



## From the Director:

### Expanding by Leaps and Bounds!

Jewish Studies is growing beyond anyone's expectations. We added [9 new courses](#) to the minor this year, and we will be adding a tenth course next year. For the second time in the program's 4-year history, I took students, faculty, and some of their family members to Israel, this time focusing on Holy Land pilgrimage (see [SMU in Israel](#)).

Our community programs continued to draw students and life-long learners alike. The fall Nate and Ann **Levine Lecture** welcomed co-authors Doron Ben-Atar (Professor of History, Fordham University) and Andrew Pessin (Professor of Philosophy, Connecticut College and antisemitism editor for the global Jewish newspaper *algemeiner*) who addressed the topic of their book, "Israel, BDS, and Campus Life: Complexities of Jewish Identity in the American Academy." The spring Levine Lecture at the fourth annual One Day Jewish University brought Lisa Gossels, director of the award-winning documentary film, *My So Called Enemy*, who discussed the process of filming and editing a seven-year longitudinal study of Israeli and Palestinian girls who attended a cross-cultural women's leadership program called *Building Bridges for Peace*. The film was deeply poignant, and Ms. Gossel's stories were compelling and thought-provoking.

January's celebration of **International Ladino Day** included reflections by members of the Ladino community and a rousing concert by Michelle Alany and friends. Follow the links to hear talks by [Rachel Amado Bortnick](#) and [Sarah Korman](#). Follow this [link](#) to watch the entire program, including the concert (which starts at 1:51:24; yes, that's me on second fiddle). The coffee break included kosher Sephardic sweets from Brooklyn, NY.

The North Texas Council of Jewish Studies Professors, which I chair, co-sponsored the first undergraduate **North Texas Jewish Studies Conference** with the University of Dallas. The keynote speaker, Prof. Sharon Portnoff, Director of Jewish Studies and Elie Wiesel Associate Professor of Judaic Studies at Connecticut College addressed "On Primo Levi's 'Dignifying Holocaust Witnessing,'" which demonstrated how Levi employed Dante's structure of the *Inferno* to create his Holocaust poem "Reveille."

Last, but most definitely not least, we graduated 5 minors this Spring (see **Student Spotlight**) and look forward to adding one more this Fall.

We look forward to continued success as we disperse for the summer and plan for next year.

*Shira Lander, PhD*

Director

[Donate Now](#)

## Student Spotlight

### 2019 JEWISH STUDIES MINORS

**Hannah Fariah Ali**

**B.A., Religious Studies**

**B.A., Markets and Culture**

Hannah is from Duncanville, Texas. In her time at SMU, she has joined various organizations such as Mustang I I, a student run spirit organization, and Gamma Phi Beta Sorority. She has also assumed leadership roles as an Orientation Leader, CONNECT Program mentor, and Mustang Corral Guide. She has participated in the Faith and Learning Scholars Program as well as the Hilltop Scholars Program, received the John L Freehafer Award for her contribution to student life, and was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa honor society. In her free time, she likes to try new restaurants around Dallas and attend concerts in Deep Ellum. After graduation, Hannah will attend Dedman School of Law.



**Jaaidah Reed**

**B.A., Biological Sciences**

**B.A., Human Rights**

**Minor, Women & Gender Studies**

Jaaidah, from Mansfield, TX, has been an activist throughout her life and at SMU. She is an Engaged Learning fellow, worked for College Access Programs, interned for Wendy Davis, volunteered for Colin Allred for Congress, volunteered as a conversation buddy for English as a Second Language, served as Secretary for Health Occupation Students of America and for SMU's Spanish Club, was Event Coordinator for SMU Hillel, and played in the Southern Methodist University Mustang Band. She was a member of the Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity, a Board member of Black @ SMU with the University President, received 2016 and 2018 Embrey Human Rights Scholarships for study trips to Rwanda and Israel, as well as the McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Award. She has volunteered at the Dallas Area Rape Crisis Center, which inspired her to develop an informational approach to combat child sexual abuse in the Southern Sector of Dallas County. After graduation, she has been offered a job teaching middle school biology and plans to work in policy and legislation or the law.



**Dalya Chaya Rومانer**

**B.A., Advertising**

Dalya Rومانer was born and raised in Dallas. After graduating from Yavneh Academy, a modern-Orthodox Jewish day school, she took a gap year where she traveled to Israel and worked in Dallas. She then attended Brandeis University before transferring to SMU to study Advertising, with a focus on Strategic Brand Management. At SMU, she was president of the Advertising Club and an editor for *Her Campus*, an online editorial for collegiate women. In addition to being a Strategy Team Member for SMU's National Student Advertising Competition Team, she is a member of Kappa Tau Alpha, the SMU Hillel Board, the Golden Key Honor Society, and earned the Temerlin Advertising Institute award for Outstanding Academic Achievement in Strategic Brand Management. She is planning to work as a brand planner in an advertising agency after graduation. In her free time, Dalya enjoys rock climbing, photography, exploring Dallas, and spending time with family.



**Michael Weiss**

**B.A., Geology**

**B.A., Environmental Studies**

Michael Weiss is from Oakland, California. He now works as an outdoor instructor and wilderness guide in the Rocky Mountains and Appalachians, which he has since done part time throughout the summers while at SMU. Michael worked for SMU Outdoor Adventures as the student trip manager, and led three climbing and backpacking trips with the OA each semester. He feels that the Jewish Studies minor has helped to solidify the way he personally practices Judaism to ground him before he ventures into a hermit-esque lifestyle in the mountains.



**Emma Guo Shufen Woods**

**B.A., Religious Studies, Summa Cum Laude**

Emma was born in mainland China but has made Texas her home for the last 19 years. While at SMU she interned in the archives department of the Dallas Holocaust Museum. She also participated in SMU study abroad programs in Paris and Madrid. She plans on spending her summer teaching English as a second language. A member of the Alpha Chi honor society and recipient of the Isaac Gustave Bromberg Award for Outstanding Work in the Humanities, she is preparing for graduate school.



## Fall '18 Levine Lecture: Campus Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism

Doron Ben-Atar, Professor of History, Fordham University, and Andrew Pessin, Professor of Philosophy at Connecticut College and antisemitism editor for the global Jewish newspaper *algemeiner*, addressed the topic of their book, "Israel, BDS, and Campus Life: Complexities of Jewish Identity in the American Academy." They traced the rise of on-campus protests against Israel and the increasing intimidation of Jewish faculty and students across American colleges and universities, both of which they demonstrated often crossed the line from civil, reasoned political disagreement to antisemitism. While Pessin and Ben-Atar situate themselves on different ends of the political spectrum, they agreed that the current environment on many campuses was hostile to Jewish self-expression.



## Spring '19 Levine Lecture: Making the Film *My So-Called Enemy*



Lisa Gossels, director, producer & Emmy® Award-winning documentary filmmaker ("The Children of Chabannes" & "My So-Called Enemy") discussed her experience documenting six Palestinian and Israeli teenage girls committed to justice and mutual understanding after participating in a cross-cultural women's leadership program called *Building Bridges for Peace*. The film explores how the young women's transformative experience of knowing their "enemies" as human beings in a U.S. retreat meets with the complicated realities of their lives back home in the Middle East. Through their coming-of-age narratives, audiences see the challenges of creating relationships across political, racial, religious, cultural and physical divides as well as the possibility and hope that come from listening to each other's stories. The event was co-sponsored by the Women's and Gender Studies program and the Perkins School of Theology.

## Guest Lecture Explores Israeli Democracy

Reuven Hazan, Professor of Political Science at Hebrew University, outlined the ways the Israeli parliamentary system fulfills its democratic objectives and how it might improve. After giving a lucid explanation of how the election and governance system works, he presented an argument for direct election of the prime minister, claiming it would diminish the disproportionate influence as well as the number of Israel's minority parties. The event was co-sponsored with the Southwest Jewish Congress.



## SMU in Israel: Focus on Pilgrims

For spring break 2019, students traveled with Drs. Stephanie Amsel (English), Denise DuPont (Spanish), Catherine Keene (Medieval Studies), Abbey Stockstill (Art History), Shira Lander (Jewish Studies), and Bonnie Wheeler (Medieval Studies) to visit and study sites with centuries-long historical significance to pilgrims of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim backgrounds. The trip examined both continuities and discontinuities of locations and stories visited by religious travelers to the Holy Land. We studied the many layers of narrative traditions as well as of physical remains that dot the contested landscape considered holy by the three Abrahamic religions.



## ONE DAY JEWISH UNIVERSITY @ SMU

This year's One Day Jewish University welcomed a new SMU professor to the event, **Yoram Solomon**, from the Cox School of Business, who specializes in innovation culture and entrepreneurship. He and his colleague, Prof. Simon Mak, taught "Innovation in Israel: From Blockchain and Beyond" (blockchain is a cryptography tool used to secure digital data). Other courses included "The Golden Age of Jewish Women? Mrs. Maisel, Rebecca Bunch, and RBG," "Jewish and Christian Views of the Messiah," "Wellhausen's Folly: Why Historical-Critical Study of the Bible Is a Waste of Time," and "Conflicting Narratives Among 'Holy Land' Pilgrim Guides." The student turnout surpassed previous years, with over 40 undergraduates attending the event.

## SMUJS Faculty Highlights

**Mark A. Chancey**, Professor of Religious Studies, is continuing to research his next book, *The Good Book as Textbook: Bible Courses in American Public Schools*.

**Richard W. Cogley**, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, was awarded the 2019 Perrine Prize for embodying the ideals of Phi Beta Kappa and its tradition of excellence.

**Erin R. Hochman**, Associate Professor of History, won the Hans Rosenberg Best 2016 Book Prize by the Central European History Society and the 2017 Radomir Luža Prize by the American Friends of the Documentation Center of Austrian Resistance, Vienna and the Center Austria at the University of New Orleans for her outstanding publication on Central European studies in the era of the Second World War, *Imagining a Greater Germany: Republican Nationalism and the Idea of Anschluss* (Cornell University Press, 2016).

**Shira L. Lander**, Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, delivered a talk "Holy Land or Land of the Holy?: The Significance of Jerusalem to Jews, Christians, and Muslims" at the 2019 *Tables of Content* fundraiser for the Friends of the SMU Libraries.

**Martha Satz**, Assistant Professor of English, delivered the paper "Literary Re-victimization in the Wake of the Holocaust: an Ethical Consideration of Problematic Post-Holocaust Novels" at the Annual Scholars Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches at UTD, and was a respondent at the Association of Jewish Studies meeting in Boston.

*Thank you to the generous donors whose support makes all of these programs possible.*



**SMU**

Jewish Studies  
PO Box 750202  
Dallas, TX 75275  
214-768-2157  
[jewishstudies@smu.edu](mailto:jewishstudies@smu.edu)  
[smu.edu/jewishstudiesprogram](http://smu.edu/jewishstudiesprogram)