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UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON** | JEWISH STUDIES

Annual Newsletter, Spring 2020

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A Note from the Director

Dear Friends of the University of Houston Jewish Studies Program,

I hope you and your loved ones are safe and well. As we continue to face the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is especially important to celebrate our accomplishments of the past academic year. The UH Jewish Studies Program continued offering exciting courses, we granted the inaugural Holocaust Remembrance Association Leizer Rose Horowitz Scholarship, we developed and participated in multiple important and unique events, and our faculty published books and articles and participated in a series of academic and community programs. UH Jewish Studies had another successful year building a Jewish Studies program with a local impact.

In 2019-20, Jewish Studies offered 19 courses from disciplines across the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CLASS) and Honors College, including Classical Studies, Religious Studies, History, English, German, Film Studies, and World Cultures and Literatures. In spring 2020, Dr. Caryn Tamber-Rosenau (Jewish Studies, Religious Studies) taught a new course for the program, Bible and Modern Pop Culture. Students analyzed popular representations of Bible stories in film, literature, and music, including Adam and Eve and Noah's Ark. They used popular culture as a window into understanding the Bible's immense, everyday impact on 20th- and 21st-century life and culture. Despite the mid-semester transition to virtual learning, the course was a success and a tremendous addition to the Jewish Studies catalog.

This year was the inaugural year for the Holocaust Remembrance Association Leizer Rose Horowitz Scholarship, in honor of Mr. Bob Horowitz's parents, Leizer and Rose Horowitz, who were Holocaust survivors. Promoting Holocaust education and awareness, the generous scholarship funds up to two undergraduates in CLASS. I am absolutely delighted to announce the first award recipient was Austin Mitchell (Religious Studies major). Austin wrote a fantastic essay discussing the significance of the Holocaust in today's society.

Even though our semester was cut short, we were able to host and co-sponsor several exciting events that reflect our vital ties with the broader UH and Houston communities.

We worked with Holocaust Museum Houston on multiple programs featuring both academic scholars and community members, and we co-sponsored events at the University of Houston as well as in the Houston community. ([See page 4](#) for more on our 2019-2020 events.) Our faculty continued publishing critical works in Jewish Studies. ([See page 7](#) for more on faculty achievements.)

“Jewish history has taught us that people are resilient in the face of devastation, a Jewish Studies lesson we should remember during these difficult times.”

We are looking forward to the moments when we can reunite to share in our commitment to Jewish Studies. Jewish history has taught us that people are resilient in the face of devastation, a Jewish Studies lesson we should remember during these difficult times. Thank you for your support in 2019-20, and please stay tuned for UH Jewish Studies events next year. We look forward to seeing you in 2020-21!

Warm regards,

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

Introducing the Holocaust Remembrance Association Leizer Rose Horowitz Scholarship

Jewish Studies is proud and grateful to announce the creation of this new scholarship. The scholarship will provide 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.

Bob Horowitz is a Houston businessman. He was born in a German displaced persons camp in 1949. His parents, Leizer and Rose Horowitz, were Holocaust survivors. Leizer survived three work camps, and Rose survived hiding in the Polish countryside with her two sisters. The Horowitz family immigrated to the United States and settled in Brooklyn. Leizer was a successful kosher butcher, and Rose raised three children. At home, they emphasized the importance of their Jewish heritage and stressed a strong work ethic. Like many other refugees, Leizer and Rose rarely discussed the horrors of the Holocaust and European antisemitism. As an adult, Bob shared their stories with his children and grandchildren. Bob is a generous supporter of multiple organizations, and the one closest to his heart is the Houston March of Remembrance. According to Bob, through the memory of his parents, he is encouraging recipients and other students from the University of Houston to become active participants against antisemitism, including taking a public stand, sharing Holocaust testimonials, and participating in public marches.



At the signing of the scholarship agreement for the new Holocaust Remembrance Association Leizer Rose Horowitz Scholarship, left to right: former CLASS Development Director Giovanni Rosselli, Holocaust Remembrance Association Director Christine Ege, Holocaust Remembrance Association Executive Director Rozalie Jerome, Bob Horowitz, Modern & Classical Languages chair Hildegard Glass, and Jewish Studies Program Director Mark A. Goldberg. Photo/Helen Utay.

UH Jewish Studies held several exciting events during the 2019-2020 academic year. Here's what we've been up to:

In September, Jewish Studies partnered with the Center for Public History, the Department of Modern and Classical Languages, and Holocaust Museum Houston to bring to town **Dr. Ruth Behar**, the Victor Haim Perera Collegiate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Michigan. She is a writer, researcher, poet, and documentary filmmaker who studies the Jews of Cuba. Her documentary *Adio Kerida/Goodbye Dear Love: A Cuban Sephardic Journey* was to be shown at HMH. Unfortunately, the screening and Dr. Behar's speaking engagement at UH had to be canceled at the last minute due to flooding from Tropical Storm Imelda. We hope to bring Dr. Behar back to Houston one day.



Jewish Studies teamed up with the Department of Comparative Cultural Studies, the Arab-American Educational Foundation Chair in Modern Arab History, and the Middle Eastern Studies program in November to host **Dr. Charles McDonald**. Dr. McDonald, the Samuel W. and Goldye Marian Spain Postdoctoral Fellow in the Program in Jewish Studies at Rice University, delivered a talk entitled "Anthropology, Race, and Spain's Sephardic Citizenship Law."

In November, community members Jo Rosenblum King and Steve King graciously hosted a Jewish Studies salon at their home, featuring **Dr. Caryn Tamber-Rosenau** and **Dr. Mark A. Goldberg** discussing Dr. Tamber-Rosenau's 2018 book *Women in Drag: Gender and Performance in the Hebrew Bible and Early Jewish Literature*. Dr. Tamber-Rosenau is instructional assistant professor of Jewish Studies and Religious Studies at UH, and Dr. Goldberg is associate professor of History and director of the UH Jewish Studies program.

Capping off a busy November for Jewish Studies, the program co-sponsored, with the Honors College and the Center for Public History, a talk by Lithuanian writer **Ruta Vanagaite**. She spoke on "The Holocaust in Lithuania: How It Happened and How It Is Remembered." Ms. Vanagaite is the co-author, with Dr. Efraim Zuboff, of the bestselling 2016 book *Musiškiai (Our People)*.

To kick off the spring semester in January, UH Studies co-hosted, with Rice Jewish Studies and Congregation Beth Israel, an evening featuring historian **Dr. Deborah Lipstadt**. Dr. Lipstadt, Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish History and Holocaust Studies at Emory University, is perhaps best known for winning a libel suit against her filed by notorious Holocaust denier David Irving. That trial, held in England, later became the basis for the 2016 film *Denial*. At CBI in January, she discussed her latest book, *Antisemitism: Here and Now* (2019) and took questions from a few of the hundreds of attendees.

In March, Jewish Studies and the UH Russian and Eastern European Initiative hosted **Dr. Vojin Majstorović** (at right), assistant professor of History at the University of North Texas, and Houston businessman **Bob Horowitz**. Dr. Majstorović gave a talk entitled "The Red Army's Encounter with the Holocaust." Mr. Horowitz, a child of Holocaust survivors, spoke about his parents' story and about why he funded the new Leizer Rose Horowitz Holocaust Remembrance Association scholarship for UH Jewish Studies.



Student Spotlight: Why I Chose Jewish Studies

A conversation with graduating Jewish Studies minor Hannah Matthews



Photo courtesy of Hannah Matthews

What led you to minor in Jewish Studies?

The simple answer is, I needed a minor. I found myself browsing the minors list and trying to decide for weeks what seemed most interesting to me. I didn't necessarily *need* a minor to support my major and frankly, I did not want to get burnt out learning more about communication disorders or Sign Language. What really sold me on Jewish Studies was the course list. I had a lot of doubts about choosing a minor that people might raise an eyebrow to and especially one that had nothing to do with what I went to college for. I think deep down I knew that this was my chance though—that I wanted to learn something that would actually matter. I wanted something that would broaden my view on the world; maybe even something that could shift my perspective. So I called my mom and told her I was considering Jewish Studies to which she told me “college is your chance to learn something you would have never encountered, something you really want to learn about, take advantage,” and I did.

Which classes did you take to fulfill the minor?

History of Jewish Food; Jewish Film; Jewish-Muslim Relations; American Jewish Culture; Introduction to Jewish Studies; Bible and Western Culture I

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

Jewish-Muslim Relations. I feel like this class shaped a lot of my thinking; and not just on the relationship between the two groups but how we facilitate conversation between religions and groups, especially in times of conflict. I think this class was especially impactful because it was taught by two professors; one from each group. I learned so much about how to look at Israel-Palestine through more than one lens, and how much history and culture affects relationships between individuals. I looked forward to this class every Wednesday. I feel like this was one of my few classes in college where I was just so excited to *learn*. Of course I had doubts about choosing

Jewish Studies as a minor, but every Wednesday I was reminded why I did it; my worldview opened up a little bit more, I learned a little bit more about things I never knew before, I came in contact with people who had cultures and histories so different from my own, and I was increasingly sure I was on the right path.

“I wanted to learn something that would actually matter. I wanted something that would broaden my view on the world; maybe even something that could shift my perspective.”

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

I was surprised at how few Jewish people there are in the world! I also did not know to the extent that they were persecuted in America and [targeted by] so many conspiracy theories that shape a lot of modern American thought.

You're planning a career in ASL/English interpreting. Do you think what you've learned in your Jewish Studies classes might come in handy in any way? How?

Everything in interpreting is about context. Everything I learn, everything that broadens my understanding of the world is incredibly valuable for interpreting. As I begin my career Jewish Studies will allow me to be a culturally competent interpreter for Jewish, Deaf consumers. I can be a liaison between my own cultural experience, deaf culture, and Jewish people that I encounter. I can relate in a new way to messages presented by Jewish people. I can feel more prepared to interpret in a religious setting. All in all, I can provide greater access because I broadened my own circle of understanding. I have new schemas for the world and a deeper understanding of why it is important to accurately convey both language *and* culture.

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

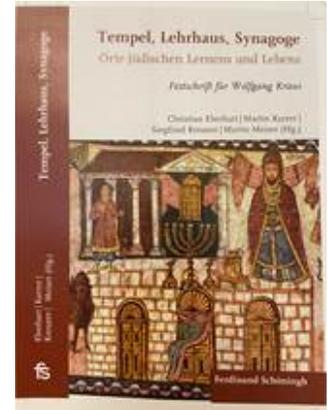
My advice for students considering the Jewish Studies minor would be to do it. Take the leap. College is the time and place to learn things you don't have any prior knowledge about. I would give the same advice my mom gave to me “this is your opportunity; take advantage of it.”

Faculty Milestones

Dr. **Richard Armstrong**, Associate Professor of Classical Studies and faculty in the Honors College, delivered an invited paper, “From Iconography to Archaeology: Freud after Charcot,” at the Warburg Institute conference Freud’s Archaeology in London in June 2019. His chapter “Freud and the Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Myth” will be published soon in the *Cambridge History of Mythology and Mythography*.

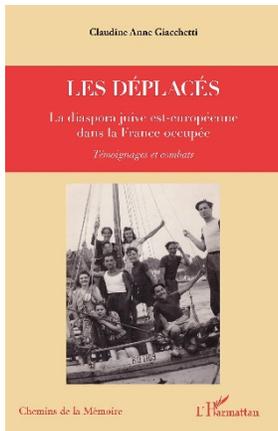
Dr. **Christian A. Eberhart**, Associate Professor and Program Director of Religious Studies, co-edited the volume *Tempel, Lehrhaus, Synagoge: Orte jüdischen Lernens und Lebens* (Brill/Ferdinand Schöningh), which was published earlier this year. This volume explores, in its various contributions, education and religious life within early Judaism as they developed alongside the temple.

Eberhart also co-edited the volume *Writing a Commentary on Leviticus: Hermeneutics – Methodology –* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), released last year. Writing a commentary on a biblical book is not limited to the scholar’s study and desk. Hence, several experts in the field of Hebrew Bible currently writing a larger commentary on the book of Leviticus followed the invitation of Dr. Eberhart and Thomas Hieke to meet between 2014 and 2016 at the Annual SBL Conference. They shared their experiences, discussed hermeneutical and methodological considerations, and presented their ideas about particular themes and issues in the third book of the Torah.



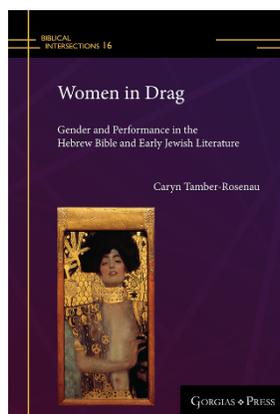
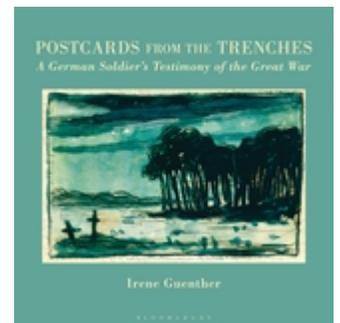
Eberhart has also published several book chapters since 2018: “Atonement: Amid Alexandria, Alamo, and Avatar,” in M. Botner/J. Harrison Duff/S. Dürr (eds.), *Atonement: Jewish and Christian Origins*; “IV. Kult und die Begegnung mit dem einen Gott in der Septuaginta,” in H. Ausloos/B. Lemmelijn (eds.), *Handbuch zur Septuaginta – Vol. 2: Theologie*; “Sacrifice? Holy Smokes! Reflections on Cult Terminology for Understanding Sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible,” in Christian A. Eberhart/Thomas Hieke (eds.), *Writing a Commentary on Leviticus: Hermeneutics – Methodology – Themes*; “Sacrificial Practice and Language,” in Risto Uro/Juliette J. Day/Richard E. DeMaris/Rikard Roitto (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Ritual*; and “Opferterminologie im Sirachbuch,” in Martin Meiser/Michaela Geiger/Siegfried Kreuzer/ Marcus Sigismund (eds.), *Die Septuaginta – Geschichte, Wirkung, Relevanz: 6. Internationale Fachtagung Wuppertal, 21.–24. Juli 2016*.

Dr. **Claudine Giachetti**, Professor and Program Director of French, published *Les déplacés: La diaspora juive est-européenne dans la France occupée: Témoignages et combats* (Editions L’Harmattan) in 2018. Jewish families in the Russian Empire, driven from their homes by exclusion laws, evictions and the violence of pogroms, had grown accustomed to displacement. In their westward migration,



many of them settled in France at the beginning of the 10th century. Under the Vichy regime, fleeing Nazi persecution, they experienced exodus and secrecy anew. This work retraces the journey of one of these families and their community through two routes: that of the anarchist Yossif Witorz, pursued by the tsarist police in Bialystok and banished to the Arctic Circle, and that of his daughter Edith, a member of the first generation born in France, who joined the resistance after the murderous roundup of Saint-Claude during which more than 300 young men were arrested and deported to Buchenwald. The testimonies of the displaced, their allies, and their relatives, Jews and non-Jews, collected by the author between 2009, form the narrative landscape of this story.

Dr. **Irene Guenther**, Instructional Assistant Professor in the Honors College, published *Postcards from the Trenches: A German Soldier's Testimony of the Great War* (Bloomsbury) in 2018. German art student Otto Schubert was 22 years old when he was drafted. As the conflict unfolded, he painted a series of postcards that he sent to his sweetheart, Irma. During the battles of Ypres and Verdun, Schubert filled dozens of military-issued 4" x 6" cards with vivid images depicting the daily realities and tragedies of war. Beautifully illustrated with full-color reproductions of his exquisite postcards, as well as his wartime sketches, woodcuts, and two lithograph portfolios, *Postcards from the Trenches* is Schubert's war diary, love journal, and life story. His powerful artworks illuminate and document in a visual language the truths of war. *Postcards from the Trenches* offers the first full account of Otto Schubert, soldier-artist of the Great War, rising art star in the 1920s, prolific graphic artist and book illustrator, one of the "degenerate" artists defamed by the Nazis, and a man shattered by the Second World War and the Cold War. Created in the midst of enormous devastation, Schubert's haunting visual missives are as powerful and relevant today as they were a century ago. His postcards are both a young man's token of love and longing and a soldier's testimony of the Great War.



Dr. **Caryn Tamber-Rosenau**, Instructional Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies and Religious Studies, published *Women in Drag: Gender and Performance in the Hebrew Bible and Early Jewish Literature* (Gorgias Press) in 2018. From Jael's tent peg to Judith's sword, biblical interpreters have long recognized the power of the "lethal women" stories of the Hebrew Bible and related literature. The tales of Jael and Judith, female characters who assassinate enemy commanders, have fascinated artists, writers, and scholars for centuries, no doubt partly because of the gender of the characters doing the killing. Tamber-Rosenau presents the first systematic study, both text-centered and deeply engaged with a variety of queer-theoretical frameworks, of the motif of the woman-turned-warrior in ancient Jewish literature.

Faculty Spotlight: Prof. Irene Guenther

Her course *20th Century Genocides* is popular—and life-changing



Photo courtesy of Irene Guenther

Dr. Irene Guenther’s class *20th Century Genocides* always has a waiting list—and students tell her it’s transformative.

Guenther, an instructional assistant professor in the Honors College, is a historian of war and culture in the 20th century. Her research focuses on the Holocaust.

Students in Guenther’s class come in with limited knowledge of the history of genocide, she said.

“What I don’t think truly occurs to them is how neighbors turn on neighbors,” Guenther said. “The discussions get deeply personal and, I think, life changing for some of them. They’ve only been taught the Holocaust, so it never occurs to them that this is a repeated state policy.”

“The way that they have been taught the Holocaust in their previous education is Auschwitz,” she continued. “They have not been taught it’s very

up close and personal in the first few years”—that genocide often

begins with neighbor-on-neighbor violence before escalating to state-sponsored, systematic efforts.

Guenther’s course is open to Honors and non-Honors students and counts toward the Jewish Studies minor. During the semester, students read, discuss, and write about European colonialism in Africa in the 1800s, followed by six 20th century genocides: Armenia, the manmade Ukrainian famine of 1932-33, the Holocaust, Cambodia, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia.

Guenther said there were so many genocides in the 20th century that she could easily fill a two-semester series talking about them all. In selecting the topics for her course, she focused on ones that differed greatly from one another so students could learn

“The discussions get deeply personal and, I think, life changing for some of them. They’ve only been taught the Holocaust, so it never occurs to them that this is a repeated state policy.”

Fashion was the last industry to be de-Judaized in Nazi Germany, in large part due to German women's affinity for Jewish designers. At one point, Rudolph Hess's wife spearheaded a program to force designers into concentration camp workshops to produce dresses for SS wives and girlfriends, "even though they said the Jewish fashions were 'ruining our German women.'"

about the full range of genocide scenarios. For example, she said, students are surprised to learn about the situation in Ukraine, when roads were blocked so starving people could not find food elsewhere. They are shocked to learn that the U.S. only formally recognized the Armenian genocide in December 2019, and that the Khmer Rouge was allowed to officially represent Cambodia at the United Nations for years after carrying out a genocide there.

Students also discuss the red flags of an impending genocide, which include classification of people into "us and them" categories, discrimination, and expropriation of property.

Many of the students in the class are pre-med, and they are especially horrified to discover the role doctors have played in some genocides, Guenther said.

Guenther received both her B.A. and M.A. from UH. Her Ph.D. in History is from the University of Texas at Austin, where she researched the Nazi shutdown of the Jewish fashion industry. It was the last industry to be de-Judaized in Nazi Germany, she said, in large part due to German women's affinity for Jewish designers. At one point, Rudolph Hess's wife spearheaded a program to force designers into concentration camp workshops to produce dresses for SS wives and girlfriends, "even though they said the Jewish fashions were 'ruining our German women,'" Guenther said.

Guenther, a native German, said genocide history feels

personal to her.

"Those countries that take responsibility have moved forward," she said. "As a German, I take that really seriously.... I need to be really aware and up front that I am teaching this with an agenda as a German and a historian and a human being who is very concerned about the ways our government is othering people."

She acknowledged that teaching about genocide every semester can get exhausting.

"It's emotionally really hard to spend an hour-and-a-half twice a week, and all the prep for it, on the worst people can be," she said. But, she added, "I really relish the best people can be—Turks who hid Armenians or Germans who hid Jews. There's always the little people whose moral bar doesn't move."

In Memoriam

Jewish Studies is saddened to share the news of the untimely death of one of our minors, Lex Riklin. Lex, who was 23, graduated from the University of Houston posthumously in May 2020. Program Director Mark A. Goldberg shares the following:

“This semester, the Jewish Studies Program lost Lex Riklin, an important member of our community, who passed away in March 2020. I met Lex two years ago when he declared Jewish Studies as his minor. From the beginning, his commitment to the field and to the program was tangible. This semester, Lex took my Jewish food history course, and it was a joy to have him in class. A main contributor to discussion, he always offered thoughtful ideas highlighting the significance of Jewish culture in world history.”



Photos/Duffy Lieber

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 e-mails 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 e-mail 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 but done within a snappy 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!