



David J. Wasserstein
Program Director

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THE PROGRAM IN JEWISH STUDIES

Annual Report 2007-08

The Program in Jewish Studies (PJS) was formally launched in August 2002, when then-Provost Nicholas Zeppos appointed Jack M. Sasson to a three-year term as its director and commissioned a committee to shape the program. Now concluding its sixth academic year, under the directorship of David J. Wasserstein, the Program in Jewish Studies continues to grow and to contribute to the teaching and research mission of Vanderbilt University.

Committee 2007-2008

David J. Wasserstein, Director, Professor of History and of Jewish Studies, Eugene Greener, Jr. Professor in Jewish Studies

In its sixth year, the Program in Jewish Studies was served by a Steering Committee made up of the following (in **bold** are appointees in the Program):

Dan Cornfield, Professor of Sociology; Director, Vanderbilt Center for Nashville Studies; Acting Director of the Vanderbilt Institute for Public Policy Studies

Sara L. Eigen Figal, Assistant Professor of German

Ellen Goldring, Professor of Education Policy and Leadership, Peabody College

Shaul Kelner, Assistant Professor of Sociology and of Jewish Studies

Richard King, Associate Professor of Religious Studies

Leah Marcus, Edwin Mims Professor of English

Ed Rubin, John Wade-Kent Syverud Professor of Law and Dean of the Law School

Jack Sasson, Mary-Jane Werthan Professor of Jewish Studies and Hebrew Bible, Professor of Classics

Allison Schachter, Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies and of English

Martina Urban, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and of Jewish Studies

In 2008, the following roll off the Committee: Dan Cornfield, Ellen Goldring, Sara Eigen Figal, Richard King.

We thank them for their support of the work of the Committee and the Program.

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The year opened auspiciously with the Inaugural Lecture of David J. Wasserstein, the Director of the Program, as first holder of the Eugene Greener, Jr. Professor in Jewish Studies (See last year's **Report** for news of the generous endowment gift by Cindy and Dan Edelman establishing this Chair). Entitled "The Date-Seller and the Rabbi: Fictions of History", the lecture was delivered in Wilson Hall before an audience of several hundred that over-flowed into a neighboring hall, a welcome sign of the significance that Jewish Studies has for colleagues and friends of the Program on campus and in the broader community.



David Wasserstein

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Current Faculty:



Martina Urban



Shaul Kelner



Allison Schachter

New Faculty:

The major development this year has undoubtedly been the appointment of Julia Phillips Cohen as our new Assistant Professor in Modern Jewish History. This post is shared with the History Department, and the search was held in the Fall of 2007. A joint Search Committee was established with the following membership:

Katherine Crawford (History); Jack Sasson (Divinity, for Jewish Studies); Helmut Smith (History); Martina Urban (Religious Studies, Jewish Studies); David J. Wasserstein (History and Jewish Studies; Chairman). The post was advertised early in the Fall, with an indication of a preference for a candidate with expertise in the history of the Jews in the modern Middle East, Zionism and the State of Israel. We received some forty applications, nearly half of them from women and roughly a third from outside the USA. The Search Committee invited three of the candidates to campus for interview, and finally recommended to the Dean that he invite Julia Phillips Cohen to take up the post here. She accepted the Dean's offer and will arrive in Nashville during the summer.



Julia Phillips Cohen

Julia Phillips Cohen will be an Assistant Professor both in the Program in Jewish Studies and in the Department of History. She is about to graduate with a doctorate in Modern Jewish History from Stanford University in California. The title of her dissertation is "Fashioning Imperial Citizens: Sephardi Jews and the Ottoman State, 1856-1912." She has an MA from Stanford too, and received her

BA in Spanish and History from the University of California, Davis. Her teaching interests include a variety of topics in modern Jewish history, the comparative urban histories of Europe and the Middle East, Jewish-Muslim relations and the modern Ottoman Empire. Dr Phillips Cohen's current project focuses on the imperial loyalties and local identities of Ottoman Jews in different urban centers of the eastern Mediterranean. She has received several grants in support of her work, including fellowships from the Stanford Humanities Center, the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, the Institute for Turkish Studies and the American Research Institute in Turkey. Her publications include "'Zeal and Noise': Ottoman Jewish Patriotism during the Greco-Ottoman War of 1897," in Michael Laskier and Yaacov Lev, eds. *Judaism and Islam in Medieval and Modern Times* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, forthcoming); "From the Streets to the Synagogues: Competing Visions of Patriotism and the Ottoman Jewish Celebrations of 1892," in Esther Benbassa and Aron Rodrigue, eds. *Itinéraires Sépharades* (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, forthcoming); as well as several entries on late Ottoman Judeo-Spanish print culture in Norman Stillman, ed.

The Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). We look forward enthusiastically to welcoming her to Vanderbilt.

- Because of the renewed search for the History appointment, we asked Richard McCarty, Dean of the College of Arts and Science, for permission to postpone the search for a new junior level appointment in Rabbinics, to start in Fall 2009, to Fall 2008.

Inter-collegiate Professor:

- We negotiated with Adam Meyer (Fisk University) to teach a course on '*Civil Rights and Civil Wrongs: Black-Jewish Relations in the 1950s and 1960s*'.

Intra-collegiate Professors:

- Helmut Smith (History) taught *JS 156 The Holocaust*, Fall 2007, for a second time, once again attracting a large registration.
- Tom Schwartz (History) taught *JS 256 Power and Diplomacy in the Modern Middle East* this year not as a Special Topics course but as a permanent Jewish Studies course.
- Jay Geller (Religious Studies) taught *JS 244 Freud and Jewish Identity* in Spring 2008.

CURRICULUM

The number and variety of courses offered in the Program are increasing, and although not all courses attracted as many students as we should like, numbers overall continue to grow. Courses offered in 2007-08 included the following:

FALL 2007

Jewish Studies 115F.04. *FYS: Civil Rights and Civil Wrongs: Black-Jewish Relations in the 1950s and 1960s.* Through an examination of historical and literary texts, as well as visual images, this course explores the shared history of Blacks and Jews, focusing on the period of its greatest intensity, the 1950s and 1960s. The course shows examples of Black-Jewish relations ranging from the heights of utopian co-operation to the depths of dystopian conflict, with many points in between. [3] Meyer (15 students registered for this course)

Jewish Studies 115F.05. *Gender, Sexuality, and Desire in Jewish Literature.* Do images of the Jewish mother and the neurotic Jew in American popular culture originate from the Bible? In this course we study the history of Jewish culture through an examination of changing representations of gender in Jewish literature and film. We look at texts that both represent and challenge accepted ideas about gender roles, male and female sexuality, marriage, and beauty ideals. We also consider whether male and female writers portray gender differently. Our readings span a broad range of literary texts, from biblical stories to contemporary American Yiddish literature. Topics to be discussed include: same sex desire, Jewish mothers, henpecked husbands, drag, and representations of the Jewish body. This course serves as an introduction to both gender studies and Jewish literature. No prior knowledge of Jewish culture is required. [3] Schachter (14 students registered for this course)

Jewish Studies 120. *Islam and the Jews.* Jewish experience under medieval Muslim rule. Analysis of primary sources, legal status of Jews, economic activities, religious developments, cultural contributions, reaction to the Crusades. [3] Wasserstein (25 students registered for this course)

Jewish Studies 121. *Introduction to Jewish History.* A survey of major moments in Jewish history from the Hellenistic period to the foundation of Israel, exploring themes of exclusion and participation, identity and emancipation. [3] Wasserstein (18 students registered for this course)

Jewish Studies 155. *American Jewish Life.* How Jews, Jewish communities, and Judaism in the US and abroad adapt to a changing world, in light of classic sociological themes such as the relation of the individual to the group; the nature of authority; religion and ethnicity in modern society. [3] Kelner (13 students registered for this course)

Jewish Studies 156. *The Holocaust.* This course is an introduction to the Holocaust: its origins, the way it happened, the issues it raises. The course has no prerequisites and does not assume grounding in history. [3] Smith, Helmut (43 students registered for this course)

Jewish Studies 255. *Zionism and Its Critics.* History of the Zionist idea from the 19th century, focusing on ideological, cultural and religious issues and examining criticism from within and without the movement. [3] Urban

Foreign Program Work (FNTM) 251. *Jewish Studies in Prague, Czech Republic.* The CET program in Jewish Studies offers students the opportunity to explore the enormous contribution of Jewish life to the culture, literature, arts and history of East Central Europe. For students who want to take an in-depth look at the rich Jewish history and culture in East Central Europe before the war, its destruction during the Nazi years, and its gradual rebirth after the fall of communism. The city of Prague, where the program is located, is host to the oldest continuous Jewish community in Europe and one of the richest collections of Judaica in the world. Living in Prague students will encounter the challenges that the Czech Republic faces in the period of transition between Soviet Communism and the privatization of many political, social and cultural institutions.

SPRING 2008

JS 115F.06. Arab and Israeli Poetry and Fiction: Mirrors and Contrasts Across Frontiers. Ways contemporary literature and other arts in Israel and surrounding Arab countries have been informed and influenced by religious traditions (primarily, though not exclusively, Jewish and Islamic) as well as various other aspects of culture. Focus on the intriguing, complex relationship between culture and artistic production. Questions regarding language, identity, gender, geography, borders, exile and migration, history, homeland, and memory figure prominently. [3] Hibbard

JS 115F.07. From Freud to Chomsky: Revolutionary Sciences in Jewish America. A surprising number of Jewish European and American linguists, poets, anthropologists, media-types and scientists of the Cold War era were inspired by “new techniques” aimed at uncovering the mathematical, psychic, poetic or biological basis of language. Given the political urgency of this project, and the vast sums of money available to those involved in propaganda, anti-propaganda, decoding, translating, and describing language, it’s not surprising that this period was witness to a convergence between radical politics, military exigencies and willful reverie. This course surveys the range of experiments undertaken by Jews working in different disciplines, and thereby makes some surprising links among well-known Jewish intellectuals, including Noam Chomsky, Louis Brandeis, Albert Einstein, Allen Ginsberg, and Roman Jakobson. [3] Barsky

Jewish Studies 135W. Introduction to Hebrew Literature. A look at the origins and development of Hebrew literature from the environs of Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century to post-modern Israeli literature written

at the end of the twentieth century. Participants trace both the developments and the disjunctures in this literary history, paying attention to the relationship between historical transformations and literary form. [3] Schachter (12 students registered for this course)

Jewish Studies 245. Major Themes in Jewish Studies. Critical and comparative study of Jewish culture using evolving models and paradigms for Jewish beliefs, identity, and history. For majors and potential majors. [3] (11 students registered for this course)

Jewish Studies 246. Berlin and Jewish Modernity. Rise of Jewish modernism presented by Jewish writers in Germany 1900-1933. [3] Urban

Jewish Studies 256. Power and Diplomacy in the Modern Middle East. History of the Middle East in the 19th and 20th centuries with an emphasis on U.S. involvement after 1945. U.S. relationship with Israel, and its impact on the region. [3] Schwartz (32 students registered for this course)

Foreign Program Work (FNTM) 251. Jewish Studies in Prague, Czech Republic. (See Above).

In addition, in order to increase awareness of our offerings, we redesigned the Major and Minor requirements. Current Majors and Minors may opt for the old requirements, but the following new criteria will go into effect with Majors and Minors declaring as of Fall 2008:

Major in Jewish Studies

The major in Jewish Studies requires a minimum of 30 hours.

1. *Foundational course*, 3 hours. JS 180W Introduction to Jewish Studies: Brothers and Others.
2. *Hebrew*, 6 hours. Intermediate Hebrew (Hebrew 113a–b). Proficiency at the level of Intermediate Hebrew can be demonstrated through testing.
3. *Focus courses*, 12 hours selected from 3 of 4 subfields of study:
 - Biblical Studies
 - Antiquity and the Medieval World
 - Modern and Contemporary Experience
 - Culture, Philosophy, and Literature
4. *Senior seminar*, 3 hours. JS 295, Senior Seminar, or JS 296, Senior Project in Jewish Studies.
5. *Electives* (minimum of 6 hours)

In addition to courses drawn from departments and the professional schools, non-traditional course work may also be selected, including archaeology at Tel Megiddo (Israel), service learning, and internships. Study abroad is encouraged and can be fulfilled with Jewish Studies in Prague and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Minor in Jewish Studies

The minor in Jewish Studies provides a basic understanding of Jewish history and culture across continents and the past three millennia. The minor requires a minimum of 18 hours.

Core Requirements (15 hours)

1. *Foundational course*, 3 hours. JS 180W Introduction to Jewish Studies: Brothers and Others.

2. *Language*, 6 hours, Elementary Hebrew (111a-111b). Proficiency at the level of Elementary Hebrew may be demonstrated through testing.
3. *Focus courses*, 6 hours. (See major for categories)

Electives (minimum of 3 hours)

Special Topics courses or First-Year Writing Seminar courses dealing with topics related to Jewish Studies may be counted with the approval of the major or minor adviser.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- We continued stimulating public and student awareness about Jewish Studies, via the Web, brochures, open-house and advertisement
- We participated actively in the United Jewish Communities General Assembly, a gathering of approximately 4,000 Jews from all over the world, held this year in Nashville. We coordinated efforts with the Undergraduate Recruitment office to publicize not only the Program in Jewish Studies but Vanderbilt University as a whole
- We maintained memberships for the Program in the
 - Association of Jewish Studies
 - Latin American Jewish Studies Association
- We subsidized one MA student at 15% of tuition (with the Graduate Department of Religion providing 70%, for a total of 85%)
- We hosted a conference on the topic *Reflections on Czernowitz 100 Years Later: Yiddish Culture in the Twentieth Century*

The conference was held, in the new conference facilities in the Commons and in Buttrick, on Sunday and Monday, 30-31 March 2007, and included the following formal sessions and speakers:

Opening address:

Hillel Kieval (Washington University, St Louis)

“Imagining the Jewish Cultural Nation in Europe:
From the 1905 Revolution to the First World
War”

Jewish National Fermentation: Peretz, Gordin, and a Yiddish Theater

Chair: Edward Friedman (Vanderbilt University)

Michael Steinlauf (Gratz College) “Hope and Fear: Y. L. Peretz in 1905-06”

Barbara Henry (University of Washington) “The Accidental Nationalist: Jacob Gordin”

Joel Berkowitz (SUNY, Albany) “The Many Languages of Modern Yiddish Drama”

Modernism, Nationalism, and the Production of Jewish Culture

Chair: Barbara Hahn (Vanderbilt University)

Jeffrey Veidlinger (Indiana University) “From Helsingfors to Czernowitz: Jewish
Conferences on the Russian Margin”



Ellen Kellman (Brandeis University) “The Afterlife of the Kultur-Lige in Interwar Poland”

Allison Schachter (Vanderbilt University) “Gender and the Jewish Nation: Jewish Modernism in the Interwar Period”

Redefining Jewish Nationalism: Post-Holocaust Yiddish Culture

Chair: David Wasserstein (Vanderbilt University)

Kathryn Hellerstein (University of Pennsylvania) “Gender and Nation in 1945: Poems by Kadya Molodowsky and Malke Heifetz Tussman”

Robert Adler-Peckerar (University of California, Berkeley) “Theaters without Audiences: The Turkow Brothers and the Internationalization of Yiddish”

Anna Shternshis (University of Toronto) “Is Yiddish Still a Language of Jewish Nationalism in Eastern Europe? Yiddish Culture in the Post-Soviet Space”



- We hosted a lecture on 10 April, 2008, by Professor David Stern, Ruth Meltzer Professor of Classical Hebrew Literature at the University of Pennsylvania, on the subject “Through the Pages of the Past: The Jewish Book in Historical Context.”

- We gave major support to a conference:

THINKING WITH FRANZ ROSENZWEIG, held on 13-14 March 2008, in Buttrick and at the Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center on campus. The program included the following sessions:

Helmut Walser Smith (Vanderbilt University) “The Nineteenth Century turns to and away from the Humanities. Leopold Zunz, Franz Rosenzweig and the Predicament of Scholarship”

“Rosenzweig’s Love Letters to Gritli Rosenstock: A Reading”, composed by Barbara Hahn (Vanderbilt University) and Brett Sterling (Vanderbilt University)

Meike Werner (Vanderbilt University) “Franz Rosenzweig as a Young Intellectual: Reflections on his Diaries”

Jim McFarland (Connecticut College) “Rosenzweig and Benjamin: Young Intellectuals and the Modern”

Barbara Hahn (Vanderbilt University) “A New Grammar of the Soul: The Correspondence Gritli Rosenstock-Franz Rosenzweig”

Gesine Palmer (University of Luzern) “Writing *The Star of Redemption*”

Nils Roemer (University of Texas, Dallas) “Franz Rosenzweig: Letters of Love and Thoughts of Longing”

Steve Dowden (Brandeis University) “Rosenzweig, Weber and the Call”

➤ We supported sponsorship of lectures and other projects throughout the Vanderbilt community

- 30th Annual Vanderbilt University Holocaust Lecture Series, October-November 2007, entitled *Broken Silence*

- the visit of Professor Saul Friedlander (in addition to our overall sponsorship support for the Holocaust Lecture Series)



- a book-project by Professor Nathalie Debrauwere-Miller (French Department, Vanderbilt University) for a collection of essays entitled “Scroll and Scarf: Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the francophone world”

- a lecture by Yaakov Ariel, professor of Religious Studies and Jewish Studies at the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill), on “Missions, Converts and Jewish-Christian Culture” (4 April 2008)



- Paul Miller, of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, to attend the annual conference of the Latin American Jewish Studies Association

- in the larger community, support of the People’s Branch Theater production of Ariel Dorfman’s “Death and the Maiden” (February 2008)



- two lectures, on 20 March 2008, by Said Ennahid, assistant professor in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at al-Akhawayn University in Ifrane (Morocco):
 - “The State of Jewish History Among Moroccan Scholars”
 - “In Search of the Medieval City: An Archaeological Reading of Medieval Texts”

ADMINISTRATION

Through its Administrator, Lynne Perler, the Program

- maintained the office of the Program in Jewish Studies
- maintained the website of the Program
- promoted the Program in Jewish Studies through student-targeted print advertising (*InnerVU*, *Hustler*, etc.):
 - August 2007 – advertised Fall 2007 Jewish Studies courses in *Hustler*
 - August 2007 – delivered 4,500 flyers to student mailboxes for Fall 2007 courses
 - November 2007 – delivered 4,500 flyers to student mailboxes for Spring 2008 courses
 - November 2007 – advertised Spring 2008 courses in *Hustler*
 - April 2008 – delivered 4,500 flyers to student mailboxes for Fall 2008 courses
 - April 2008 – advertised Fall 2008 courses in *Hustler*
 - April (and also up-coming in June) 2008 – advertised in a special Supplement of the *Hustler* to promote the Program in general
- participated in student-targeted event – Majors Fair
- administered the graduation of an MA: Alex Cutler
- administered the granting of a Certificate in Jewish Studies to Chris Paris
- accepted an MA student for 2008-09: Sam Lorber

The Miller Gift, mentioned in last year's **Report**, was presented to Vanderbilt's Program in Jewish Studies by Diane and Steven Miller. Money from this gift was used during the year to purchase books for the Library in the Program's Conference Room in Buttrick, helping us to develop what will become a major resource for the Program as it seeks to become a home for Jewish Studies and Jewish Studies students – undergraduate to senior researchers – on campus.

In 2007-08, Martina Urban returned from a sabbatical in Germany; Shaul Kelner will be spending next year on sabbatical, in Israel, with the help of a Research Scholar Fellowship from Vanderbilt; and David Wasserstein, out-going Director, will be spending next year as a Fellow of the Davis Center for Historical Studies at Princeton University.

LOOKING AHEAD

My three years as Director have been demanding - and rewarding. Vanderbilt University's Program in Jewish Studies is continuing to grow and winning recognition as a premier program among our peer institutions with such programs. As we anticipate our seventh year, we hope to forge ahead on all fronts. What are our ambitions for the future?

Faculty Development

- To make a successful appointment to a position in Rabbinics within the Program.

Curriculum Development

- To continue negotiations for a full Study Abroad program in Spain
- To expand participation in the Study Abroad program in Israel, agreed upon during the year by the University's risk assessment bodies
- To stimulate the production of more JS courses taught by faculty from within and without Vanderbilt
- To concretize Service Learning opportunities
- With Peabody College, to create a Master of Education in Jewish Studies program, with multiple foci.

Program Development

- To continue seminars for faculty and launch equivalent forums for undergraduates
- To broaden public interest in JS through lectures and conferences
- To seek new funding support for the Program's expanding teaching and research activities.



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