about how our own ethical systems might interact with them. To manage such a course without either becoming entirely anachronistic or making the texts entirely historically contingent is a difficult balance, and I look forward to the challenge.

What are you most looking forward to at the University of Michigan?

I currently teach at a very small rabbinical college. I look forward to new colleagues and to cross-disciplinary conversations.

Can you tell me about a historical figure you would like to meet?

I would love to meet Emma Goldman, anarchist political activist and writer, because she defied norms, possessed an enormous amount of integrity, and considered the world a place in which she could have an active role for justice.

What do you see as your greatest success?

I believe my greatest success is the fact that many of my students come into my (compulsory) classes with great resistance and leave with a love of rabbinic literature.

Meet the 2017–18 Frankel Institute Fellows



Todd Berzon

Bowdoin College

“Holy Tongues: The Materiality of Language in the Religious World of Late Antiquity”

Berzon is assistant professor of religion at Bowdoin

College. He specializes in the religions of late antiquity, with a particular interest in how ancient religious communities that viewed themselves as distinct (orthodox/heterodox, Jewish/Christian, etc.) articulated and negotiated perceived differences. He is the author of *Classifying Christians: Ethnography, Heresiology, and the Limits of Knowledge in Late Antiquity*. His current research project, entitled *Holy Tongues*, investigates how Jews and Christians conceptualized verbal language as a material and corporeal object. He received his BA, MA, and PhD from Columbia University.



Rick Bonnie

University of Helsinki

“Material Religion in Hasmonean–Roman Judaea: The Role of the Senses, Space, and Climate in Determining the Use of Synagogues and Miqva’ot”

Bonnie is a postdoctoral researcher in the Centre of Excellence in Changes in Sacred Texts and Traditions at the University of Helsinki. He earned his BA and MA from Leiden University and his PhD in archaeology from the University of Leuven. Bonnie’s current research focuses on studying Jewish material culture in Hasmonean–Roman Judaea in relation to the climatic environment, visual space, and the human senses. He is the author of the forthcoming book *Being Jewish in Galilee, 100–200 CE: An Archaeological Study*, and is currently co-editing a volume entitled *The Synagogue in Ancient Palestine: Current Issues and Emerging Trends*.



Sean Burrus

Metropolitan Museum

“Image and Empire: Jewish Identities and Visual Arts under Rome”

Burrus received his PhD in the history of Judaism at Duke University and

recently completed a year as the Bothmer Research Fellow in Greek and Roman art at the Metropolitan Museum. His research explores the role of material and visual culture in the Jewish experience of late antiquity. Currently, he is working on a monograph exploring Jewish visual culture through a series of case studies across different media, including mosaics, wall paintings, and marble.

Catherine Chin

University of California at Davis

“Life: The Natural History of an Early Christian Universe”

Chin’s work explores how mundane objects can, with the right kind of attention, create extraordinary imaginative worlds. Her book *Grammar and Christianity in the Late Roman World* examines the supernatural worlds that lurk behind, and sometimes in front of, ancient educational texts. She recently coedited two books, *Late Ancient Knowing* and *Melania: Early Christianity Through the Life of One Family*. Currently she is working on multiple projects under the rubric *Life: The Natural History of an Early Christian Universe*. She received her PhD from Duke University and teaches at the University of California at Davis.



Deborah Forger

University of Michigan

“God’s Embodiment in Jewish Antiquity”

Forger received her PhD in Near Eastern studies from the University of Michigan. She also holds master’s

degrees from Duke University and the University of Michigan. Much of her work centers on questions related to how the so-called parting of the ways occurred between Judaism and Christianity. Her current research analyzes how Jews, and later Christians, envisioned God in corporeal form and humans as divine.



Chaya Halberstam

King’s University College at the University of Western Ontario

“Justice and Mercy Revisited: a Religious–Legal History of Judicial Impartiality”

Halberstam is associate professor of Hebrew Bible and Judaism in the department of religious studies at King’s University College at Western University in London, Ontario (Canada). She earned her PhD from Yale University, and has held academic posts at King’s College London (UK) and Indiana University, Bloomington. Her interdisciplinary work focuses on ideas and discourses of law in ancient Jewish literature, and her current research is on the intersection of law, emotion, and care in ancient attitudes toward judging. Her book *Law and Truth in Biblical and Rabbinic Literature* won the Salo Baron Prize for best first book in Jewish Studies. She is also the author of several book chapters and articles in *Prooftexts*, *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, *Law, Culture, & Humanities*, and the *Journal of Ancient Judaism*.

This year, researching on the theme of “**Jews and the Material in Antiquity**,” eleven scholars will spend the semester or year at the Frankel Center investigating how Jews in antiquity understood the material world around

them, and how the material world impacted the development of Judaism. The fellows will present lectures and symposia, and participate in a range of events open to the public. We are thrilled to welcome them all to Ann Arbor.



Rachel Neis

University of Michigan
 “**The Reproduction of Species: Humans and Other Materials in Ancient Rabbinic ‘Biology’**”

Neis holds the Jean and Samuel Frankel Chair of Rabbis and is associate professor in the history department and the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan. Neis has a PhD in Jewish studies from Harvard University, an MA in religious studies from Boston University, and a law degree from the London School of Economics. Neis also studied art at the Bezalel School of Art and Design. Her first book, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture: Jewish Ways of Seeing in Late Antiquity* won the Salon Baron Prize for best first book in Jewish studies and an honorable mention for the Jordan Schnitzer Award. Neis studies and teaches Talmud, ancient Jewish history, Jewish visual culture, and comparative law. She is currently working on a book project about rabbinic conceptions of species (human and otherwise) at the intersection of ancient reproductive science and zoology.



Megan Nutzman

Old Dominion University
 “**Asclepius and Elijah: Ritual Healing in Roman and Late Antique Palestine**”

Nutzman is assistant professor of ancient history at Old Dominion University. Her work focuses on the intersection of Greco-Roman religions, Judaism, and Christianity, with a special emphasis on the land of Israel. She received a PhD in classics from the University of Chicago and earned an MTS and a ThM from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. Her current project examines rituals used

to treat physical ailments, from amulets and local healing cults to incantations and liturgical prayers. Much of the research for her current project was completed during her residency at the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem.



Daniel Picus

Brown University
 “**Ink Sea, Parchment Sky: Reading Practices of Late Ancient Rabbis**”

Picus (PhD expected 2017) studies religion in the ancient Mediterranean at Brown University. He holds a BA in classics from Macalester College, and an MA in Jewish studies in the Greco-Roman period from the University of Oxford. His research focuses on Jews and Christians in late antiquity, and is driven by questions surrounding the relationship between people, groups, and texts. At the Frankel Institute, he will continue his research on reading as a material, embodied practice among late ancient Jews.



Michael Swartz

Ohio State University
 “**The Economics of Ritual in Judaism in Late Antiquity**”

Swartz is professor of Hebrew and religious studies at The Ohio State University and specializes in the cultural history of Judaism in late antiquity, rabbinic studies, early Jewish mysticism and magic, and ritual studies. He received his PhD in Near Eastern languages and literatures at New York University in 1986. He is the author of *The Mechanics of Providence: The Workings of Ancient Jewish Magic and Mysticism*, *The Signifying Creator: Nontextual Sources of Meaning in Ancient Judaism*, *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism*,

and *Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism: An Analysis of Ma’aseh Merkavah*; he is also coauthor, with Joseph Yahalom, of *Avodah: Ancient Poems for Yom Kippur* and, with Lawrence H. Schiffman, of *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Geniza: Selected Texts from Taylor-Schechter Box K1*. He also served as the associate editor for Judaica for the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*.



Juan Manuel Tebes

Catholic University of Argentina
 “**Fluid Cultural Boundaries in Idumaea and the Formation of Jewish and Idumaean Identities**”

Tebes is a Near Eastern historian with areas of specialization in the history and archaeology of the Iron Age southern Levant and northwestern Arabia. Tebes currently teaches at the Catholic University of Argentina and the University of Buenos Aires and is also a researcher at the National Research Council of Argentina. He has been a research fellow at several international institutions, including the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem, the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman, the Maison de l’Archéologie et de l’Ethnologie in Paris, the University of Sydney, and New York University.

Sarah Autry

BS, Cell and Molecular Biology and Judaic Studies, University of Michigan, 2004

MPH, Environmental Health Policy, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, 2008

In an interview with *Frankely Speaking*, Sarah Autry talked about how her courses in Judaic Studies opened up unexpected opportunities.

Tell me about your current position:

I am the Director of Business Systems at the Union for Reform Judaism. Fundamentally, my job is to solve the organization's business problems using technology: to find ways to help my colleagues do their jobs more smoothly and help them access and analyze information so they can make well-informed decisions. I lead a great team of business analysts, systems analysts, and software developers. We redefine and automate business processes, make decisions about what systems and applications the organization should use, provide training, and generally act to help the business function smoothly.

What are some of the most rewarding parts of your work?

It's satisfying to change a process or build a program that will consistently save someone hours of work every week or month. It's a great feeling for me and my team, and it's usually a great feeling for the colleagues we're working with as well. I don't work at a tech company, and my colleagues aren't necessarily deeply interested in technology—they're interested in creating programming for the communities they serve. It's reward-

ing to be able to suggest and implement changes that allow people to spend more time doing what they excel at and less time fighting with technology.

I also work with a wonderful team, made up of really smart, creative, motivated people with impressive and diverse skills. It's a pleasure to come into the office and solve problems with them.

How did you get interested in Judaic Studies?

My original plan didn't involve majoring in Judaic Studies—I was a Cell and Molecular Biology major who wanted to study more Hebrew. But in my first semester, I took a History of the Holocaust class with Todd Endelman. It was a very satisfying intellectual experience, and I knew I wanted to take more of his classes. So I decided to major in Judaic Studies, too, which kept me busy!

How did your education at the Frankel Center prepare you for your current position?

My education didn't lead directly to the job I have now, though I do work at a Jewish nonprofit. It's very important in my job to be able to be a liaison between technical and non-technical people, and that's something I started learning when I studied in both the sciences and the humanities.

Who are some of the U-M professors who inspired you?

I'm pretty sure I took every class that Professor Endelman offered during my four years at U-M, and I even did a bit of research for him. I also took a couple of courses with Ralph Williams, including one on the works of Primo Levi, and his lectures were an absorbing, almost theatrical, experience.

What advice would you give to students who are considering studying Judaic Studies?

When I decided to major in Judaic Studies, I didn't have specific plans for how I'd use the degree after I graduated—I made the choice because it interested me at the time. I assumed that after graduation I'd be working in a research lab using my science degree, but I actually got my first job largely on the strength of the writing sample I provided: a paper I'd written senior year about Primo Levi, Tiresias, and having one foot in each world.

You don't always know what will open doors for you...or even what doors you'll want to open! But I think the best way to discover those answers is to pursue the things that call out to you.

Students Class of 2017



In 2017, fifteen undergraduate students and two graduate students earned degrees in Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan.

Besides their focus in Judaic Studies, our students studied subjects including cognitive science, history, and psychology. “Judaic Studies gave me skills to think critically about multiple areas in my life,” said Rachel Klein of Ferndale, who majored in Judaic Studies and International Studies. “Although I was learning about specific areas in Judaism—Jewish history, etc.—these skills can be applied to other areas in my life.” Klein is working as a community organizer for Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength (MOSES), which trains religious leaders to advocate for social justice in metro Detroit.



Klein

Sharo Costa, who also earned a degree in Judaic Studies, is attending Vanderbilt University to study International Education Policy. “Deciding to become a Judaic Studies major has been the most fulfilling decision I’ve made during my time at Michigan,” Costa said. “Every day, I am intellectually challenged by my professors and peers, and cherished by the many friends I’ve come to know.” Costa, who was born in Kanyakumari, India, and lived in Saudi Arabia before coming to the United States, added: “I have been able to learn so much about a country whose narrative is often left out of curricula in the Middle East, and the classes I’ve taken have greatly expanded my perspective.”



Costa

Each year the Frankel Center honors a graduate with the Outstanding Undergraduate Student Award. To receive this award students must be graduating with at least a 3.8 GPA and be recommended by Judaic Studies faculty members. This April, the award was presented to Seif-Eldeen Basheer Saqallah of West Bloomfield. In recommending Saqallah for the award, one of his teachers wrote of him: “Seif has been the most engaged student I’ve had at the University of Michigan, regularly coming to my office hours to discuss class material in greater depth, actively contributing to classroom discussions in an informed and passionate way. His presence in class and in office hours was always stimulating, and the written material that he produced was consistently the highest quality in the class, both in terms of writing and in terms of his analytical abilities.” Saqallah is currently attending University of Michigan Law School.

Judaic Studies Core Courses

Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan offers a diverse curriculum to undergrads, including three core courses, which give students a broad introduction to the program. Students majoring in Judaic Studies are required to take at least two of the three courses in addition to the elective courses they can choose to complete the required credits.

“**What is Judaism**” studies the rise and development of Jewish civilization and the diversity that has marked Jewish culture and religious expression. Students explore cultural strategies that enabled Jews to adapt to changing historical conditions and gave new meaning to Jewish identity.

“**Sources of Jewish History**” explores the Jewish historical experience through significant texts, places, and cultural objects. Students learn about the histories of the Jewish people, from their ancient origins to the present.

“**Jews in the Modern World**” examines the ways in which Jews in Europe, America, Israel, and the Middle East have responded to the cultural, political, economic, and social forces of modernity. Students will consider how Jewish cultures have been shaped and reshaped in the face of unprecedented new freedoms and persecutions.

All three classes are foundational courses designed to put students on the path to a well-rounded Judaic Studies education.

Students

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, the Frankel Center is able to provide a variety of fellowships, travel grants, and research grants in support of our students. This year twelve students received funding to learn about conflict resolution in Israel, attend language study programs, participate in archaeological excavations, and attend seminars in Talmud and Judaic texts.

Brandt Graduate Fellowship Challenge Account Frances & Hubert Brandt Israel Fellowship



Yaakov Herskovitz (PhD, NES) received funding to conduct dissertation research in Israel and to present papers at the National Association of Professors of Hebrew conference and the American Comparative Literature Association.

Delta Phi Epsilon Scholarships



Miriam Saperstein (Undergrad, LSA) attended Svara's Queer Talmud Camp—Rabbinical & Biblical Text Study in California. "I am super excited to learn more about the SVARA method for Talmud study so that I can incorporate that into how

I understand Jewish texts in my classes, and also how I facilitate learning as a leader of Ahava. I'm also really excited to be in a queer Jewish space!"

Frankel Family Fellowship Fund



Joshua Flink (Judaic Studies Minor) conducted research and took classes at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem this summer. "I have had the privilege to study with astounding scholars such as Donniel Hartman and Yossi Klein

Halevi. We have had a number of tiyulim (trips) around Jerusalem where we have explored Jewish and Palestinian art as well as the Christian institutions in western Jerusalem. For my internship, I have been matched with a mentor, Yehuda Kurtzer, and have been assisting him with his research. Overall, it's been an incredible experience to live in Jerusalem and has been inspiring to be immersed in the heart of intellectual thought."

Stanley Frankel Summer Travel Fellowship



Joshua Scott (PhD, NES) traveled to Israel to work on the Huqoq Excavation project. "I've learned a great deal about the stratigraphy of ancient sites and how materials are catalogued and preserved." *Photo Credit: Jim Haberman*

Jerold & Kathleen Solovy Fund



Jason Wagner (PhD, Slavic Language and Literatures) (l) and **Yeshua Tolle** (PhD, English Language and Literatures) (r) attended the Naomi Prawer Kadar Yiddish Summer Program at Tel Aviv University.

Tolle explained: "My research explores the intersection of Orthodoxy and modernity in Jewish literature of the past century. Yiddish language and culture can, I believe, reorient our sense of Jewish intellectual and literary history in America, allowing us to recover important lives and works ignored by narratives of secularization."

Orna & Keenan Wolens Global Experience Fund Martha K. Bindeman Student Awards Fund



Rachel Woods (Judaic Studies Minor) participated in U-M's Global and Intercultural Study Course, "Conflict Resolution and Co-Resistance."

"I was able to study the culture of West Jerusalem and the Old City, Bethlehem, Haifa, Tel Aviv, and beyond. Although it was absolutely amazing to see the beautiful landscapes of the Israeli countryside and learn about historic and religious landmarks, my favorite part was meeting the people around the country."



L to R: Rima Miah, Noah McCarthy, and Rachel Woods volunteering at Leket Israel (the largest food bank in the country) picking surplus cabbage at a farm outside of Nazareth.

Weingast Family Fund

Noah McCarthy (History Major) and Rima Miah (Business Administration Major) participated in U-M's Global and Inter-cultural Study Course, "Conflict Resolution and Co-Resistance." Miah explained: "While abroad, we traveled through 13 cities in Israel and the West Bank meeting with people from different backgrounds and identities and visiting famous and religiously historical sites. This allowed me to gain insight on the conflict in an unbiased perspective, something I had not received prior to the trip." McCarthy noted: "I biked along the beaches of Tel Aviv and explored the backstreets of Jerusalem's Old City, but I also met with Hasidim, Druze Arabs, members of Beta Israel, and more. It was a privilege to hear all the different voices and stories that define and enrich the Jewish State."



Nathan Moretto (MA, Judaic Studies) received funding from both the Weingast Family Fund and an anonymous donor to participate in an excavation project at Kiriath-Jearim in Abu Gosh, Israel through Tel Aviv University and Collège de France.

"This is a Biblical site that has not yet been excavated, though it has been surveyed, and this summer will be the first time to break ground. Hopefully this dig will shed light on the ancient cult history of Judah and Jerusalem."

2017 Student Awards

Marshall M. Weinberg Prize



Harry Kashdan (PhD, Comparative Literature) was presented the award for the work on his dissertation prospectus, *Eating Elsewhere: Food and Migration in the Contemporary Mediterranean*.

"The final chapter of my dissertation explicitly attempts to link Judaic and Mediterranean Studies, and I plan for this intersection to be a major research area for me in the years to come." Kashdan also received funding from the **Marshall M. Weinberg Endowed Fund** to attend an intensive Ladino/Judezmo Summer Skills Workshop in Colorado.

Outstanding Undergraduate Student Award



Seif-Eldeen Basheer Saqallah (BA, Judaic Studies) was named outstanding undergraduate student. He is currently attending University of Michigan Law School. "Judaic Studies is an amazing program, one which possesses great insights and

abilities for examining ancient and modern issues."

Marshall M. Weinberg Endowed Fund for Graduate Students



Hannah Roussel (PhD, History) attended the Svara Program to participate in language training in rabbinic literature in Wisconsin and California. "Talmud is central to my research at the University of Michigan, so dedicating four days to intensive study was a main goal in attending.... This experience definitely enriched my own learning and pedagogy, which are highly important to my work in academia."

Retiring Faculty

In 2018, two longtime Judaic Studies faculty will be retiring from the University of Michigan. The Frankel Center wishes **Zvi Gitelman**, Preston R. Tisch Professor of Judaic Studies and Political Science, and **Anita Norich**, Tikva Frymer-Kensky Collegiate Professor of Judaic Studies and English, the best in their future endeavors and, together with their many students, thanks them for all that they have done to advance Judaic Studies at Michigan.

Zvi Gitelman by Jeffrey Veildinger

The opening of the Soviet archives during *glasnost* was one of the greatest finds in Jewish studies, arguably rivaled only by Solomon Schechter's



identification of the Cairo Geniza and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls by three Bedouin shepherds. While numerous discoveries of forgotten Soviet Yiddish poets, Judaic religious practices in Ukraine, Holocaust-era killing sites in Belarus, and lost manuscripts in St. Petersburg have transformed Jewish studies, the central arguments that Zvi Gitelman has advanced—many

long before the opening of the archives confirmed his views—have remained relevant, accurate, and influential.

His first book, *Jewish Nationality and Soviet Politics*, based on his Columbia dissertation and written during a period in which American scholarship was highly politicized by Cold War battles, presented a nuanced and revisionist account of the Jewish experience in the

Soviet Union. In his reading, which he expanded in his monumental textbook, *A Century of Ambivalence*, the early revolutionary years were neither the culmination of Jewish political achievement nor the result of unbridled oppression, but rather represented a failed attempt at cultural, intellectual, and political rebirth.

Gitelman's 1997 volume, *Bitter Legacy: Confronting the Holocaust in the USSR*, initiated a whole new direction of scholarship on both the Holocaust and the Soviet Union. He showed that the Soviet government did not completely suppress knowledge of the Holocaust, as had commonly been assumed, but rather reinterpreted the Holocaust to conform to a broader Soviet intellectual framework. More recently, Gitelman authored a book that was the result of a decade of surveys among post-Soviet Russian and Ukrainian Jews about their attitudes toward Jewish identity and Judaism. This sobering account shows that while some post-Soviet Jews have taken on aspects of Jewish identity, it is what Gitelman calls a "thin" identity, and is unlikely to be sustained in future generations.

Gitelman's scholarship has earned him accolades from Uzbekistan to Brighton Beach, but here in Michigan he is more widely recognized as a favorite professor

for generations of Wolverines. Students who have had the good fortune to study with him recall how hard they had to work for that B+, and how much they learned in the process. His passion, wit, erudition, and high expectations often come up in student comments.

Although he is retiring from the classroom after 49 years, Gitelman continues to be an active teacher and researcher. He is currently working on at least two books, and is initiating a larger project to help Russian-Jewish immigrants learn about their own heritage. One of the founders of the Frankel Center, Gitelman remains a voice of authority and a stalwart defender of the highest standards of teaching and research.

When the last chapter of Deuteronomy is read in synagogue on the festival of Simchat Torah, it is customary for the congregation to chant "Chazak, chazak ve nitchazek," (be strong, be strong, and let us gather new strength), after which the congregation immediately begins reading the Torah anew from the first chapter of Genesis. As one session of study ends, another begins. As Zvi Gitelman begins a new session of study, we all wish him chazak, chazak ve nitchazek.

Please join us for a 3 pm panel discussion, 5 pm lecture by Zvi Gitelman, and reception to follow on December 4, Rackham Assembly Hall.

Anita Norich

by Julian Levinson

I first met Anita Norich on the shelves of an academic press bookstore during an extended layover in Houston. I was a young graduate student trying to organize my ideas about modern Jewish literature, and here was a title that demanded my attention: *The Homeless Imagination in the Fiction of Israel Joshua Singer*. What? A whole book dedicated to I. B.'s brother? Who was this I. J. and who was this A. Norich who had devoted so much time to him? That book showed me, as all of her dazzling scholarship has, what a serious Jewish literary criticism could and should look like. It was subtly argued, impeccably researched, wholly

Yiddish modernism. Here was a rambling assortment of midwestern Shakespearians and post-structuralists with a keen appreciation for Yankev Glatshteyn. How easy it was, given Anita's presence, to introduce myself to my colleagues as a Jewish Americanist. Indeed, I have been continually impressed by Anita's ability to communicate with non-specialists, even with those whose awareness of Jewish culture may go no further than a few stereotypes. Where some in her position might leave Yiddish or Hebrew words untranslated or forget to explain historical figures and movements in Jewish life, Anita never makes anybody feel like an outsider (translation is, after

the class, she noticed, I would rephrase the question in slightly different language several times, until somebody finally answered. "Instead, ask *one good question*," she told me, "and give the students time to ponder it." Thus is her pedagogy marked by deep faith the learning process—and her advice here as always was incisive, well-honed, and eminently practical.

I have been continually amazed by Anita's brilliance and versatility, while being moved by her uproarious sense of humor and generosity. An example of the latter that I can't help but mention here:

When my father died, my wife and I were busy taking care of our newborn twins, and in no position to hold a *shiva* (Jewish mourning ritual). Anita assured me that such things are important, and she opened her home to me. What would I have done without a space to mourn with friends and colleagues? How would I have honored my father's memory? Anita's generosity in this case was matched by her deep wisdom, which has enriched me as it has so many at Michigan and far, far beyond.



Where some in her position might leave Yiddish or Hebrew words untranslated or forget to explain historical figures and movements in Jewish life, Anita never makes anybody feel like an outsider.

unapologetic, and sharply attuned to the multiple contexts shaping modern Jewish culture: literary, political, religious, geographical, and, of course, linguistic.

When I joined the Michigan faculty in 2000, Anita moved from being a key reference on my reading lists to my closest colleague and mentor, and a dear friend. I soon discovered that Anita had schooled the entire English department quite thoroughly in the nuances of

all, one of her areas of expertise). She is keenly aware of her audience, which helps explain why everybody feels like an insider when she begins talking.

Having soon recognized what her students all knew—that Anita is a virtuoso in the classroom—I naturally turned to her for advice about teaching. After visiting one of my classes, she offered a critique that I still bear in mind whenever I teach. Each time I posed a question to

Please join us for a panel discussion and celebration of Anita Norich on March 21, 1 pm, Rackham Assembly Hall

Graduate Students

Sam Shuman was awarded a Conference Travel Grant from the Association for Social Scientific Study of Jewry. He also presented papers at the annual Association for Jewish Studies and American Anthropological Association conferences and at the New York Working Group on Jewish Orthodoxies December meeting along with fellow PhD student, **Shira Schwartz**.

Shira Schwartz was awarded a Short-Term Research Fellowship in Jewish Orthodoxy from Fordham University.

Visiting Faculty

Shelley Perlove presented “Irony and Anti-Judaism in Maerten van Heemskerck’s Hermitage Crucifixion” at the Renaissance Society of America. She also recently spoke at the Yeshiva University Museum of Art in New York City.

Faculty

Maya Barzilai received honorable mention in the Salo Wittmayer Baron Book Prize for her book *Golem: Modern Wars and Their Monsters*.

Walter Cohen spoke at Warwick University (UK) on “The Early Modern Period and the Current Phase of World Literature.”

Zvi Gitelman was awarded the Bernard Chased/Natalie Mendel Racolsky Fellowship, YIVO Institute for Jewish Social Research. He also published an article, “Ruminations on Resistance and Rationalism,” in Victoria Khiterer, ed., *Holocaust Resistance in Europe and America: New Aspects and Dilemmas*.

Rachel Neis published “Religious Lives of Image-Things, Avodah Zarah, and Rabbis in Late Antique Palestine,” in *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte*. She also spoke at the Klingenstein Annual Lecture in Judaic Studies in New College Florida, and presented “Species, Reproduction and the Question of Hybridity in Classical Rabbinic Literature,” at Duke University.

Brian Schmidt received the Humanities Research Award from the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts at the University of Michigan and a Hadassah-Brandeis Research Grant from Brandeis University. He also published “Gender Marking, Overlapping and the Identity of the Bes-Like Figures at Kuntillet Ajrud,” in *History, Archaeology and The Bible Forty Years After “Historicity.”*

David Schoem published “Honoring the Humanity of Our Students,” in *Well-Being and Higher Education*.

Jeffrey Veidlinger received an NEH Public Scholars Grant for work on his book on the pogroms of 1919–1921. He also published “Was the Doctor’s Plot a Blood Libel?” in Eugene Avrutin, Jonathan Dekel Chen, and Robert Weinberg, eds., *The Worlds of Ritual Murder: Culture, Politics, and Belief in Eastern Europe and Beyond*, “Jewish Geography in Three Cities: St. Petersburg, Moscow and Warsaw in 1897” in Mikhail Krutikov and Gennady Estraikh, eds., *Three Cities of Yiddish: St. Petersburg, Warsaw and Moscow*, and “What if Russian Jewry Had Never Been Confined to the Pale of Jewish Settlement?” in Gavriel Rosenfeld, ed., *What Ifs of Jewish History: From Abraham to Zionism*. He continues to serve as a Vice-President of the Association for Jewish Studies.

Rebecca Wollenberg was awarded the De Gruyter Prize for Biblical Reception History and Biblical Studies from the Society of Biblical Literature and received a Regional Development Grant from the American Academy of Religion. She also published “I am God Your Healer: A Short Note on the I Am Sayings and the Dangers of a Translation Tradition,” in *Novum Testamentum* and “The Dangers of Reading as We Know it” in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*.

Current Fellows

Deborah Forger published “Interpreting the Syrophoenician Woman to Construct Jewish-Christian Fault Lines: John Chrysostom and the Pseudo-Clementine

Homilist in Chrono-Locational Perspective,” in the *Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting*.

Past Fellows

Susan C. Dessel was invited to participate in the “Dangerous Women Project,” an initiative of the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Edinburgh. She was also invited to participate in “Trees of Life and Evil Eyes: A Contemporary Take on Superstition, Symbols and Mysticism” at the Abraso Interno Gallery Clemente Soto Vélaz Cultural Center in conjunction with Yiddish New York.

Lois Dubin published “Diversity on the Frontiers in the 18th Century: Why Trieste? Then and Now” – *Gli ebrei nella storia del Friuli Venezia Giulia*, eds., Miriam David and Pietro Ioly Zorattini. She was an Ellie and Herbert D. Katz Distinguished Fellow at the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

Kirsten Fermaglich began a five-year tenure as coeditor of the *Journal American Jewish History* and was invited to participate in the workshop inaugurating the working group, “Situating American Jewish Studies,” through the Berman Center at Lehigh University.

Jessica Marglin published her book, *Across Legal Lines: Jews and Muslims in Modern Morocco*. She also published the article “Sharia Courts and the Study of Moroccan Jews” in *Hesperis-Tamuda*.

Monique Rodrigues Balbuena was a finalist for the 2016 National Jewish Book Awards in the category of Sephardic Culture for her book *Homeless Tongues Poetry and Languages of the Sephardic Diaspora*. She also published her article, “Ladino in US Literature and Song” in *The Cambridge History of Jewish American Literature*.

Veerle Vanden Daelen was appointed Deputy General Director and Curator at Kazerne Dossin: Memorial, Museum and Documentation Centre on Holocaust and Human Rights.

Books

Maya Barzilai, Associate Professor, Department of Near Eastern Studies, **Golem: Modern Wars and Their Monsters**, NYU Press

Gabriele Boccaccini, Professor, Department of Near Eastern Studies, **Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism**, Fortress Press; **Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels**, SBL Press

Walter Cohen, Professor, Department of English, **A History of European**

Literature: The West and the World from Antiquity to the Present, Oxford University Press

Deborah Dash Moore, Frederick G.L. Huetwell Professor of History, Department of History, **Taking Stock: Cultures of Enumeration in Contemporary Jewish Life**, Indiana University Press

Caroline Helton, Associate Professor, School of Music, **La Tregua: Songs from a Lost World of Italian Jewish Composers, Vol. II**, Blue Griffin Records

Mikhail Krutikov, Professor, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, **Three Cities of Yiddish: St Petersburg, Warsaw and Moscow**, Routledge

Brian Schmidt, Associate Professor, Department of Near Eastern Studies, **The Materiality of Power: Exploration on the Social History of Early Israelite Magic**, Mohr Siebeck

Rachel Seelig Fellow, Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies; University of Chicago, **Strangers in Berlin: Modern**

Jewish Literature between East and West, 1919–1933, University of Michigan Press

David Schoem, Professor, Department of German, **Teaching the Whole Student: Engaged Learning With Heart, Mind, and Spirit**, Stylus Publishing

Scott Spector, Professor, Department of German, **Violent Sensations: Sex, Crime, and Utopia in Vienna and Berlin, 1860–1914**, University of Chicago



Kalman Weiser published *Yiddish: a Survey and a Grammar, Revised Edition* with coeditor David Birnbaum. He also published two articles: “Yiddish: A Survey and a Grammar in its historical and cultural context” and “Saving Yiddish, Saving America Jewry: Max Weinreich in 1940s New York City – Languages of Modern Jewish Culture: Comparative Perspectives.”

Alumni

J.H. (Yossi) Chajes (BA, 1988) was awarded the Friedberg Prize from Israel Science Foundation, and published his book, *Between Worlds*. He also published an article, “Ansky’s Dybbuk as Heretical Midrash,” in *Jewish Studies Quarterly*.

Anna Cichopek-Gajraj (PhD, 2008) was a 2016 Jordan Schnitzer Book Award Finalist for *Beyond Violence: Jewish Survivors in Poland and Slovakia, 1944–1948*.

Saskia Coenen Snyder (PhD, 2008) received a Fellowship-in-Residence at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, a research award from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, and the Advanced Support for Innovative Research

Excellence Research Award from the University of South Carolina Provost’s Office.

Jessica Evans (BA, 2008) accepted a position at American Jewish World Service as Associate Director, Institutional Giving.

Deborah Forger (PhD, 2016) published “Interpreting the Syrophoenician Woman to Construct Jewish-Christian Fault Lines: John Chrysostom and the Pseudo-Clementine Homilist in Chrono-Local Perspective,” in the *Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting*.

Sara Halpern (MA, 2010) received a Junior Research Grant from Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, the Fritz Halbers Fellowship from the Leo Baeck Institute, and a Sharon Abramson Research Grant from the Holocaust Educational Foundation of Northwestern University. She will also be on a Visiting Fellowship at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Erica Lehrer (PhD, 2005) published her article, “Curating Polish Folk” in *Political Critique*.

Eve Posen (BA, 2004) published her new book, *Pirkei Imahot: Wisdom of Mothers, The Voices of Women* with co-author Lois Shenker.

Andrea Ritter (MA, 2013) was hired as an administrative assistant at Wayne State University’s Cohn-Haddow Center for Judaic Studies.

Melissa Sherman (BA, 2009) was honored as one of the “36 under 36” in the January 2017 issue of the *Detroit Jewish News*.

Asa Smith (BA, 2011) was hired as an associate at Epstein, Becker, & Green, P.C. in the Labor & Employment Department.

Retired Faculty

Todd Endelman spoke at a memorial meeting at the University of Southern California for the Holocaust and Anglo-Jewish historian David Cesarani. He also published “The Jewish Health Organization of Great Britain in the East End of London, 1923–1946,” in *An East End Legacy: Essays in Memory of William J. Fishman* and “Salo Baron on the Transformative Power of Early Capitalism,” in *The Enduring Legacy of Salo W. Baron*.

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Art Spiegelman

Save the Date!

MARION KAPLAN

Thursday, September 28, 12:15 pm – Room 2022

SAM KASSOW

Wednesday, October 25, 7:30 pm – UMMA Auditorium

ART SPIEGELMAN

Thursday, November 9, 5:00 pm – Michigan Theater

ZVI GITELMAN

Monday, December 4, 3:00 pm – Rackham Assembly Hall

Spiegelman photo: Enno Kapitza—Agentur Focus

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