



*Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic
Studies*

2013-2014 Annual Report

Director's Message

It is my pleasure to submit this year-end report of the Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies for AY 2013/14.

This was a year full of events, initiatives, and ideas. It was a time for us to try new ways in which the Elie Wiesel Center serves the academic mission of the College of Arts and Sciences, enhances faculty productivity, interacts with students across campus, reaches out to the wider Boston area, and represents BU in the wider world of Jewish studies.

To mention a few highlights:

In CAS/GRS, we

- doubled the number of students declaring an undergraduate minor concentration in Jewish studies,
- hosted a semester-long visiting professorship in Jewish studies and Religion,
- and graduated two doctoral candidates in Jewish studies.

On the BU campus, we

- worked with Hillel-affiliated students and other student and faculty groups to facilitate an open debate on Israel and the Middle East,
- and co-sponsored a week-long residency of Israeli playwright Savyon Liebrecht.

We appealed to the greater Boston area by

- offering two major public lectures, the Fall 2013 Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Lecture with former NYT Jerusalem Bureau Chief Ethan Bronner, and the first in a new series named for Rabbi Leo Trepp, with Susannah Heschel as the featured speaker,
- and hosting a kosher wine tasting with BU Trustee Peter Paul and star-vintner Jeff Morgan.

We attracted professional attention to Jewish studies at BU by

- joining the list of institutional sponsors of the Annual Meeting of the Association for Jewish Studies,
- advertising graduate fellowship opportunities nationally and internationally,
- and launching a postdoctoral fellowship in Jewish studies and the Core Curriculum that attracted over sixty applications from the US, Canada, Europe, and Israel.

None of these achievements should come as a surprise: we have a robust community of teaching and affiliated faculty who contribute actively to the curricular and academic mission of the Center; we have gifts and endowments that enable us to support faculty and students; we have a dedicated building that we are eager to fill with life; and we enjoy the goodwill of

many friends on and off campus, including Professor Elie Wiesel, who continues to take a lively interest in the life of the Center.

We have already begun planning programs for next year. This includes a return of Elie Wiesel for a public conversation with Alan Dershowitz, scheduled for Sept 22, 2014, and the annual Yitzhak Rabin Memorial lecture in late October, with Amichai Ayalon as this year's distinguished speaker. Ami, who currently serves as chairman of the executive committee of Haifa University, formerly served as head of the Israeli Navy and of Israel's security service, the Shin Bet.

This annual report includes a summary description of our activities by category (undergraduate, graduate, faculty, events, etc.), followed by a detailed documentation.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the faculty who contributed time, energy, and initiative to the Center, taught challenging and engaging classes, shared of their research, and helped us to be even more ambitious in our plans for next year. I extend this thanks to the stellar staff of the Center, foremost among them our full-time administrator Diane Bensel, graduate assistant Leanne Hoppe, and undergraduate assistant Erin Shibley who brought imagination, good cheer, focus and professionalism to the task of running numerous events, both large and small. Finally, we congratulate our graduating class and wish everyone success in their future undertakings. It was a privilege to have you here as students and we hope you will stay in touch.

Yours,

Michael Zank

Professor of Religion

Director, Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies

Undergraduate News

This year we financially supported two undergraduate students' study abroad in Haifa. Rachel Dushey, a recent Muslim Studies graduate, was supported by the David V. Karney fund. Lena Steinberg, a Jewish studies student and prospective minor, was supported by the Brooks Family Endowment.

To address the issue of enrollments in Jewish studies, particularly in religion classes, we resolved to reinvigorate our outreach and approach to students. Ahead of enrollment season, we held two sessions at the Hillel House (February 26 and March 5), where we offered Jewish studies and religion course samplings; the meetings included dinner for students accompanied by brief faculty overviews on upcoming classes. The events were well planned and advertised. Faculty participating included Professors Lobel, Klawans, Katz, Levine, and Zank; however student attendance was disappointingly in the single digits.



From left: Former BU Hillel student president Joel Udwin, Melanie Weiser (COM '14), and Jeremy Lowe (SMG '14) at the spring 2014 EWCJS undergraduate party.

A year-end Jewish studies undergraduate party, held on April 23 at 147 BSR, was more successful. Advertisement targeted Jewish studies minors, but invitations were open and, consequently, other students attended as well. The event included a Jewish-themed pictionary game; a staged faculty latke vs. hamentashen debate with Professors Abigail Gillman and Simon Rabinovitch, who delivered fantastic and captivating speeches; as well as a performance of three songs by Kol Echad, a BU student a Capella group affiliated with the Hillel House. About fifteen students attended, with several professors participating in the evening's activities.



Rachel Dushey in Haifa, Israel

Student Spotlight

Rachel Dushey, CAS '14

Rachel Dushey is a recent graduate of the College of Communications. In fall 2013, Dushey received EWCJS funding for study abroad in Haifa, Israel.

"I was able to take classes that were very specific to my interests: Arabic, Media in the Arab World, Honors Peace & Conflict, and Bible: Soul's Journey. All of my professors were knowledgeable and kind. My summer Arabic class was taught by a young Jewish Israeli that I grew close to, and my semester class was taught by a Jewish Israeli who worked in the army's Intelligence unit. . .

Haifa is the perfect place for Arabic language immersion, in which I participated during the recommended August pre-semester option, and then as a regular class during the semester. There is a high number of Arabic-speakers, whether students at the University or residents in the area. Many students offered help with our homework. The teachers were great and incorporated local history, songs, and

greetings into our lessons. During the semester, I lived in the Talia dorms with four Palestinian girls, two Muslim and two Christian, as well as a German, who was studying Hebrew. She had a great experience with the Hebrew program and learned to speak very well. The situation was peaceful in our apartment. Some international students became very close with their roommates." *See appendix for full report*

Graduate Student News

This year, we are delighted to graduate two PhD students. Michelle L. Bellamy, B.A., M.A.R., a September 2013 graduate, received her PhD upon completing a dissertation in biblical studies entitled "The Elijah-Elisha Cycle of Stories: A Ring Composition" (major professor: Katheryn Pfisterer Darr). Ingrid Lisabeth Anderson, B.A., B.A., M.A., graduated with a PhD in Religious Studies (major professor: Steven T. Katz). She completed her PhD with a dissertation on "Making Ethics 'First Philosophy': Ethics and Suffering in the Work of Emmanuel Levinas, Elie Wiesel, and Richard Rubenstein." Ingrid's superb

teaching abilities were recently recognized by the CAS Writing Program, which offered her one of two highly coveted lectureships for next year.

In July 2013, Chaim (Elly) Moseson (PhD student, GDRS Track II) received funding from the Henry J and Carole Pinkney Fund for travel to Odessa, Ukraine, where he participated in the Sixth Session of the International Forum of Young Scholars on Eastern European Jewry. This forum, which is co-organized by EWCJS Prof. Rabinovitch (History), meets biannually at various locations and brings together young scholars of Eastern European history from across the globe for workshops led by senior scholars in the field. On his trip, Elly visited all principal towns associated with the life of Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of the Hasidic movement, before arriving in Odessa for the forum. He was able to trace his ancestry to the regions he visited.

The following graduate students also received Center funding: Ekaterina Anderson (David V. Karney Fund), Ingrid Anderson (Ezratti Family Fellowship Fund), Yair Lior (David V. Karney Fund), Maoqin Tang (Ezratti Family Fellowship Fund, Judaic Studies Scholarship Fund, and Bronia Horn and Sarah Berger Fund), and Arslan Tazeem (Judaic Studies Scholarship Fund, David V. Karney Fund). Monica Rey (David V. Karney

Fund) received funding to participate in an archaeological dig in Israel for the summer of 2014.

Newly affiliated graduate students include Ekaterina Anderson (Anthropology), Monica Rey (GDRS), Jeffrey Bristol (Anthropology), Elina Tochilnikova (Sociology), and Staci Rosenthal (MED).

Two PhD students with a significant focus in Jewish studies will enter BU in the fall of 2014: Jonathan Kelly was accepted into the Graduate Division of Religious Studies Track II (Philosophy of Religion) where he will work on post-Holocaust theology and Jewish philosophy. Adam Westbrook was accepted into GDRS Track III (Religion and Society); his research interests include religious pluralism, the democratic imperative of religious literacy, as well as the role religion can play in



On right: Elly Moseson (GDRS, PhD Track II)

conflict and conflict-mediation. He has spent time studying intergroup conflicts throughout the world, and has facilitated and led interreligious dialog in the United States and Israel/Palestine.

Faculty News

New Affiliation

We are delighted to include Professor **Irit Kleiman** (Romance Studies) in our AY 2014/2015 list of affiliate faculty. Professor Kleiman teaches courses on medieval and Renaissance French literature and culture. Her research interests include written cultures, historiography, intellectual history, psychoanalysis and literature, the cultures of memory, and the tropes of embodiment. She has published essays on the apocryphal life of Judas Iscariot, ethics in Chrétien de Troyes, and rhetoric in the works of Alain Chartier and Norman jurist Thomas Basin. Kleiman's recent book *Philippe de Commines: Memory, Betrayal, Text* (University of Toronto Press, 2013) received the Newberry Library's Weiss/Brown Award. Professor Kleiman is active in promoting the field of medieval and early modern studies at BU, and she organized the interdisciplinary conference "Voice and Voicelessness in Medieval Europe and Beyond" during the spring of 2013.

Visiting Faculty

In the fall of 2013, visiting lecturer Professor **Abigail Jacobson** taught a course on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (CAS HI393: Topics in the History of Israel), which received rave reviews and was written about in *BU Today*. Dr. Jacobson, who is scheduled to teach this course again in spring 2015, is the author of *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem Between Ottoman and British Rule* (Syracuse University Press, 2011). She is a trained mediator who has worked with Israeli and Palestinian youths and who has taught at various colleges and universities in Israel and the US. Prior to teaching at BU, she served as a junior fellow at the Crowne Center for Middle East Studies at Brandeis University.



EWCJS Visiting Prof. Thomas Meyer at the final BU JS Forum

In the spring of 2014, we hosted Professor **Thomas Meyer** as a visiting professor in Jewish studies and religion. Professor Meyer previously taught on the history of political theory at the University of Chicago, Vanderbilt University, and Wake Forest University. At BU, he taught two courses in the Religion department: a philosophy of religion seminar on Weimar era philosophy (Cassirer and Heidegger at Davos, 1929: CAS RN397), and Modern Jewish Thought (CAS RN329). The courses were well enrolled and received excellent reviews. During his semester at BU, Professor Meyer also lectured at Harvard and Princeton and published a widely referenced review of Heidegger's recently published "black notebooks" (*Schwarze Hefte*). That review was subsequently cited in the New York Times (see appendix).

On April 30, 2014, Professor Meyer presented his ongoing research on Leo Strauss at the last session of our Faculty/Graduate Research Forum. Thomas Meyer and Michael Zank plan to continue working together: analyzing and commentating on Leo Strauss's notes on the biblical Book of Kings and related material from the mid-1920s. Strauss's notes provide a glimpse of the scholar engaged in a close reading of medieval Jewish Bible commentators at the very time

he was working on a critical study of Spinoza's modern critical approach to the Jewish sacred scriptures, published in 1930 as *Die Religionskritik Spinozas als Grundlage seiner Bibelwissenschaft*.



From left: Prof. Michael Zank (RN, Center Director), Dr. Ingrid Anderson, Rebecca Esterson (GDRS), Prof. Margaret Litvin (MLCL), and Peter Herman (Visiting Researcher)

Other Faculty News and Accolades

Professor **Kimberly Arkin** (AN) published her book, *Rhinestones, Religion and the Republic: Fashioning Jewishness in France* (Stanford University Press, 2014). She also published "The Vanishing State: Religious Education and Intolerance in French Jewish Schools," (Oxford University Press, forthcoming) as well as a review of *Bukharan Jews and the Dynamics of Global Judaism* by Alanna E. Cooper in winter 2014, and delivered a lecture, "Calling Jesus a 'dirty Jew': renegotiating the Jewish Question in Contemporary France," at the American Anthropological Association, in Chicago, and to the Society for French Historical Studies, in Boston. Additionally, Professor Arkin gave a presentation entitled "Beyond tolerance: Jews, Jesus, and pluralism in contemporary France" in Washington, D.C. for the Council for European Studies.

Professor **Andrea Berlin** (AR) continued work on her international collaborative Levantine Ceramics Project. She organized a workshop in Jerusalem on March 10 that was attended by sixty Israeli archaeologists. Berlin also published a review of *The Roman Temple Complex: at Horvat Omrit: An Interim Report* by J. Andrew Overman in the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 369, and two articles, "Dining in State: the Table Wares from the Persian-Hellenistic Administrative Building at Kedesh," and "A New Administrative Center of the Persian and Hellenistic Periods at Tel Kedesh of the Upper Galilee". Next year, Professor Berlin will serve as a Jeffrey Henderson Senior Research Fellow at the BU Center for the Humanities, to complete her monograph on Tel Kedesh. The book will present the results of her excavations and explain how the discoveries reveal new insights into biblical history.

Professor **Alicia Borinsky** (RS) refereed the American Academy in Berlin Fellowship Competition, and published two articles, "¿Dónde está la niña?" and "Le puede pasar a cualquiera" (fiction). She also participated in a fiction reading, a panel in Buenos Aires, "La pasión de la Mirada," and gave a lecture entitled "Counterfeit Buenos Aires" at NYU.

Professor **Michael Grodin** (SPH) held a BPSI Members Seminar in February; he continues to work on his initiative, the Project on Medicine and the Holocaust.

EWCJS founding director and Slater Professor **Steven T. Katz** (RN) gave lectures at several international conferences, including "Holocaust Education in Muslim Countries," at the Aladdin Foundation Conference (Istanbul, October), "Economic Interpretation of the Holocaust" at the Wiener Library Conference (Tel Aviv, November), a talk on "Analyzing Mystical Texts" at the Iranian Association for Philosophy of Religion Conference (Teheran, January), and "The Importance of Holocaust Education" at the UNESCO Conference on Holocaust Education (Paris, January). In a diplomatic role, Professor Katz attended an academic committee meeting at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum and chaired a meeting

on "The Care of Killing Sites in Eastern Europe" at the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Conference. During a four-day visit to the Vatican, he met with senior officials of the IHRA about the possibility of a Pope Pius XII World War II Archive; the meeting was attended by figures such as Ambassador Mario Silva and Sir Andrew Burns. At the Twentieth Commemoration of the Rwandan Genocide, Rwanda, he gave a talk on "Genocide Comparisons", and in New York City served as chair at the Fellowship Committee meeting of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany. He also participated in a conference on Roma During World War II in London, during which time he met with the U. K. Prime Minister in his home.

Professor **Pnina Lahav** (LAW) served as faculty advisor to the Jewish Law Student Association this year. She also published an introduction to a special issue of *Israel Studies*, an article titled, "Women of the Wall: American Jewish and Israel Feminism" in *Sh'ma Journal*, and presented her paper on Golda Meir and the IS women's movement at the BU Women's Studies conference in April. In September 2013, Professor Lahav delivered the first inaugural keynote address to the Israel Association of Legal History.



From left: Prof. Stephen Scully (Classics), Arslan Tazeem (GDRS, PhD Track II), Prof. Pnina Lahav (LAW), and Donald Altschiller (Mugar Library)

Professor **Margaret Litvin** (MLCL) received a promotion to Associate Professor of Arabic and Comparative Literature this year. She also launched a new BA that combines Middle East and North Africa Studies (MENA) into a coherent and interdisciplinary academic program, to which she now serves as director. Professor Litvin published an article in *Theatre Research International* entitled, "Between Tahrir and 'Tahrir': Documentary and Prophetic Theatre Impulses toward the Egyptian uprising, an article on *Hamlet* in *Hamlet Handbuch* (J B Metzler, 2014), and her review of *The Speaker's Progress* was published in *Shakespeare*, the journal of the British Shakespeare Association. Professor Litvin gave a lecture, "Forgive me, Tolstoy!" at the University of London as part of the Russian Literature and Russian Reality in Arab Writers' Lives Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies conference (May 2014), as well as two lectures on Shakespeare for conferences in Chicago and New York (January, March 2014).



From left: Prof. Israel Bartal and Prof. Simon Rabinovitch (HI)

Professor **Jeffrey Mehlman** (RS) published an article "French Literature and the Holocaust" for a volume edited by Alan Rosen (Cambridge University Press, 2013) and an article in the French journal, *Revue d'histoire de la shoah* (March 2013).

Professor **Simon Rabinovitch** (HI) gave a lecture for a panel in honor of the installation of Suzanne Fortier as Principal and Vice-Chancellor of McGill University (November 2013), and he also lectured on Moses Gaster for a workshop in Paris (October 2013). Professor Rabinovitch published an article, "Searching for the Meaning of 'Russian'" for the *Marginalia Review of Books*, and his review Faisal Devji's *Muslim Zion, Pakistan as a Political Idea* was published in *Haaretz*.

EWCJS director Professor **Michael Zank** (RN), published a review of Richard L. Velkley's *Heidegger, Strauss, and the Premises of Philosophy: On Original Forgetting*, contributed an invited essay to "TABU: Bruch," a project related to the Austrian Nobel laureate Elfriede Jelinek, and met in Israel with representatives from universities and NGOs to work on

various current and future collaborations. In June 2013, Professor Zank lectured on “Leo Strauss and Hermann Cohen” at a workshop of the Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung in Berlin, and in January 2014 he lectured on “Jewish Philosophy and the Problem of History” at the Bar Ilan University Department of Jewish Philosophy. Additionally, Professor Zank gave two inter-curricular lectures at BU, on the Hebrew Bible in the context of the humanities and on Jerusalem in the Muslim tradition. He also worked on a volume of essays written by colleagues and students of Elie Wiesel, in honor of Wiesel’s eighty-fifth birthday, co-edited by EWCJS assistant Leanne Hoppe, a graduate student in the GRS Creative Writing program.

Course Focus

Thomas Meyer, PhD, Munich

Thomas Meyer was the EWCJS spring 2014 Visiting Associate Professor of Jewish Studies. While at BU, he taught two courses, delivered a BU JS Forum lecture, and participated in numerous events held at the Center. His current work encompasses a critical biography of political philosopher Leo Strauss. Professor Meyer, who received his philosophical doctorate (2003) and teaching qualification (habilitation, 2009) from Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, is the author of seven books and numerous articles on many subjects in modern Jewish thought and Continental philosophy. His appointment at BU was made possible by the Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies endowment fund.

His topics in philosophy and religion course on **Heidegger and Cassirer at Davos, 1929** (CAS RN397/PH456/GRS RN697/PH656/STH TT819) met for three hours on Thursday evenings. The seminar was open to advanced undergraduates and to graduate students with some background in philosophy: The 1929 Davos debate is remembered as one of the seminal moments in twentieth century history. The ostensible subject of this intellectual duel in front of witnesses was the legacy of Kant, but it really pitted against one another a science-oriented neo-Kantianism, represented by Ernst Cassirer (later famous for his philosophy of symbolic form) and a new, critical departure from the western philosophical tradition represented by Martin Heidegger. The course reviewed basic texts, some of them newly published, and the philosophical problems at stake.



EWCJS Visiting Prof. Thomas Meyer

Postdoctoral Fellowship in the Core

With income from EWCJS endowment funds, we developed a new postdoctoral position in Jewish Studies and the CAS Core Curriculum. After a competitive search and review, in which many colleagues participated, CAS heeded our recommendation and offered the fellowship to Alexandra Herzog (B.A. B.A./M.A., B.A./M.A., M.A., ABD).

Alexandra Tali Herzog is a doctoral candidate in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis University, scheduled to defend her dissertation in June 2014. Alexandra specializes in modern Jewish literature, with an emphasis on Yiddish literature in America, especially the life and work of Isaac Bashevis Singer. She holds a BA in Biblical Hebrew as well as BA/MA degrees in French literature and English literature from the University of Geneva, and a joint MA in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies and Women's and Gender Studies from Brandeis University. She has taught in the Brandeis University Myra Kraft Transitional Year Program for first-time college students from underprivileged backgrounds. Other experience includes teaching in the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Brandeis University and service as a teaching fellow and instructor at the Cambridge School for Adult Education, the Collège Voltaire in Geneva, and the University of Geneva. She has presented her scholarship at professional conferences in the US and in Europe, and has published (online) a précis of ongoing work on hitherto unpublished letters by Bashevis Singer; Alexandra plans to integrate this into a book that will be based on her dissertation. Her familiarity with a broad swath of medieval and modern European—specifically French and Anglophone—literature positions her well to teach in the Core Curriculum, and her expertise in American Jewish modernism and gender studies deems her an attractive candidate for our interdisciplinary program in Jewish studies.



Alexandra Tali Herzog

In the Community: Lectures and Events

We held a number of events to raise our profile on campus, enhance our relationship with the regional alumni-community, and reach out to the Boston-area public. These included two public lectures, one in the fall of 2013 and one in the spring of 2014, as well as a “salon” event, and a residency of Israeli author and playwright Savyon Liebrecht, in which we hosted a world-premiere of her new play, *Freud's Women*.



Ethan Bronner (Deputy National Page Editor, NYTimes)

2013 Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Lecture

On November 19, 2013, we revived the Yitzhak Rabin lecture series with a presentation by Ethan Bronner, former Jerusalem Bureau Chief of the NY Times. Mr. Bronner spoke on the difficulties, as a reporter, of covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict while attempting to keep amicable relations with both sides. He provided a firsthand account of the life of a journalist and the hardships faced when dealing with controversial issues. The lecture was held at the BU Hillel House and attracted an audience of about sixty people. On this occasion we connected with Mr. Jonathan Krivine, who endowed the series and expressed an interest in expanding it. We intend to make the lecture an annual event.

Inaugural Leo Trepp Lecture

Our second major lecture, held on April 23, 2014, was initiated by Gunda Trepp, widow of Rabbi Leo Trepp and friend of BU Trustee Peter Paul. Leo Trepp was an orthodox rabbi from Germany who immigrated to Boston in the 1940s and later settled in California. Through connections with Rabbi Joseph Polak, former director of BU Hillel House, Gunda approached us with the plan of establishing a lecture series in honor of her late husband. She also donated the Trepp family Torah scroll, a valuable gift, to the Elie Wiesel Center. We intend to host two additional Trepp lectures, annually, before making the decision on whether to make this a permanent event. Professor Susannah Heschel (Dartmouth College), daughter of A. J. Heschel and friend of Gunda Trepp, delivered the inaugural lecture, "Joy and Obligation: The Legacies of A.J. Heschel and Leo Trepp." Gunda Trepp and Consul General of Germany to New England Mr. Rolf Schuette offered introductory remarks.



From left: Mary Elisabeth Moore (Dean, BUSTH), Alane Shani (Independent Consultant), Alexandra Rozenman (Visual Artist), Prof. Susannah Heschel, and Miriam Shenitzer (Visual Artist/Teacher)

Savyon Liebrecht

Working with the Jewish Cultural Endowment, the Hebrew program, and Israeli Stage (Guy ben Aharon), we hosted Israeli author and playwright **Savyon Liebrecht** for a two-week residency in Boston. On March 24, 2014, Liebrecht offered a well-attended seminar on "Writing after the Shoah," and on March 26 she gave this year's Newton Family Lecture, "The Creative Process," at the BU Hillel House. On March 30, the series concluded with a staged reading of Savyon's new play *Freud's Women*, at Boston Playwrights' Theatre. In addition, Liebrecht's play, *The Banality of Love* was performed on April 28 as a staged reading at Morse Auditorium with a keynote address by Holocaust survivor Rosian Zerner (co-sponsored by CJP). The residency was the result of collaboration between our new lead-teacher in the Hebrew program, Miriam Angrist, Prof. Abigail Gillman, convener of Hebrew in MLCL and coordinator of the Newton Family Lecture Fund, JCE, and EWCJS.



From left: Prof. Michael Zank (RN, Center Director), Savyon Liebrecht, Prof. Miriam Angrist (MLCL, Hebrew Program), Prof. Abigail Gillman (MLCL, Director of Undergraduate Studies), and Guy Ben-Aharon (Director, Israeli Stage)

Advanced work, open to the public: the “BUJS Forum”



Foreground: Ann Vasaly (Chair, Classical Studies) amidst the audience of the final 2013/14 BU JS Forum

This year we reinstated the BU Jewish Studies Faculty/Graduate Student Research Forum (BUJS Forum). The meetings, conducted monthly, were broadcast in a combination of weekly online newsletters, posters, email reminders, and personalized email blasts to relevant BU, Northeastern, Boston College, Brown, Harvard, Stonehill, Suffolk, and Brandeis faculty. Over the academic year, we held seven lectures with subjects ranging from Jewish history and philosophy to cultural studies and literature.

Speakers included graduate student Elly Moseson, senior Israeli historian of eastern European Jewry Israel Bartal, German scholars Christina von Braun (Berlin) and Ursula Reitemeyer (Münster), Italian scholar Giuseppe Veltri (Halle, now: Hamburg), BU faculty Abigail Gillman, and visiting professor Thomas Meyer. Held in the EWCJS library (JSC 202), the meetings enlivened our space and contributed to the prestigious atmosphere of the center. Attendance ranged between fifteen and thirty colleagues, students, and community members.

Special Events

An **Alumni Weekend Symposium**, held October 27, 2013, helped to jumpstart our collaboration with the CAS Core Curriculum. The symposium was held under the theme of Jewish Text(s) and the College Humanities. Invited participants included: BU alumnae Leah Hochman (PhD DRTS 2000), now a professor at HUC/JIR and USC, and Lesleigh Cushing (PhD DRTS 2003), now a professor at Colgate University; Robert Gibbs, director of the Jackman Center for the Humanities at University of Toronto; Naomi Seidman, Koret Professor of Jewish Culture and Director of the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies; and Susannah Heschel (Dartmouth University). BU panelists included Jewish studies faculty Diana Lobel (RN), David Frankfurter (RN), and Alicia Borinsky (RS), and Core faculty Stephanie Nelson (Director) and Stephen Esposito (Classics).



From left: Prof. Hillel Levine (RN), a member of the Boston Psychoanalytic Society, Prof. Christina von Braun, and Rabbi Joseph Pollack

On November 12, 2013, we screened Margarethe von Trotta’s widely acclaimed film, **Hannah Arendt** in the College of Communications. The event included a post-screening discussion with JS faculty Deeana Klepper, Abigail Gillman, and Pnina Lahav and attracted about eighty guests, mostly undergraduates and community members. The discussion was lively and dynamic, with Arendt critics and devotees both engaging in the talk.

On January 23, 2014, we offered a **kosher wine tasting** salon event with California star-vintner Jeff Morgan. The concept for this occasion mirrored our 2011 salon-style event, which featured the Arneis Quartet performing a Jonathan Berger piece inspired by a Sh. Y. Agnon story. These events allow us to use the center’s beautiful Victorian ambience to offer an



BU Trustees Elaine Kirshenbaum and Peter Paul

engaging fusion of high culture, intellectual stimulation, and conviviality. The January wine tasting and talk (“Manischewitz It’s Not: Ruminations of a Kosher Vintner”) was generously supported by BU Trustee Peter Paul, who introduced Jeff Morgan and offered guests a taste from his own vineyards. The event filled our library to capacity and received media attention from the *Boston Globe* and *Pour Favor* blog.

Israel-Related Activities

In an effort to continue our commitment to Israel studies, we hosted visiting faculty and offered several Israel-related co-curricular lectures, film screenings, and co-sponsorships.

Visiting Professor Abigail Jacobson offered a class on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the History department. This class was exclusively funded by the EWCJS.



Prof. Omri Boehm

On October 19, 2013, the EWCJS and the Jewish Law Student Association offered a screening of a documentary by Ra’anan Alexandrowicz, “The Law in These Parts,” on judges serving in Judea and Samaria (West Bank). The filmmaker was present and engaged the audience in a lively Q&A discussion.

On December 5, 2013, the EWCJS and the BU Hillel House co-hosted a public lecture by Dr. Yuval Steinitz, Minister of Intelligence of the State of Israel.

On January 27, 2014, we hosted a lunch meeting with the Consul General of Israel to the Tri-State Area, Ambassador Ido Aharoni, who spoke on “Israel and Nation-Branding.” The event was held at the BU Hillel House.

On April 2, 2014, Prof. Omri Boehm (New School of Social Research) gave a talk on Avi Shavit’s *My Promised Land*. This was advertised as a co-curricular event, serving several CAS classes, and held in CAS 326.

In addition, we hosted formal and informal conversations with various BU students, faculty, off-campus groups, and colleagues in Israel to enhance our knowledge, inquiry, and debate related to Israel and the Middle East. We were delighted to see EWCJS-affiliated faculty Margaret Litvin successfully launch a new major concentration in Middle East and North Africa Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences. The major integrates Israel with other Middle Eastern nations in an attempt to comprehensively engage in critical discussions. We look forward to working with her in the future. The revitalization of the Hebrew program is also notable and we are committed to

supporting new head-lecturer Miriam Angrist in her course developments. CJP also sought the center’s aid in developing follow-up courses for graduates of the Birthright program on BU campus. During a trip to Israel, Professor Zank met with the Haifa University International School Academic Director to discuss ways of strengthening our ongoing partnership (see report in appendix). Two Israel-related courses are scheduled for next year, both fully funded by EWCJS. Finally, we have launched an ongoing consultation between the STH dean and EWCJS faculty to model open and civilized campus debate on Israel/Palestine issues.

Funding and Co-Sponsorships

The EWCJS occasionally co-sponsors initiatives by faculty and students in other units who are engaged in academic work related to Jewish studies. This year, we sponsored many activities, ranging from lectures and travel aid to a class trip to NYC.

In a divergence from recent practices, the Jewish Cultural Endowment (JCE), a CAS-based fund, and the EWCJS director agreed that the JCE would be more effectively administered from within EWCJS. Administrator Diane Bensel took on this additional responsibility, but oversight concerning the funding remains under the auspices of the JCE board (current chair: Prof. Michael Grodin). The work of the JCE has been significant in providing major funding for widely visible cultural events, including the fall 2013 CFA "Wagner in Context" series, directed by Deborah Burton, the European Studies' Russian Voices Film Series (Sept. 30 - Oct. 28), and historical commemorations such as the Italian Holocaust Remembrance Day (Jan. 27), organized by Professor Nancy Harowitz (RS). The transition has helped JCE streamline its procedures and makes the administration of this important fund more manageable.

EWCJS also provided supplemental funding for the following JCE-sponsored events: "Writing History in the First Person," a lecture by Max Ubelaker Andrade (Nov. 22); the Amos Wilder lecture and a seminar with scholar/poet Joy Ladin (Mar. 20, 21, respectively); and a lecture by Francisco Ramirez on "Mateo Alemán's Spelling Reform: Autobiography, Converso Caste, and the Arrival of Modernity" (Mar. 27).

We funded a class trip to New York in November for Professor Simon Rabinovitch and six of his students (CAS HI219). The group took a walking tour of the Lower East Side and visited the Tenement Museum.



Students at the spring 2014 EWCJS undergraduate party

Center Developments

Expanding Outreach Database and Methods

AY 2013-2014 saw the vast improvement of our outreach databases. Our online mailing lists increased two-fold, extending to Jewish studies faculty of various centers in the Greater Boston area. A postal mailing list to local synagogues and relevant organizations took fruition, as well. From our organizational need arose an efficient system of outreach which included researching deadlines for online calendar, local newspaper, and journal submissions; collaborating with centers such as the BU Center for the Humanities (BUCH) and Hillel to promote events; preparing monthly email newsletters; dispatching weekly event reminders via email and telephone; consistently updating our Facebook and Twitter pages; and sending personal invitations to BU and area faculty and students prior to events. On campus, we posted flyers to dormitories and advertised one of our major events, the Inaugural Leo



Faculty, staff, and students enjoy ice cream at the spring 2014 EWCJS undergraduate party

Trepp Lecture, in a casing in front of Warren Towers. We also advertised in local newspapers: the *Boston Forward* (*North Shore Jewish Journal*), the national *Forward* education issue, and the *Jewish Advocate*. Finally, we renewed our institutional membership with the Association for Jewish Studies (AJS) and advertised in their program book.

New Offices and Staff Developments

In wake of Kilachand Honors College's relocation, EWCJS offices moved to the first floor of 147 Bay State in January 2014. Since then, consistent staffing of the front desk and accessibility of administrative offices and the director's office have made the Center more accessible and visible to students.

This year, we hired four student workers with varied skill sets to help execute administrative tasks. This expansion of our administrative staff aided immensely in the planning and fulfillment of events and the consolidation of the Center's professional profile. With our hires, we have been able to finish several projects such as revamping our social media presence; cataloging over fifty boxes of books on Jewish Law, donated by Neil Hecht; and compiling and editing two tribute volumes, in honor of Elie Wiesel and of Steven Katz. We now have a team that can effectively divide tasks and cover more area than before. Weekly staff meetings to update progress and discuss possible avenues for outreach organize the Center's ongoing dynamics into an efficient and manageable system.



BU Hillel a Capella group Kol Echad performing at the spring 2014 EWCJS undergraduate party

Updating Website and Archives

Considerable staff time and attention went into professionalizing our website and increasing our social media presence. We documented various events through audio/visual media and are planning to harvest these images for future outreach work, including a professional summer newsletter to our donor community and an e-bulletin sent out to all members of AJS. We have archived past lectures on our website, making them available to the public, including a comprehensive collection of Elie Wiesel's annual lecture series, "Three Encounters with Elie Wiesel: The Fascination with Jewish Tales," beginning with his lectures in 2001. This will provide an opportunity for those who have not attended our events to explore our prestigious and intellectually stimulating lectures and connect with our center's namesake.

Professional Promotion

In recent months, EWCJS has worked with a graphic designer to create a consistent, associable theme for communication and outreach. By having a standardized style of fonts and logos, we will be easily recognizable to the public. With the help

of our graphic designer, we can now update documents such as EWCJS brochures and flyers more readily and appear active to the community. In a bid to create a “new face” for the Center, we hope to draw academics, students, and community members to the doors of 147 Bay State and expand our reach.

Future events

We already have a few large-scale events planned for next year. These events will continue to grow our visibility—not just at BU, but in all of Boston and among a larger community of scholars around the globe. Our schedule includes: a return of Elie Wiesel on September 22 for a public conversation with Alan Dershowitz; a major conference led by faculty member Professor Jonathan Zatin on Economic Dispossession in conjunction with a “Final Sale” exhibit; and the annual Yitzhak Rabin Memorial and Leo Trepp lecture series, with speakers who will electrify and inspire their audiences. We also look forward to monthly BUJS Forum meetings with faculty, graduate students, and visiting scholars.



Undergraduate Students Joel Udwin and Melanie Weiser

Goals for next year

Visibility

We endeavor to establish ourselves at a flagship unit of the university. By increasing our public outreach and operating under a consistent, professional theme, we will continue expanding our presence in the Boston Jewish community. Furthermore, we hope to build our academic reputation as a well-known center for advanced Jewish studies by developing a faculty and graduate research-based environment and participating in Jewish conferences and programs. This will help “put our center on the map” as a prestigious organization dedicated to the advancement of Jewish scholarship.

Participation

We aspire to continue increasing participation in EWCJS events. Given the volume of activity we seek to maintain, our most important task is to preserve and grow audience interest. This involves heightened routinization of tasks, planning, and consistency in outreach. Additionally, we seek to increase the appeal of our programs to undergraduates and attract more students to our classrooms. The appointments of Ingrid Anderson as a lecturer in the CAS Writing Program and Alexandra Herzog as our first Jewish studies post-doc in the CAS Core Curriculum will provide excellent recruitment opportunities.

Collaboration with Faculty

We seek to encourage collaboration with faculty members. This includes incorporation into events and bettering structures to facilitate efficient and consistent cooperation. Our intention is to extend the development and execution of events to faculty as a means of diversifying the Center's message. This past year, Professor Simon Rabinovitch proposed and helped successfully engineer our second 'salon' event, a kosher wine tasting with California vintners Jeff Morgan and Peter Paul. We wish to evolve our relationship with faculty to reflect similar interactions, and in doing so seek to increase faculty buy-in.

Advanced Studies

We aim to enhance the Center's reputation for advanced studies by supporting faculty-driven research and publications. The recruitment of graduate students, addition of a post-doctoral fellow, presence of visiting faculty, and routinization of the BUJS Forum will help to cultivate EWCJS as a location of advanced Jewish studies. Fall 2014 welcomes the first in a new series of high profile conferences and exhibitions. Professor Zatlin's conference on economic dispossession in 1930s Germany is ambitious and promises to embody the type of work we want to be known for: a research-driven conference which develops the Elie Wiesel Center's reputation for advanced work by providing a context for our faculty to pursue their intellectual and academic ambitions.

Similarly, the future of the EWCJS publication series with NYU Press depends on faculty developing research proposals that we can help implement. We see this as an opportunity for our faculty to grow their academic standing and for the Center to expand its reputation as a location of advanced studies.

Open Dialogue

We hope to facilitate open dialogue. At a time of increasing polarization within the Jewish community, we provide a platform for discussion where students and colleagues constructively develop their voices and consider conflicting perspectives. This occurs both in and outside of the classroom, through lectures, informal discussions, and specialized events. The new MENA major provides an encouraging example for collaboration on campus by focusing on regional scholarship. By bringing people of different background and orientation together, we contribute to a larger conversation concerned with history and humanity, rather than focus on a single nation or point of view. We strive to create an environment that fosters critical inquiry, first-rate scholarship, and creative thinking.