Newsletter

Volume 2

2020 - 2021

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Dr. Rachel Kranson  
*Director of Jewish Studies Program & Associate Professor of Religious Studies*

I hope this message finds every one of you healthy and well.

I am thrilled to be stepping up as the Director of Jewish Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. This program, which fosters research and offers courses in Jewish history, culture, religion and thought, has been a most dynamic and satisfying intellectual home for me since I joined Pitt’s faculty in 2011. It has served the same role for so many others – the thousands of students, community members, and faculty who have participated in courses, earned certificates, attended lectures, and benefitted from the research opportunities offered by Pitt Jewish studies. I am honored to have this opportunity to direct a program that has already given so much to the University of Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh community, and the field of Jewish Studies.

As you will discover in this newsletter, our program has remained as active as ever through the challenges of the Covid pandemic. Though much of our programming occurred virtually instead of in person, the faculty and students who make up Pitt’s Jewish Studies program have continued to pursue their research, attend stimulating courses, and access lectures and talks offered by world-class faculty.

None of this could have happened without the exemplary leadership of outgoing director Dr. Irina Livezeanu, whose vision and dedication enabled this program to thrive and grow in spite of the unforeseen challenges of a global pandemic. This coming November, in honor of Dr. Livezeanu’s retirement, we will be hosting a symposium on Images of Jews, Antisemitism, and the Holocaust in Romania. This program will feature the work of Dr. Livezeanu’s former graduate students, now accomplished researchers in their own right. We hope you will join us for this and our other upcoming programs in the upcoming academic year. Please keep in touch with us over email or social media so we can keep you informed about everything we have planned.
I would also love to hear from you! A core part of our mission is to bring cutting-edge Jewish studies scholarship to you, our alums and community members. Please do not hesitate to contact me and let me know about the topics that most fascinate you. If you tell me which aspects of Jewish history, religion, and culture you always wanted to learn more about, we will try our hardest to make that scholarship accessible. The best way to reach me is via email: Kranson@pitt.edu.

Whether virtually or in person, I look forward to learning with you!

Rachel Kranson
As we begin the new school year, I have just stepped down as director of Jewish Studies and retired from teaching in the History Department. It’s a bittersweet mixture of anticipation and regret at this crossroads. I enjoyed very much having the chance to lead the Jewish Studies Program and to work closely with wonderful colleagues and students active in this interdisciplinary field the last few years. I know that I leave Jewish Studies in good shape and in very capable hands. I’ll miss teaching, but I look forward to more time for research, writing, and other projects.

This past year has been challenging for all of us as we were “socially distancing,” feeling either isolated or over-crowded at home as we shifted to working and learning away from campus. Yet in some ways the pandemic has made us smarter, tested our resiliency, and brought about a certain solidarity. It brought us closer together not only because, all around the globe, we’ve had to confront the same virus, but also because we’ve learned to use zoom and meet virtually to discuss, listen, share screens, and learn in new ways. Our entire schedule of classes and talks in Jewish Studies over the last year has taken place over zoom, something many of us had barely even heard of before March 2020. We taught 397 students that way, and we had more than 2500 people from the university and the wider community register to attend our many and varied virtual programs and events over zoom.

Kudos to my colleagues who did enormously innovative work to teach students in this new environment. Adapting courses to the virtual format involved re-designing classes thoroughly. Students at every level performed heroically to adapt to new modes of learning. Everyone, on both sides of the lectern, is excited at the prospect of teaching and learning in physical classrooms again, fingers crossed. Even though I won’t be here to teach, I’m excited as well!

I’m grateful to the Jewish Studies program for sponsoring a symposium focused on the Jews of Romania to mark my retirement on November 12. I hope to see you there and at many other events in the near and more distant future as well!

Irina Livezeanu
**Faculty**

**Director and Certificate Advisor**

**Program Faculty**

Jeff Aziz (Senior Lecturer & Advisor, English): Detective fiction, early modern England.

Brock Bahler (Lecturer II, Religious Studies): Philosophy of Religion, Faith & Reason, Jewish Philosophy (e.g., Levinas, Maimonides).

Aidan Beatty (Scholar Mentor): Antisemitism & Sexuality; Irish Nationalism & Zionism.

Barbara Burstin (Visiting Lecturer, History): American Jewish history, Jews in Pittsburgh, US & the Holocaust.

Frayda Cohen (Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences; Director of Undergraduate Studies, Senior Lecturer & Undergraduate Advisor for the Gender, Sexuality & Women's Studies Program): Children, gender, adoption, reproduction & population policy, transnationalism, & food studies.

Amy-Diana Colin (Associate Professor, German): Holocaust literature, Paul Celan, German-Jewish culture & literature.

Vivian Curran (Distinguished Professor, Law): Comparative Law, transnational law, international human rights, estates & trusts, law & language.


Shirin Fozi (Associate Professor, History of Art & Architecture): Medieval European Art & Architecture.


Laura Gotkowitz (Associate Professor, History): Jews in Latin America, modern Latin America, the Andes, colonial Latin America, political violence & human rights in Latin America.

Keila Grinberg (Professor, Director of the Center for Latin American Studies): Slavery & Abolitionism in Brazil; Jews in Brazil.

*Lina Insana (Associate Professor & Director of Graduate Studies, French & Italian): Primo Levi, Holocaust literature, 20th-century Italy.

Hannah Johnson (Associate Professor, English): Historiography of medieval Jewish-Christian relations.

Jan Musekamp (DAAD Visiting Associate Professor, History): Nationalism, Comparative European History, Germany in the Cold War.

Irina Reyn (Associate Professor, English): Creative writing, American Jewish literature.

*Adam Shear (Associate Professor & Department Chair, Religious Studies): medieval & early modern Jewish history, history of the Jewish book, Zionism & Israel studies.

Oscar Swan (Professor & Advisor, Slavic): Polish & Russian linguistics, Polish cinema & culture.

Eve Wider (Jewish Studies Liaison Librarian, Director, Millstein Library & Coordinator, Regional ULS Libraries): Jewish Studies, library development.
Support Jewish Studies

The Jewish Studies Program is the central hub of Jewish Studies in Pittsburgh.

Support our students, faculty, events, and development by making a contribution today.

Visit [www.giveto.pitt.edu/jewishstudies](http://www.giveto.pitt.edu/jewishstudies) to make a donation. Email Rachel Kranson at kranson@pitt.edu for more information.

Thank You to Our Donors!

We are grateful to our friends for their continued support. Thanks to these contributions, we are able to nurture our community of Jewish Studies scholars and students who will continue to share their knowledge.
Jews are often called the “People of the Book” in reference to the importance and even the sacrality of the study of canonical texts like the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud. The term actually originates in Islamic discourse to identify Jews and Christians as monotheistic worshippers of God with a scriptural revelation. But Jews have embraced this definition and have treasured books and their transmission as part of Jewish culture throughout history.

My research in the last decade has centered on the impact of a new technology in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries—moveable type printing—on the transmission of Jewish literature. During my sabbatical this academic year (2021-2022), I will continue research and writing of a monograph on how print changed the transmission of medieval works of Jewish thought. I am exploring how editors, commentators, publishers, and printers prepared earlier works for publication, adding new features and marketing the books through the invention of the title page. Thus far, I have surveyed hundreds of prints from this period in libraries in Israel, the US, and Europe, looking for particularities and commonalities to understand the new business of printing and comparing these printed books to manuscripts from the same period. Thanks to a Gilboa faculty research grant from the Jewish Studies Program and a visiting fellowship from Magdalen College, I will (pandemic conditions permitting) spend October-December this year in the libraries of Oxford with side trips to Cambridge and London. The Bodleian Library at Oxford has one of the largest collections of Hebrew books in the world.

In this project I also look at how early modern readers used these books, noting marginalia and other features of the copies I examine in the rare book rooms and online. While much of my research for this project deals with what went on inside the print shops of the early modern world, what happened when the books left the print shop and were bought, sold, read, censored, bound, rebound, traded, travelled across long distances, and were passed down to the next generation is also part of Jewish book history.

These early printed books often include owners’ signatures and inscriptions, expurgation and censor’s signatures, bookplates, and other clues that give us evidence about the individual book copy’s movement through time and space. Other kinds of documents (like inventories of library collections or correspondence about books) give us further information about individual book copies. This treasure trove of information about

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**Faculty Spotlight**

**From the Book Stacks**

**Adam Shear**

*Footprints: History of the Jewish Book*

Dr. Adam Shear is an Associate Professor and Department Chair of Religious Studies and affiliated with the Department of History, Jewish Studies, Medieval & Renaissance Studies, Cultural Studies, and the European Studies Center of the University Center for International Studies. He served as Director of the Jewish Studies Program between 2010 and 2018.
the Jewish past is scattered in rare book rooms and archives around the world and until now many scholarly encounters with this evidence was ephemeral or incidental. Several years ago, I suggested that a central place to gather this information and make it available to others would advance our field. From this, my collaborators and I conceived and piloted Footprints: Jewish Books Through Time and Place, a digital project that aggregates this information as data, pulling it all together in order to allow scholars to trace the movements of copies of Jewish books around the globe. We recently launched a short video that explains the project, which can be seen on our website: footprints.ctl.columbia.edu.

Key to a project like this is collaboration: Not only are we bringing together data from libraries and archives, the digital format requires technical support and knowledge. My co-directors are historian Joshua Teplitzky (from Stony Brook University); Talmudist Marjorie Lehman (from the Jewish Theological Seminary), and librarian Michelle Chesner (from Columbia University). The four of us work with librarians from around the world who upload data, with researchers who spend time closely examining the hard copies of the printed books, and with database designers and programmers from Columbia’s Center for Teaching and Learning. We now have over 17,000 records related to the movement of Jewish books in the database and several thousand records in progress that are being checked and formatted for uploading. We have also trained scholars to submit information. This “trusted crowd-sourcing” model represents another innovative aspect of this collaborative digital project. (For those interested in more information, we published an article about our collaborative model in a volume edited by two Pitt librarians, Robin Kear and Kate Joranson, Digital Humanities, Libraries, and Partnerships, 2018.)

I have tried to involve Pitt students in this work as well. There is a small collection of rare Hebraica and Judaica in Pittsburgh at Pitt, CMU, Duquesne, and the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. In pre-pandemic days, I have sent students from my medieval and early modern Jewish history survey to explore what they could find out about books by looking at everything other than the text inside. (Yes, this is a way of judging books by their cover!) This has enabled students who don’t know a word of Hebrew to identify clues to the “footprints” of a book—handwriting (to be deciphered later), bookplates, library markings, and so forth. Several first-year students have worked with me over the years in the Dietrich School’s First Experiences in Research Program to survey auction catalogues and extract information on the sales of Hebrew books. In summer 2020 and 2021, thanks to funding from the Dean’s office, I was able to hire graduate students from the Department of French and Italian as research assistants. Andrei Belisario, Yacine Chemmsi, and Nawel Cotez used their formidable language and detective skills to survey auction catalogues and other material to identify works of Judaica moving through collections in France and Italy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. If you would like to contribute to the project or have ideas for collections and books we should consider, please get in touch! I would love to hear from Pitt alumni and friends. - Adam Shear

Dr. Aidan Beatty, Scholar Mentor at the Honors College and affiliated faculty in Jewish Studies and affiliated faculty in Gender, Sexuality & Women’s Studies, has received the Loewenstein-Wiener Fellowship Award from the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (AJA) in Cincinnati, Ohio. He will spend two weeks at the AJA and use the fellowship to carry out research on antisemitism.

Loewenstein-Wiener Fellowship Award

-lowed faculty in Jewish Studies as well as Gender, Sexuality & Women’s Studies, has received the Loewenstein-Wiener Fellowship Award from the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (AJA) in Cincinnati, Ohio. He will spend two weeks at the AJA and use the fellowship to carry out research on antisemitism.
Dr. Frayda Cohen, Director of Undergraduate Studies and Senior Lecturer in the Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies Program & the Department of Anthropology, was the recipient of a Gilboa Course Development Grant in 2020. In spring semester 2022 she will be offering a new course in Jewish Studies, cross-listed with Religious Studies and Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies: GSWS/JS/RELGST 1715 Feeding the Soul: Food, Gender and Religion. While everyone eats, the ways in which we eat and learn to enjoy food, and even fasting, are culturally constructed. Gender and religion are two key aspects of culture that shape our individual experiences with food and this class will explore these complicated cultural relationships with food and eating as we look at a wide array of religious practices and taboos to explore questions such as: How is food fashioned cross-culturally in ways that connect us to notions of the “divine?”; How do gender, race, and class intersect with religious culinary systems to influence our access to and perspective on food and eating?; What kinds of ethical obligations do we have (or not) to improve the situations of those who are hungry, and the animals who have historically been treated as food?

Dr. Benjamin Gordon, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Affiliated Faculty of Jewish Studies, and Rosenberg-Perlow Fellow in Classical Judaism, published an article called “Health and the Origins of the Mikveh” in the Journal of Ancient Judaism (2020). The article argues that Jewish ritual immersion in mikvehs was first practiced as a healthful activity indebted to Greco-Roman hydrotherapeutics. Immersion of the body in water was seen in the ancient Greek medical tradition as a beneficial activity because it balanced the humors and opened harmful blockages in the skin membrane. Judeans picked up on the custom and their purification rituals followed suit, requiring the construction of special stepped pools—mikvehs—to carry out the ritual. In addition to publishing the article on the topic, Dr. Gordon presented the paper virtually in December 2020 to the “Graduate Interdisciplinary Specialization: Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean” group (GISRAM) at Ohio State University.
Dr. Rachel Kranson, Director of Jewish Studies and Associate Professor Religious Studies, recently published “Rethinking the Historiography of Antisemitism in the Wake of the Pittsburgh Shooting” in American Jewish History’s recent special issue of antisemitism. The article combines personal reflections on the tragedy with an analysis of how American antisemitism has been approached by historians. Kranson calls for American Jewish historians to think relationally about how racism and xenophobia have influenced and shaped antisemitism in America, and vice versa. Read the article at this link: https://muse-jhu-edu.pitt.idm.oclc.org/article/804162

After five years of development, Dr. Rachel Kranson, Dr. Benjamin Gordon, and Aaron Brenner (Associate University Librarian for Digital Scholarship & Creation) officially launched ReligYinz: Mapping Religious Pittsburgh. The ReligYinz project is a dynamic, participatory, and evolving online exhibit that showcases the lived experiences of religion in Pittsburgh. This exhibit features religious Pittsburgh in all of its diversity and dynamism, and in ways that are as colloquial, unexpected, and quintessentially Pittsburgh as our second-person plural pronoun, yinz. For each case study, undergraduate students research, photograph, and write about lived religion in Pittsburgh through course-related assignments that encourage exploration of their own interests. Kranson and Gordon incorporated these case studies into their Jewish Studies courses, enabling students to engage in the Jewish landscape of Pittsburgh. The project was made possible by extensive support from the University as well as a diverse team of faculty members, community partners, staff, and undergraduate students. Visit religyinz.pitt.edu to learn more.
In Focus: Latin America

Dr. Laura Gotkowitz is a historian of modern Latin America whose research and teaching interests center on the Andes and the Southern Cone and encompass such themes as violence, migration, and memory. Her research in Jewish history focuses on Jewish refugees in World War II era Bolivia. She is currently working on a book on antifascisms in Bolivia in the shadow of World War II that has taken her to archives and libraries in Bolivia, the US, and Argentina.

Dr. Keila Grinberg, Professor of History, became Director of the Center for Latin American Studies in January of 2021. Her fields of expertise include the history of Brazil, race and slavery in modern Latin America, and public history. She has also published a history of Brazilian Jews: Os judeus no Brasil: inquisição, imigração e identidade (Jews in Brazil: Inquisition, Immigration and Identity).

Fabián Darío Mosquera is a PhD Candidate in Hispanic Languages and Literatures. In 2020, Mosquera received a Gilboa Research and Travel award to research the literary and philosophical reception of Paul Celan’s poetry in the Hispanic world. Whereas the Jewish tenors of Celan’s poetry were initially occluded in most Hispanic criticism of his work, later a diametrically opposite reaction emerged: an exaggeration of “Jewishness” that highlighted catharsis and the Holocaust. Through this lens, Mosquera seeks to identify the aesthetic and critical mechanisms that feature in the reception of Celan from Spain to Latin America.
Student Spotlights

Congratulations to the Class of 2021!
We were pleased to award Jewish Studies Certificates to three outstanding graduates.

Talia Jade Levi
Major: Psychology
Minor: Neuroscience
Certificate: Jewish Studies

Favorite Class: “My favorite course was Jews and the City with Rachel Kranson. I especially enjoyed our Pittsburgh unit because I was able to learn more about the history of Jews in Pittsburgh!”

Marissa Herzig
Majors: English Literature, French, and History
Minor: Korean
Certificate: Jewish Studies

Favorite Course Reading: G-d vs Gay: The Religious Case for Equality by Jay Michaelson (for The History of G-d)
Capstone Title: “Creations, Names, and Life: Humanity and Femininity in the Female Golem Myth”

Michelle Herzberg
Major: Environmental Science
Certificate: Sustainability, Jewish Studies

Favorite Class Memory: “My favorite class for the JS certificate was Hebrew 5 because I really enjoyed the small class environment, and being able to use my knowledge of Hebrew to talk more informally with my peers and professor.”
Laura Cherner, Class of 2016
Director of the Community Relations Council at the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh

Laura Cherner (she/her) graduated in 2016 with a degree in Political Science and French as well as a Jewish Studies Certificate. Upon graduating, she served as the Assistant Director of Community Relations at the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh for four years. In fall of 2020, she was promoted to Director of Community Relations. In this role, she works to combat anti-Semitism, foster inter-group and interfaith relations, pursue and mobilize for social justice causes, and manage government relations.

How did JSP influence your career?

I feel confident that I would not be in the role I am today without the Jewish Studies Certificate. I initially started as a way to learn Hebrew and my studies quickly evolved to reflect my interests. As a political science major, I naturally started to meld Jewish history with politics and the impact that Jewish Americans have had (and the limitations they have faced) on our political system. Without the opportunities given to me through JSP, such as the Jews in the City course and the opportunity to be published in *Her Deeds Sing Her Praises*, I do not think I would have the job I have today.

What was your favorite Jewish Studies class and why?

Jews in the City with Dr. Rachel Kranson. Dr. Kranson has such a unique style of teaching where it feels like she is telling a story. It was also personal for me as the class covered trends and historical pathways of how the Jewish community was built and nurtured in Pittsburgh. Through this, I was able to draw connections and parallels to the story of my own family. Exploring the journey of the Jewish community in Pittsburgh still impacts the makeup of our community today. For this reason, the class was beneficial to me both personally and professionally.

Did you have any standout, meaningful experiences as a student in JSP? What lessons have stuck with you?

As a part of the Jews in the City course, we were tasked with profiling a significant person or event related to Jewish Pittsburgh which was used as part of an exhibit at the Heinz History Center. I did a profile on Mayor Sophie Masloff. It was incredibly inspiring to research the journey of such a trailblazer navigating the intersections of being a Jewish, first generation immigrant woman. Through this, I had the opportunity to write a short biography on Mayor Masloff and Liliane Kaufmann, which was then published in the NCJW book *Her Deeds Sing Her Praises* by Eileen Lane, Eric Lidji, and Lois Michaels.
Emma Litwak (she/her) graduated in 2020 with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology, a minor in History, and certificates in Jewish Studies and Nonprofit Management. After graduating, she worked at the JCC of Greater Pittsburgh's virtual learning program for children during the pandemic. In 2021, she became the Director of the South Hills Children, Youth, and Family Department and Director of South Hills Day Camp.

**What was your favorite Jewish Studies class and why?**

I really enjoyed taking Hebrew. I had a great professor [Haya Feig] and felt that Hebrew helped me connect more deeply to Israel when I went on Birthright. I also really enjoyed my internship at the JCC of Greater Pittsburgh with the Family Engagement Coordinator. I was able to get hands-on experience.

**How did earning a Jewish Studies Certificate influence your career?**

I found a home in the Jewish community and wanted to continue learning and deepening my connection to this community. The Jewish Studies certificate allowed me to do just that. The hands-on experience from the internship, along with the development of skills that I could use within the Jewish community was something that I absolutely loved. I also enjoyed learning more about the history of the Jewish religion, and getting to dive deeper into that.

### Olivia Devorah Tucker, Class of 2016

**Program Coordinator at Svara: A Traditionally Radical Yeshiva**

Olivia Devorah Tucker (they/them) graduated in 2016 with a degree in Psychology, minors in Legal Studies and Theatre Arts, and a Jewish Studies Certificate. While in school, they also taught Hebrew school. After graduating, they became Program Coordinator and Executive Assistant to Rabbi Sharyn Henry at Rodef Shalom. In 2021, they became a Program Coordinator at Svara.

**Did you have any standout, meaningful experiences as a student in JSP? What lessons have stuck with you?**

I wrote my capstone on trans and nonbinary spaces in Jewish text and modern practice. Professors Benjamin Gordon and Rachel Kranson were a really good tag team of support on this project. I ended up surfacing thousands of years of trans and nonbinary spaces in Jewish history. At the time, it was really helpful to share a lot of different synthesized sources with people who had never encountered these concepts before. It was also helpful for me because the Jewish Studies Program never questioned the veracity of my hypothesis—that there was space for trans and nonbinary people. They helped me to find a throughline of ‘always in fluxness’: the only thing that doesn’t change in Judaism is that it’s always changing. As established researchers, they pointed me to resources that I had never encountered before. I really owe a lot to that.

(Cont. next page)
What was your favorite Jewish Studies class and why?

My favorite course was Jews and Judaism in the Medieval World taught by Professor Adam Shear. I remember an old book project where we got to go into the Special Archives at Hillman Library. They had a really old prayer book that was silver plated with a latch. I put on special gloves to go through the pages and found that there was muck or stains on some of the pages. I was so excited it indicated use! The stains were on the Birkat Hamazon [Grace After Meals]. When I showed Professor Shear, he said, “We could get that tested to figure out what they were eating.” It was so fun to have a professor whose first instinct was, “Let’s test this book stain to find out about their chicken grease!”

Sai Koros (they/them) graduated in 2019 with a Bachelor of Philosophy in Religious Studies and Sociology as well as a Jewish Studies Certificate. Their Bachelor of Philosophy thesis is titled, “For(a)ging Jewish Spirituality from What is Left: Problematizing, Placing, and Practicing.” As a student, they received numerous Jewish Studies Program awards for their scholarship. After graduation, they continued to work closely with the Department of Religious Studies and the Jewish Studies Program as a Digital Humanities Project Coordinator and Assistant, respectively. Since the fall of 2019, they have been a Religious School Teacher at various schools in the area, including Joint Jewish Education Program, Congregation Dor Hadash, and Adat Shalom. Beginning in August of 2020, they now serve as Congregational Manager at Congregation Dor Hadash.

How did Jewish Studies shape your perspective on the world?

The Jewish Studies Program had a profound impact on my outlook of the world. Beyond the personal discovery inherent in exploring one’s own ancestry, each class and professor illuminated the struggles and strengths of Jewish life, showing how Jewish Studies can reveal larger patterns faced by those on the margins. Most powerfully, JSP gave me the resources and tools to apply these insights to other topics like LGBTQIA+ identity. The close-knit nature of the program empowered me to explore my interests and helped to build confidence in my abilities. As a result, I was able to form strong connections with the community, both inside and outside the University. I feel incredibly fortunate to have had JSP’s support through the years.

Are you an alumni who is interested in being featured? Email us at jsp@pitt.edu!
In spite of difficulties from the pandemic, the Jewish Studies Program was honored to virtually host experts from all over the world to present on a wide range of topics. From artists to faculty, students, and community members, our featured events showcased the best of the Jewish Studies community.

Classrooms Without Borders

As part of International Holocaust Remembrance, Classrooms Without Borders was proud to partner with JSP on a 4-part series on Auschwitz Survivor, Chemist, and Author, Primo Levi.

This series began with book discussion of Primo Levi’s Survival in Auschwitz, with Primo Levi Scholar, Lina Insana. Insana, Jewish Studies Program faculty, led a book talk and community event that she described as “a package of recorded lectures, classroom materials (lesson plans, a teaching workshop), and a musical performance to make available for Holocaust Remembrance Day.” The academic approach to the reading of Primo Levi’s works was followed by an artistic approach; we were honored to host renowned singers and musicians, Shai Bachar, Shulamit Ottolenghi and Frank London to demonstrate the works on Primo Levi in song.

These two programs were accompanied by an educator workshop on How to Teach Primo Levi in the classroom. The series culminated in an all day Teach-In on January 27, International Holocaust Remembrance Day, where 71 educators from 11 countries and 16 U.S. States participated in teaching the works of Primo Levi.

To learn more about these programs or see request past recordings please visit the CWB website at classroomswithoutborders.org.
Annual Israel Heritage Room Lecture

The Making of *Shtisel*

*with Q&A to follow*

Yehonatan Indursky

Co-creator of the Israeli TV series *Shtisel*

**Sunday, October 18 at 2:00 p.m.**

Award-winning writer and director, **Yehonatan Indursky** graduated from the ultra-Orthodox Ponevezh Yeshiva, and from the Jerusalem Sam Spiegel Film School. He wrote and created, with Ori Elon, the acclaimed TV series *Shtisel*, which won 17 Israeli Academy of Television awards, the equivalent of the Emmys. The series is currently a hit on Netflix.

His documentary *Ponevezh Time* (2013), was nominated for Best Documentary Film at the Israeli Academy Awards. His short, *The Cantor and the Sea*, won the Best Director prize at the Jerusalem Film Festival in 2015. *Driver* (2018), his first feature, won the Israeli Critics Award. Indursky’s series *Autonomies* received rave reviews and won the Reflet d’Or for the "Best International Television Series" at the Geneva International Film Festival.

This program is presented in partnership with the Hillel Jewish University Center of Pittsburgh, Chabad House on Campus, the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, and the Film and Media Studies Program.

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**Praise from the Audience**

“Thank you for giving us such a meaningful series that offers a real glimpse into the lives of these characters, both haredi and oh so human. I have become so invested in their lives and am excited to know where they are going. It’s beautiful to be able to share in a program that is about Jewish lives, family dynamics, tradition, beliefs, and raw human emotion.”
Ben Schachter

Ben Schachter is Professor of Visual Art at St. Vincent College in Latrobe, PA. During his sabbatical this past year, he was Artist in Residence at the Jewish Studies Program at Pitt. His year-long visit during the pandemic was funded in part by a Provost’s Year of Creativity grant, which we gratefully acknowledge.

This past year, 2020-21, I was honored to be Artist-in-Residence at the Jewish Studies Program. Over the course of the year, I finished and published Akhnai Pizza, ran a workshop with faculty, and offered a four-part lecture to the public. I also gave a Contemporary Jewish Art Lecture titled “Still Jousting with Idols: Jewish Art Criticism Today” in the History of Art and Architecture Department. During that time, my understanding of Jewish texts and how to turn them into visual narrative grew in part because of interactions I had with faculty and students and inspired a project I began while in residence, illustrating the life of Abraham, the patriarch.

Illustrations for this project are still being made and some of them will be shown at Saint Vincent College in the spring 2022 semester. For these images, I imagine what it might be like to work for a king whose ideas are not one’s own, to leave home, and to find oneself in strange environments. Abraham’s life, in a very powerful way, ran counter to the cultures around him. And yet, many interpretations of the texts describe his values and way of life in traditional terms. The contradiction between counter culturalism and tradition inspires my current illustrations.

I am grateful to Irina Livezeanu, Director of the Jewish Studies Program, for hosting my residency and to everyone who organized the events. Together, we showed that circumstances affect but do not limit success.

-Ben Schachter
Remembering Kristallnacht, 9-10 November 1938
SYNAGOGUES BURNED; JEWISH HOMES, HOSPITALS, ORPHANAGES, SCHOOLS, & BUSINESSES ATTACKED; JEWS ARRESTED AND INTERNED

Monday, Nov. 9, 4:00-5:00 p.m.
30 Years at the University of Pittsburgh

Readings by University of Pittsburgh Students
Musical Selections by Suzanne Ortner
Reflections on the Hidden Children who Survived the Holocaust, by Keith Sachs

Sponsored by the German Department, the Jewish Studies Program, and the German Embassy's Campus Weeks Program

ZOOM REGISTRATION LINK: HTTPS://PITT.ZOOM.US/MEETING/REGISTRATION/20KK02Z7HOM45ON7FKD07L-TSHMYT5CD
**The Crossroads Album:**
Exploring Jewish and African-American Histories in the Hill District through Sound

**A Talk by David Zahniser**
David Zahniser is a senior at the University of Pittsburgh. He recorded this album during the summer of 2020 as part of an Honors College Bracketridge Fellowship.

**Friday, April 9 at 11:00 a.m.**
*This Crossroads* tells the stories of the Jewish and African-American communities residing in the Hill District of Pittsburgh from the late 1800s to the mid-1950s. The album portrays parts of each community’s story through musical compositions and sounds to immerse the listener in various time periods. The Hill District was an incredibly important location for both communities, and this project is meant to highlight its significance.

Sponsored by the Jewish Studies Program and the Department of Music.

**Zoom Registration Link**
https://pitt.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_pr6H8m5w5ycqorHbyD3kg

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**Shazam! Jewish Biblical Texts Transformed by the Power of Pictures**
A Four-Part Lecture/Workshop Series
Featuring

**Ben Schachter**, Artist in Residence, Jewish Studies Program, University of Pittsburgh

*Jewish tales are often inspired by icons. For stories become afterimages and books become comics. The purpose of the four-part lecture is to demonstrate how visual storytelling enhances our understanding of Jewish narratives and ideas. There is a common claim that these two forms of story are often a matter of style, or, in other words, that there is no way to separate the two. This series of talks will be an exploration of the visual storytelling and how it is often another form of interpretation. Specifically, we will see how elements of grammar and text are transformed and adapted to convey ideas to a new narrative. Images can be used to transform ideas to the same extent as text. We will use images in the Jewish narrative to explore the transformative power of art.*

**Biblical Stories Then and Now**
Thursday, February 18 @ 7:30 PM

**Zoom Registration Link**
https://pitt.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJzyfowqOzrzAtyAqmp5kA4luA04zgsFjA3sg

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**Joshua in Goblins: Biblical Adaptation**

**Thursday, February 25 @ 7:30 PM**

**Zoom Registration Link**
https://pitt.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJzyfowqOzrzAtyAqmp5kA4luA04zgsFjA3sg

*The second presentation focuses on the ways in which stories are changed in their telling. The ancient narrative serves not only to retell and share but also to prompt new stories. The reviewer and the audience will evaluate the process and the content of the images that are created. We will examine how the ancient story is transformed into a new narrative. We will also examine how the story is transformed into a new narrative. We will examine how the ancient story is transformed into a new narrative. We will examine how the ancient story is transformed into a new narrative.*

**Text and Image: A Tasty Palatable Debate**
**Thursday, March 4 @ 7:30 PM**

**Zoom Registration Link**
https://pitt.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJzyfowqOzrzAtyAqmp5kA4luA04zgsFjA3sg

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**Vichy Law, the Holocaust, and the Dangers of 'Incrementalism' when Participating in a 'System of Evil'**

**Friday, March 5**
**11:00 - 12:00**

**Dr. Richard Weisberg**
Yeshiva University
University of Pittsburgh

Richard H. Weisberg is the Walter Reischheimer Professor of Constitutional Law at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University, and is currently a visiting professor of Law at the University of Pittsburgh. A scholar of Vichy law, Professor Weisberg has also helped litigate successfully in American federal courts on behalf of Holocaust survivors and their heirs, providing a measure of justice for World War II victims of anti-Semitism.

**Zoom Registration Link**
For more information about upcoming events, including registration links, please visit jewishstudies.pitt.edu

**Registration URL:** https://pitt.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJzyfowqOzrzAtyAqmp5kA4luA04zgsFjA3sg

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**Joshua in Goblins: Biblical Adaptation**

**Friday, February 26 @ 1:00 PM**

**Zoom Registration Link**
https://pitt.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJzyfowqOzrzAtyAqmp5kA4luA04zgsFjA3sg

**Emma Squire** is a doctoral candidate in the Theatre Arts Department. She is currently working on her pioneering dissertation on the Yiddish Theatre in Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuania. Through archival research in Vilnius, and interviews with spectators and theater artists, her project explores the repertoire, challenges, and cultural impact of the Jewish Folks Theatre in communist times.

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**Poster** (in Lithuania, Russian, and Yiddish) for a production of Sholem Aleichem’s play *Peyre the Millman*. Part of a collection of posters and other theatre ephemera from the Judaica Research Centre at the National Library of Lithuania.
This story is my story, told from the memory and viewpoint of a very young child who, from the age of 4 until the end of the war, was a hidden child. It’s a story about fear, separation from family, traveling on a long train ride to a place you know nothing about. It’s about guilt, seen through a child’s eyes and guilt, now seen through the eyes of a 68-year-old lady who is still trying to figure out why she survived while other children died.

This is also about courage. The courage you get after tragedy. It’s about the will to live and to make each day a gift, which you have to constantly deserve.

By sharing her own story, Renée shared the stories of millions of children who did not survive the Holocaust.

Biography

Renée Lyszka Lise Sachs was born in March of 1940 to Abraham and Sarah Lyszka, Polish secular Jews living in Paris. Abraham had immigrated in 1913 when he was 17-years-old. A master tailor, he worked for a fashion house in Paris and could pass as Aryan, unlike Sarah, who emigrated from Poland to France in the late 1930s through an arranged marriage to Abraham. Sarah was lucky to leave Poland; her relatives who remained there did not survive the war.

Two months after Renée was born, the Germans occupied France. When Renée was four, a neighbor reported Sarah to the Gestapo as being Jewish. Though she was a young child, Renée had a clear memory of her first experience of antisemitism:

It happened when my mother and I were standing in a bread ration line. The lady who was selling the bread looked at my mother and said, “We don’t serve Jews here.” Nous ne servons pas les Juifs ici. She said it as loudly as she could. What did she mean?
Shortly thereafter, Renée found herself at home alone when a government official knocked on the door asking for Sarah. In her memoirs, Renée recalled “being absolutely paralyzed with fear.” Like many other Hidden Children, she blamed herself. “I knew I shouldn’t have opened the door,” she said. Sarah and Abraham took Renée to stay with a neighbor when they learned what had happened.

The next day, the police arrested Sarah and took her to Drancy, a transit camp north of Paris. Through bribery she was spared from deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau, and she was released from Drancy. When Sarah returned, Renée saw that “she was angry, she was sad, she didn’t talk.” Renée, still only four, felt responsible for her mother’s imprisonment.

Soon, her parents sent her to live with relatives, who also lived under false identities, in Saint Pardoux, a provincial town south of Paris. Renée attended Catholic school and had to live under a false identity herself. Before going off to Saint Pardoux, Renée vividly remembered hanging onto her mother, begging, “please don’t leave me. I didn’t do anything wrong. I’m so sorry.” She was taken to the train station, boarded the train alone, and was given instructions to transfer to another train and sit near an open window. Worried about her safety, she sat near a couple so it looked like they were her parents. When the train arrived at her stop, Renée recalled, “I was swiftly pulled through the open window by a man I did not know. He took me to my aunt’s home.” The entire trip was over eight-hours long. Once there, she remained in Saint Pardoux until after the war. Though she was constantly afraid, Renée grew fond of her relatives and enjoyed being with them.

After the war, Renée returned to Paris at age eight to find her mother ill and her father absent. Renée became her mother’s caretaker, best friend, therapist, “sister,” even “mother.” Still a small child, Renée had to become an adult too early. Soon, her mother was too ill to provide for Renée so she was sent to a post-war orphanage for Jewish children, where there were many children separated from their parents during the Holocaust. When letters from Renée’s mother stopped coming, she knew her mother had died. It would be 15 years before Renée learned of the circumstances of her mother’s death and where she was buried.

Though Renée had a difficult childhood due to her Jewishness, she had little idea of what it meant to be Jewish. Looking for answers when she was a young teenager, Renée took a book from the Yeshiva across the street from her orphanage. She put the book under her pillow, hoping that she could learn from it even if she could not read Hebrew. Later, she learned that “Jews were a people with a history of survival” who stood up for the oppressed.

After graduating from the orphanage school at 15, Renée’s father sent her to live with relatives in York, Pennsylvania. She traveled alone to the United States, just as she had when she went to Saint
Pardoux. Not knowing English when she arrived in the U.S., she could only speak to her uncle in French and to her aunt in Yiddish. She entered the 7th grade due to her lack of English, but then quickly mastered the language and graduated high school at 18.

Renée went on to receive her BA with honors in Education at West Chester College and an MA in Comparative Literature at the University of Michigan. She married her husband, Keith, in 1969 and they had two children, Anne and Joshua. Renée became a teacher of French and other romance languages. In her free time, she participated in a French book club, belonged to a synagogue, went to the theater, collected antique teacups, and did needlework. She had a gift for languages and spoke English, French, Yiddish, Spanish, and Italian.

Renée realized she had a responsibility to teach that there were better ways to resolve the world’s problems than war and that each of us has a responsibility to leave the world a better plan than it was when we were born. She wanted to teach children, young adults, and older adults how to love and be loved.

After Renée passed away, a video recording of her testimony was given to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC and Memorial de la Shoah in Paris. Now, her testimony is available for educators, students, and anyone who wishes to keep her stories and lessons alive. View her testimony: www.collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn526746.

We will remember Renée with reverence and appreciation.
In Memoriam

Jerry Rosenberg

Jerome L. Rosenberg
June 20, 1921 - June 12, 2021

Jerry “Jerry” Rosenberg was an educator in every sense of the word. During his 64-year tenure at the University of Pittsburgh, the longest career of anyone at Pitt, Rosenberg served as a chemistry professor, president of the faculty senate, dean, vice provost, and chief research integrity officer. Among Rosenberg’s accomplishments during this time was his essential involvement in establishing both the Jewish Studies Program in the early 1970s and the Israel Heritage Nationality Room in the Cathedral of Learning in 1987. Rosenberg also served as director of the Jewish Studies Program in the 1990s.

Born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Jerry Rosenberg grew up in an observant Jewish family during the Great Depression. He received his BS in Chemistry at Dickinson College, and his PhD at Columbia University; he held a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Chicago. During this time, he was also part of the Manhattan Project. In 1954, Rosenberg began his long tenure at Pitt until finally retiring in 2017 when he was 95-years-old.

Outside of Rosenberg’s academic accomplishments, he was an avid tennis player, a violinist in a string quartet, and a primary Torah reader at the Young People’s Synagogue in Pittsburgh. He was active in the Hebrew Institute of Pittsburgh, a Jewish educational institution that later merged to become the Jewish Educational Institute in Pittsburgh. He and his wife, Shoshana, had two children, Judith and Jonathan. His daughter, Judith Cohen, shared that her father “hated unscheduled time. He had to fill up every moment of the day. You’d get exhausted just watching him.” A true renaissance man, he was actively involved in art, theater, music, science, sport, and philanthropy.

At Pitt, Rosenberg harnessed his multidisciplinary interests throughout the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences. As Dean in the 1970s and 80s, he responded to calls for new academic programs such as those in African American Studies, Cultural Studies, and Women’s Studies. In this context he was key to the creation of the Jewish Studies Program as well. “He took the bull by the horns and made it happen,” explained Alexander Orbach, emeritus scholar of modern Jewry hired at Pitt in 1977 to teach in the Religious Studies Department and Jewish Studies. Rosenberg secured the necessary funding, created the framework for
undergraduate and graduate coursework. Later, he contributed financially to the Program’s endowed position, the Perlow-Rosenberg Fellowship in Classical Judaism. “Jewish Studies was near and dear to his heart,” Cohen said. While Judaism and Zionism were of great personal importance to Jerry Rosenberg, Orbach explained that he expected students and faculty to uphold high academic standards—to look at the Jewish experience “not from the inside, but from a critical, scholarly perspective.” Of course, this was the case for Rosenberg across disciplines, and throughout his life.

Whether in the university, in the synagogue, on the tennis court, or the concert hall, Rosenberg’s passion for excellence was clear. The Jewish Studies Program has been profoundly affected by his tireless, generous commitment to its development. His memory will live on with us for decades to come.

“We will remember Jerry with warmth and gratitude.”
Next up

University of Pittsburgh

Jewish Studies Program
Fall 2021 Events

Friday, October 8, 10:00AM–11:30AM, VIRTUAL
Bioethics Work-in-Progress Colloquium
“Abortion, American Jews, and the First Amendment”
Dr. Rachel Kranson (Director, Jewish Studies Program)

Friday, October 15, 10:00AM–11:30AM, VIRTUAL
Jewish Studies Work-in-Progress
“King David, The Sweet Singer of Israel: A Musical Exemplar for the Late Antique Synagogue”
Jill Joshowitz (PhD Candidate, New York University; Visiting Scholar, University of Pittsburgh)

Tuesday, October 26, 5:30PM, VIRTUAL
“The Might of the Living Dead: Thinking with Zombies in Medieval Jewish Culture”
Dr. David Shyovitz (Northwestern University)

Friday, November 12, 10:00AM–5:00PM, HYBRID EVENT
A Symposium in Honor of Dr. Irina Livezeanu
“Image and Memory: Jews, Antisemitism, and the Holocaust in Romania”

For more information, including how to access virtual events, please visit the "Events" tab at jewishstudies.pitt.edu.

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