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UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON** | JEWISH STUDIES

Program Newsletter, Spring 2022

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A Note from the Director

Dear Friends of the University of Houston Jewish Studies Program,

University of Houston Jewish Studies courses and programming have been a whirlwind the last two years as we moved from in-person to virtual learning and shifted most programs online. Despite these challenges, we continued to offer our students and community members important educational opportunities; our faculty continued to produce cutting-edge scholarship; and we granted Holocaust Remembrance Association Leizer and Rose Horowitz scholarships to several fantastic students. We also continued to grow our minor, welcoming new students into the program.

In the last two academic years, Jewish studies offered 34 courses from disciplines across the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS) and Honors College, including classical studies, religious studies, history, German, film studies and world cultures and literatures. In 2021, we welcomed our Fulbright Scholar-In-Residence, Ivan Puš, Ph.D., who joined us from Palacký University in Olomuoc, Czech Republic. Puš specializes in the history of nationalism, education and local politics in 19th and 20th century Central Europe, and he taught courses in Jewish studies and history on European nationalism and the Holocaust. He also presented his research in the community during his year here at the Czech Center Museum Houston and Holocaust Museum Houston. Puš was a welcome addition to our program during his stay.

Jewish studies faculty regularly sent students into the community to enrich their educational experiences, and this year was no different. My HIST 2349 Latina/o Jewish history students, for example, developed the Sephardic Latinx Oral History Project in collaboration with Holocaust Museum Houston's (HMH) Latino Initiatives. Funded by the UH Provost's Cougar Initiative to Engage (CITE), students interviewed Sephardic Latin Americans who immigrated to Houston, documenting Jewish histories that are often hidden and uncovering the diversity and texture of the local Jewish and Latinx communities. HMH developed a webpage to archive the video recordings, and the project culminated in an event at the museum, celebrating the archive's launch. We encourage you to visit the [webpage](#) and watch the interviews. We are so proud of our student's excellent work! The Sephardic Latinx Oral History Project is another example of the unique and locally oriented education the UH Jewish Studies Program offers its students.

We were fortunate to offer four Holocaust Remembrance Association Leizer and Rose Horowitz scholarships, in honor of Mr. Bob Horowitz's parents, Leizer and Rose Horowitz, who were Holocaust survivors. The 2020-21 winners were Kiran Khan and Miranda Ruzinsky, and the 2021-22 winners were Claudia Ramírez and Bianca Soriano. Responding to the Holocaust Remembrance Association annual marches and Victoria Aarons, Ph.D. (Trinity University) and Jennifer Caplan's (Towson University) research on Holocaust graphic narratives, they wrote important analytical essays demonstrating why Holocaust education continues to matter in the 21st century.

Despite the pandemic, we were able to host and co-sponsor many exciting events and to continue developing our relationships with community institutions. We worked with the Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish Community Center and Holocaust Museum Houston on multiple programs, featuring Ruth Behar, Ph.D. (University of Michigan), Laura Oren, Ph.D. (University of Houston), Ivan Puš (Palacký University and Fulbright Scholar-In-Residence), Leandra Zarnow, Ph.D. (University of Houston), and our UH students. The Jewish Studies Program co-sponsored events with the UH Comparative Cultural Studies Department and Center for Public History, featuring Jill Hicks-Keeton, Ph.D. (University of Oklahoma) as well as a panel of local community members, including Rabbi Ranon Teller, launching the Houston History Magazine Hurricane Harvey issue. We hosted a virtual book talk featuring Zarnow's exciting book, *Battling Bella: The Protest Politics of Bella Abzug*. With generous funding from the Edith and Sidney Goldensohn Fund of ADL Southwest, we also hosted two virtual talks by historian Asher Lubotzky on Israel-Africa relations. We co-sponsored the UH History Department's Night at the Museum held at Holocaust Museum Houston's "Notorious RBG" exhibit. Finally, we hosted Victoria Aarons, Ph.D. (Trinity University) and Jennifer Caplan, Ph.D.'s (Towson University) fantastic lectures on Holocaust graphic narratives and Holocaust education in the 21st century.

The Jewish Studies faculty published many important works in the field in the last couple of years. Christian Eberhart co-edited an anthology with Wolfgang Kraus, in cooperation with Richard Bautch, Matthias Henze and Martin Rösel, titled *Covenant – Concepts of Berit, Diatheke, and Testamentum: Proceedings of the Conference at the Lanier Theological Library in Houston, Texas, November 2019* (Mohr Siebeck, 2022). He also contributed a chapter in this new publication. Richard Armstrong, Ph.D. Christian Eberhart, Ph.D., Claudine Giachetti, Ph.D. and Caryn Tamber-Rosenau published multiple book chapters and articles on their research, in topics ranging from Sigmund Freud and Jewish survival in German-occupied Belgium to various theoretical approaches to biblical interpretation. These fascinating projects demonstrate the tremendous breadth our faculty offers in the program. Richard Armstrong received a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend Grant to work on his book project, *Theory and Theatricality: Classical Drama in the Age of Grand Hysteria*, and I became a Research Fellow for the Center for Jewish Ethics project "Race, Religion, and American Judaism." Congratulations to all of my colleagues!

I hope this newsletter finds you and your loved ones safe and well. Thank you for your support, and please stay tuned for UH Jewish Studies events in the near future. Have a great summer!

Warm regards,



Mark A. Goldberg
Director, Jewish Studies
Associate Professor, History

The Holocaust Remembrance Association Leizer Rose Horowitz Scholarship

This scholarship, inaugurated in 2020, provides funds to up to two University of Houston students per year who attend a Jewish Studies or Holocaust Remembrance Association event and write an essay reflecting on the Holocaust.

Our 2021 winners were Kiran Khan and Miranda Ruzinsky. Khan “wrote a wonderful, personal essay that connected histories of hate with present-day movements for social justice,” according to the judges. Likewise, Ruzinsky “linked forms of discrimination in her creatively written essay response.”

2022 prizes were presented at the Modern and Classical Languages award ceremony, back in person for the first time since 2019. The two winners this year were Claudia Ramírez and Bianca Frances Ysabel Soriano. Ramírez “engaged Jennifer Caplan’s lecture on Holocaust graphic narratives and education in a strong piece [that] drew connections between the McMinn County School Board (Tennessee) ban on Art Spiegelman’s ‘Maus’ and legislative efforts at silencing other histories of marginalized populations.” Soriano’s essay displayed “thoughtful and specific engagement with both the Holocaust Remembrance March and Jennifer Caplan’s talk, grounded in wide-ranging cultural texts.”



Left to right: Former U.S. Ambassador Michael Pelletier, Executive Director of UH Institute for Global Engagement; UH Jewish Studies Director Mark A. Goldberg; 2022 winner Claudia Ramirez; 2022 winner Bianca Soriano; and Modern and Classical Languages Department Chair Emran El-Badawi.

UH Jewish Studies has held several exciting events, both in-person and virtual, since our last newsletter. Here's what we've been up to:



L to R: UH students Miranda Ruzinsky and Lynnex Rougeaux, interviewees Ana Eigler and Jacob Varon, and Mark Goldberg. Photo courtesy of HMM.

In April 2022, Professor **Mark A. Goldberg** and his students presented their work doing oral histories with Latinx Jews in Houston. The event, held at the **Holocaust Museum Houston**, (HMH) was called “Untold Stories: The Sephardic Latinx Oral History Project.” Supported by a UH community-engagement grant, students from Goldberg’s Latina/o Jewish History class conducted interviews with six community members and prepared them for HMM’s Latino Initiatives online archive.

Also in April 2022, **Professors Goldberg, Nancy Beck Young and Leandra Zarnow** spoke at the Holocaust Museum Houston’s special viewing of “Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg.”



Earlier that month, Jewish Studies and German Studies hosted a virtual talk with Professor **Jennifer Caplan** (left) of Towson University about teaching the Holocaust through graphic novels, including Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*, which was in the headlines this spring when a Tennessee school board banned its inclusion in the curriculum. The event was called “Never Again Until the Next Time: Memory, Education, and the Holocaust.” The event was generously funded by

the **Holocaust Remembrance Association** and **Bob Horowitz**.

Jewish Studies joined **Religious Studies** and the **Center for Public History** to present an in-person event with biblical scholar **Jill Hicks-Keeton, Ph.D.** of the University of Oklahoma in March 2022. Hicks-Keeton's talk was entitled, "Who Owns the Bible? An Unauthorized Scholarly Tour of Washington, D.C.'s Museum of the Bible." The talk, which drew students, faculty and community members, addressed how the billionaire owners of Hobby Lobby, the Green family, have used their museum to promote a narrow evangelical Christian vision of the Bible.

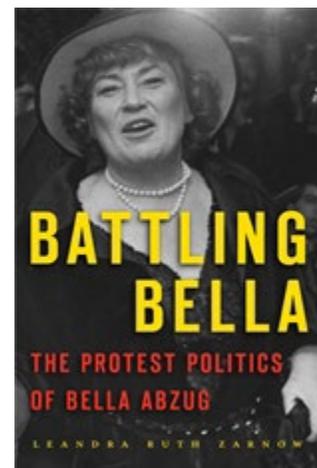


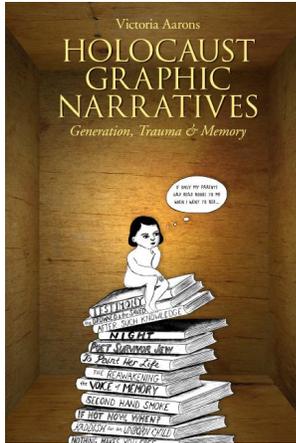
In Spring 2022, Indiana University Ph.D. candidate **Asher Lubotzky**, who studies relations between Israel and Africa, gave two online lectures for UH Jewish Studies. The first, held in February, was called "We are returning to Africa, and Africa is coming back to us": Israel's Evolving Relations with Africa," and the second, held in April, was called "Don't Call Us Kushim: African Students in Israel in the 1960s." The events were funded by a grant from the Edith and Sidney

Goldensohn Fund of the **ADL Southwest**.

Visiting Fulbright Scholar **Ivan Puš** spoke at HMH in October 2021 about the Moravian Jewish experience between the world wars. Jewish people who lived in late-19th century Central Eastern Europe, including Moravian Jews, experienced oppression on one hand and emancipation on the other hand, depending on the specific time and place. Those individuals and families that were exceptionally successful in their own business or in the arts participated in everyday politics and public discussions on the local level and the imperial level. After the First World War, they largely showed their loyalty to the Czechoslovak state while preserving their original culture.

In April 2021, UH Associate Professor of history, Jewish studies and women's, gender, and sexuality studies **Leandra Zarnow** spoke virtually about her book, *Battling Bella: The Protest Politics of Bella Abzug* (Harvard University Press, 2019).



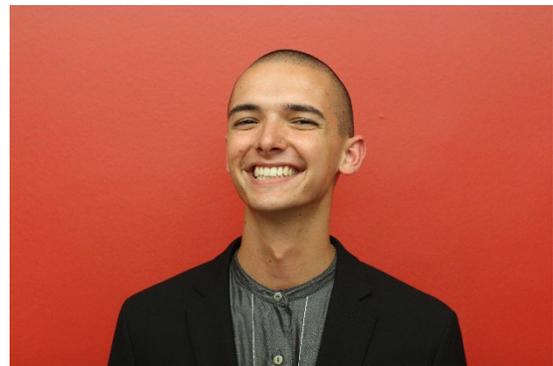


Victoria Aarons, English professor at Trinity University, joined us in March 2021 for a virtual conversation about her book, *Holocaust Graphic Novels: Generation, Trauma, and Memory* (Rutgers University Press, 2019).

UH Jewish Studies cosponsored a three-part online series on the life and legacy of the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, “May Her Memory Be a Revolution: The Life and Legacy of RBG,” in November and December of 2020. UH Profs. **David Dow**, **Mark A. Goldberg**, **Leandra Zarnow** and **Laura Oren** were among the speakers. Other sponsors of the series were the **Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish Community Center of Houston**, **Rice Jewish Studies** and the **Rice Center for the Study of Women**.

Standout Student Research

Graduating UH senior **Audrey Gale Hall**, a religious studies major who has taken several Jewish studies courses, wrote a senior honors thesis that reads biblical rules about diagnosing and dealing with *tsara’at* disease — often mistranslated as “leprosy” — alongside modern psychiatric classification of gender variance in the “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual” (DSM). The work won an award for outstanding senior thesis. Hall’s work was completed under the supervision of Jewish studies and religious studies faculty member **Caryn Tamber-Rosenau**. In March 2022, Hall presented an excerpt from the thesis entitled, “Diagnosing Deviance: Lepers and Transsexuals in Leviticus and the DSM,” as part of a panel called “Bodies, Spirits, and Wisdom,” in the Second Temple and Late Antique Judaism section of the Southwest Commission on Religious Studies. Hall is a faith-rooted political organizer who aspires to attend seminary for training as a movement chaplain.



Student Spotlight

A conversation with Jewish studies minor Cecilia Peltier



What led you to minor in Jewish studies?

Honestly, I had found it on accident when I started looking at the diversity requirement for undergraduate. ‘Intro to Jewish Studies? Oh, that’s interesting. I’m Catholic; I’m sure I know a little bit already.’ I thought I had a foundation already. I realized, ‘Oh, I don’t know anything!’ I had assumptions, and I really enjoyed having all those assumptions turned on their head. It was really cool getting to have something you thought you understood be better explained, more truly explained. It fascinated me so much; I just wanted to learn more. Then [Prof. Tamber-Rosenau] told me about the minor and showed us the classes, and I wanted to take more of them.

Which classes have you taken to fulfill the minor so far, and which will you take to finish the minor?

Introduction to Jewish Studies, Judaism, History of German Cinema and The Bible

and Modern Pop Culture. American Jewish Culture and Women in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament in Fall 2022.

Which class do you feel was the most impactful for you?

Judaism with [Houston Hillel executive director and UH faculty member] Rabbi [Kenny] Weiss. The class itself is really interesting. I liked having a class specifically dedicated to learning more about the faith tradition. There was this awesome assignment when you had to go to two services. [I went to] one Conservative and one Reform. It was such a fun, interesting experience ... I took my mom with me and my husband [to the Reform synagogue] because they said, “Can we come too? Is that OK?”

What is one thing you learned in a Jewish studies class that surprised you?

The most surprising thing I learned was in [Dr. Tamber-Rosenau’s] introductory class and that was when we were talking about the *converso* Jews in Mexico specifically, and that there was a large portion of Jews that had gone to South America, to Mexico, they were in the [American] southwest. I had never heard of that before. I ran home to my mom and said, “You use a lot of Yiddish words, is there any chance we ... ?” Then of course I asked her about other things, and it didn’t quite line up.

We're not sure if there was any Judaism in the family. It was cool to think of diaspora and this huge movement of people, what makes you Jewish, holding on to your faith even though you've been displaced so far. That was the thing that stuck in my mind the most.

Can you talk about a discussion you had with other students in one of your Jewish studies classes that changed your thinking on something?

History of German Cinema. We had to watch "The Murderers Are Among Us" ("Die Mörder sind unter uns," 1946) trying to grapple with the idea that the people who were in charge of Germany, in charge of the concentration camps, they're trying to deal with that. They're their neighbors; they walk past them all the time. The class discussion that we had about that was so interesting. We talked about after the war, when Germans were let into the camps to see what happened. They probably knew people who turned in people. They weren't necessarily legal war crimes, but they were crimes against humanity, crimes against their fellow man.

You're planning a career as a children's librarian, either in a public library or in an elementary school, and in fact, you just started a job working in the library at the school you attended. After you finish your B.A. next school year, you hope to get a master's in library science. Do you think what you've learned in your Jewish studies classes might come in handy in any way in your career?

The school that I'm at now is a private Catholic school. I'm trying to bridge that gap in interreligious relations, religions that might not see eye-to-eye on everything being able to have a dialogue and have mutual respect. I'm hoping next year that I can pitch myself as, "Hey, I did a minor in Jewish studies." You can ask questions about other faiths—that doesn't mean you're not a good Catholic.

"It was cool to think of diaspora and this huge movement of people, what makes you Jewish, holding on to your faith even though you've been displaced so far. That was the thing that stuck in my mind the most."

Can you offer advice to other students considering a Jewish studies minor?

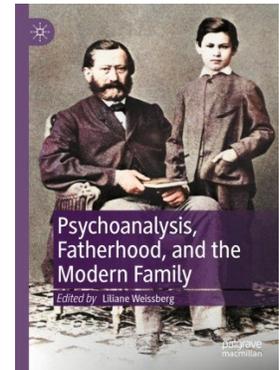
I guess if you feel even the smallest urge to do it, to just go for it. Just try it. It's a faith that I think a lot of people have assumptions about, and they think they already understand it: bar mitzvahs, World War II, Passover. It's so much more than that. It's such an old, beautiful faith that has so much to offer. It's so much more than, "Here are the teachings of Judaism." It's not trying to convert you. I don't think a lot of people know nearly as much as they think they do about Judaism.

Faculty Milestones

Richard Armstrong, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Classical Studies, received a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend Grant in 2020 to complete his book on Sigmund Freud, *Theory and Theatricality: Classical Drama in the Age of Grand Hysteria*.

Armstrong also published “The Road to Thebes: Freud and French Retrospective Medicine,” in the anthology *Psychoanalysis, Fatherhood, and the Modern Family*, edited by Liliane Weissberg (Palgrave MacMillan, 2022) and “From Iconography to Archaeology: Freud After Charcot,” in a special issue of the journal *American Imago* in 2021.

Armstrong gave an invited lecture called “Oedipus in Paris and Vienna: Freud, Theatricality, and the Primal Scene of Theory” at the University of Maryland in 2021.



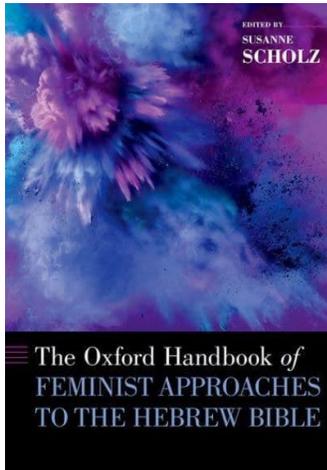
Christian A. Eberhart, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Program Director of Religious Studies, co-edited with Wolfgang Kraus, in cooperation with Richard Bautch, Matthias Henze and Martin Rösel, *Covenant – Concepts of Berit, Diatheke and Testamentum: Proceedings of the Conference at the Lanier Theological Library in Houston, Texas, November 2019* (Mohr Siebeck, 2022). He also wrote the chapter “Between ‘My Blood of the Covenant’ and the ‘New Covenant in My Blood’: Origins, Meanings, Ramifications.”



Eberhart wrote two chapters, “Gottesschau” and “Halacha,” for *Handbuch zur Septuaginta (LXX.H) – Vol. 6: Die Wirkungs- und Rezeptionsgeschichte der Septuaginta*, edited by Martin Meiser and Florian Wilk (Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2022). He also contributed “Neues zur neuen Paulusperspektive,” to the book *Bibel und Patristik: Studien zur Exegese und Rezeption von Septuaginta und Neuem Testament*, edited by Siegfried Kreuzer, Wolfgang Kraus, Martin Karrer, and Jörg Persch (Brill Schöningh, 2022). Finally, he published an article on atonement in the *Encyclopedia of Jewish-Christian Relations* (De Gruyter: 2021).

Claudine Giachetti, Ph.D., Professor and Program Director of French, published “Le grenier d’Anvers: Vie privée et stratégies de survie sous l’Occupation” in *Les Cahiers de la Mémoire Contemporaine*, a journal dedicated to Judaism in Belgium. The article is about Jewish survival in Antwerp under German occupation.

Mark A. Goldberg, Ph.D., Associate Professor of History and Jewish Studies Program Director, became a Research Fellow for the Center for Jewish Ethics National Endowment for the Humanities-funded project “Race, Religion, and American Judaism” in 2022. The Center is housed at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.



Caryn Tamber-Rosenau, Ph.D., Instructional Associate Professor of Jewish Studies and Religious Studies, published three articles in late 2020: “No Future for Bethulia? Judith and Queer Time” in the journal *Biblical Interpretation*, “A Queer Critique of Looking for ‘Male’ and ‘Female’ Voices” in *The Handbook of Feminist Approaches to the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Susanne Scholz, Oxford University Press), and “Beyond Judeo-Christian,” in *The Social Studies Texan*. In 2021, she published entries on Jael, Deborah and Women Warriors in the Hebrew Bible in the newly revised *Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women*. In 2022, she published an article on TheTorah.com called “Deborah, Yael, and Sisera’s Mother, Themech.”

Tamber-Rosenau has delivered several invited lectures in 2021 and 2022 at institutions including The Frick Pittsburgh, Hebrew Union College, the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Faculty Spotlight: Visiting Scholar Ivan Puš

When Czech historian Ivan Puš saw UH’s Fulbright Scholar notice seeking an expert on nationalism and antisemitism in Central and Eastern Europe, he knew he had to apply. Not only was he well qualified to teach the courses UH wanted, he also knew Texas was home to a large and vibrant community of people with roots in the former Czechoslovakia. As a scholar who works on the migration of Czechs in the 19th and 20th century, he saw an opportunity.

Puš spent calendar year 2021 in Houston, teaching at UH and making connections with Czech Texans for his research. His permanent job is at Palacký University in Olomuoc, Czech Republic.

He was most interested in the World War II-era activities of Texans from Czechoslovakia to support those back home.



“The events of the late 1930s and the war aroused a big wave of solidarity in the States, in Texas and in Illinois and D.C. and other states and cities,” he said he discovered. “Czech Texans and other people collected clothing, money, some other [things] ... and they sent it to Europe, to the U.K. and to France in coordination with Czechoslovak consuls, French and British consuls.”

“One interesting thing is that some European institutions are established not as Holocaust museums but as Jewish museums. Those institutions were established before World War II to study or present the Jewish culture.”

By connecting with the Czech community in Texas, especially the Czech Center of Houston, Puš was able to find private correspondence detailing these efforts. He plans to publish his findings in an academic article.

While at UH, he taught courses on Europeans nationalisms, modern civilizations and writing Holocausts. The Holocausts class encourages students to examine how the Shoah is processed and taught, particularly through analysis of films

and museums. In one assignment, he had students physically visit the Holocaust Museum Houston and do virtual visits to another U.S. museum and one in Europe that teach about the Holocaust. The students then had to reflect on the museums’ contents and framing.

“I wanted to read something [about] how they perceive today’s situation with antisemitism and the perception of Jews in current society,” he said.

In assigning students to visit museums, Puš observed a key difference in the framing of museums that treat the Holocaust in the U.S. and Europe.

“One interesting thing is that some European institutions are established not as Holocaust museums but as Jewish museums,” he said. “Those institutions were established before World War II to study or present the Jewish culture. It’s the case of the Jewish Museum of Prague. On the other hand, [the European Jewish museums are] connected with migration.”

Puš noted that having the Fulbright made it easier for him to travel to the United States to research Czech Texans.

“It was much, much easier for me to get to the U.S. with Fulbright,” he said. “Most of 2021, people were not allowed to travel to the U.S. I was really lucky that I had this exception. Otherwise, I would have to travel to Croatia or Turkey, and then stay there two weeks and travel to the U.S.”

Puš has his B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. all from Palacký, an institution that dates back to the 16th century. He began his studies in history and German studies and received his Ph.D. in Czech studies in 2018.

Get Involved!

Want to stay up-to-date on UH Jewish Studies' goings-on? There are three easy ways!

1. [Join our e-mail list](#). We send periodic emails alerting Friends of UH Jewish Studies to upcoming events, sharing program news and extending holiday greetings.
2. [Like our page on Facebook](#). In addition to sharing all the news you'll see on our email list, our Facebook page posts information about our fabulous courses, faculty milestones, student achievements and stories of interest to fans of Jewish studies.
3. [Follow us on Twitter](#), for all of the above, with a brief 280-character limit.



The Jerusalem Synagogue in Prague, Czech Republic. Photo/Chris Waits via Flickr Creative Commons.

You can also get involved by supporting UH Jewish Studies financially. There are two ways to start the giving process:

1. Contact Program Director Mark A. Goldberg at magoldbe@central.uh.edu.
2. Give online using the University of Houston College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences' [donation portal](#). On the form, select "Modern & Classical Languages" from the drop-down menu and type "Jewish Studies Program" in the box.

Thank you for helping us build the Jewish Studies program at one of America's most diverse universities!