



December 2022 Newsletter



SWIG PROGRAM in
JEWISH STUDIES
and SOCIAL JUSTICE

Announcing Our Spring 2023 JSSJ Events

We are thrilled to announce three unique opportunities to learn and engage with the Swig JSSJ Program in the spring 2023 semester. All three events will take place on the USF Main Campus. As always, each one is free and open to the public. If you have any questions about these events, please contact Oren Kroll-Zeldin at omkrollzeldin@usfca.edu. Save the dates below!

The Jews of Iran

Sunday, March 5, 2023

Acclaimed scholar **Lior B. Sternfeld** will offer an interactive presentation on the Jews of contemporary Iran, the largest population of Jews in a Muslim-majority country in the world. A professor of history and Jewish studies at Pennsylvania State University, Sternfeld is the author of ***Between Iran and Zion: Jewish Histories of Twentieth Century Iran*** (2018) and co-author of ***Jews of Iran: A Photographic Chronicle*** (2022), along with Hassan Sarbakhshian and Parvaneh Vahidmanesh.

The Alvin H. Baum Jr. Memorial Lecture

Sunday, March 26, 2023

The second annual Alvin H. Baum Jr. Memorial Lecture in honor of an LGBTQIA+ Jewish social justice activist will be delivered by former California State Senator Mark Leno.

Social Justice Passover Seder

Tuesday, April 11, 2023

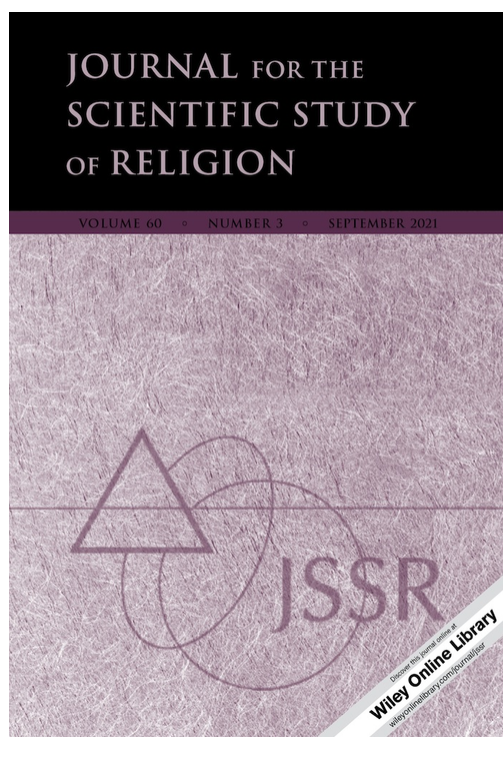
The 13th annual social justice Passover Seder will focus on anti-racism. We will tell the Passover story while making connections between the ancient story of moving from slavery to freedom and contemporary anti-racist activism.

Spring 2023 JSSJ Classes

Course Name	Course No.	Days/Times	Instructor	Core Req.
Arabic (Second Semester)	ARAB 102-01	MWF 2:15-3:20 p.m.	Walton-Price	Foreign Lang.
Forgiving the Unforgivable? The Ethics of Apology	THRS 132-01	TR 12:45-2:30 p.m.	Hahn Tapper	D-3; CD
Government and Politics of the Middle East	POLS 349-01	TR 9:55-11:40 a.m.	Zunes	
Hebrew (Second Semester)	HEBR 102-01	MWF 12:00-1:40 p.m.	Gvirtsman	Foreign Lang.
Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Thru Literature and Film	THRS 238-01	TR 9:55-11:40 a.m.	Kroll-Zeldin	D-3; CD
Jewish-Christian Relations	THRS 230-01	T 6:30-10:10 p.m.	Latteri	D-2
Jews, Judaisms, and Jewish Identities	THRS 130-01	TR 2:40-4:25 p.m.	Bar-Gabai	D-2
Mideast Peoples and Culture	ANTH 270-01	TR 12:45-2:30 p.m.	Kroll-Zeldin	E; CD
Paris-Berlin	GERM 350-01	TR 9:55-11:40 a.m.	Ramos	C-1
Queering Religion	THRS 129-01	TR 4:35-6:20 p.m.	Angel	D-2; CD
Refugees: Justice and Ethics	THRS 236-01	TR 4:35-6:20 p.m.	Bar-Gabai	D-3; CD; CEL

[Learn more about the requirements for the JSSJ minor »](#)

Questions? Email JSSJ Director **Aaron Hahn Tapper**.



ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

Alumni Q&A

Aaron J. Hahn Tapper, MTS '00

Mae and Benjamin Swig Chair in Jewish Studies and Director of the Swig Program in Jewish Studies and Social Justice at the University of San Francisco

BY MELIN A. SOTIRIOU DROZ, MTS '23

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Professor Aaron J. Hahn Tapper grew up in multiple communities, something that helped him understand his own intersecting identities from a young age. Living in both South Philly and suburban Lower Merion, his diverse upbringing set the stage for the work that would define his career: how differences can both fuel conflict and foster connection.

One distinction had to do with the religious identities of his family. "My mom converted before she married my dad, so I grew up with two grandmothers who were Jewish and two who were nominally Christian," Hahn Tapper shares. "I attended Jewish day school through 11th grade, but it wasn't until my time at HDS that I really explored the historical nature of Judaism, in large part by looking at how other religions developed."

From his travels in the Middle East to his latest ethnographic work on Australia's Indigenous peoples, Hahn Tapper's research and teaching focus on marginalized communities, identity formation, and social justice. We sat down with Hahn Tapper to discuss comparative conflict analysis, social justice education, and how facilitating interfaith conversations can expand a limited worldview to embrace our shared humanity.

HDS: With an undergraduate degree in psychology, a master's degree focused on world religions, and a PhD in religious studies, how did your time at HDS help guide your curiosity and career?

Hahn Tapper: Out of college, I spent a year in Jerusalem at a Jewish seminary, a year working in DC, and a year backpacking Southeast Asia and the Middle East. In Israel/Palestine, sectarian violence seemed to be getting worse. The intensity of the conflict, and a desire to help mitigate and transform things for the better, led me to graduate school. At HDS, along with four semesters of Arabic, I took classes in Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam. My newfound love of Arabic led me to spend a summer studying the language in Morocco, an opportunity that opened my eyes to Jewish Arab communities, largely unknown to me as a young man with an Eastern European Ashkenazi Jewish background whose schooling had discounted such groups. My HDS studies taught me that all religious traditions and communities are varied and multifaceted, most extraordinarily so.

HDS: Your PhD dissertation focuses on the relationship between power and the sociopolitical context of Israel/Palestine. Can you tell us about your research and how it informs your current work, particularly with the Center for Transformative Education?

Hahn Tapper: My dissertation focused on how leaders from different religious traditions—rabbi, shaykh, and imam—interpret law in relation to nonviolence: Who is a combatant? Who is a civilian? What does self-defense entail? I traveled all over Israel and Palestine, including Gaza, interviewing religious figures, many of whom had nonmainstream ideas. In a roundabout way, this led to my book *Judaisms* (2020), which incorporates historically marginalized Jewish voices in an attempt to represent the heterogeneous nature of Judaism.

Recent JSSJ Highlights

Over the past month, there were three extraordinary highlights of the Swig JSSJ Program that we would like to share.

In the News

An article about our **Mapping Jewish San Francisco** project, originally published in *J. Weekly*, was picked up by the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* and syndicated in Jewish publications across the world, including *The Jerusalem Post*, among other acclaimed newspapers and media sources.

In the Harvard University Dean's Review

Swig JSSJ Director Aaron Hahn Tapper was profiled in a recent publication of Harvard University's Divinity School, where Hahn Tapper received a master's of theological study in 2000. [See the in-depth profile »](#)

In the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion

Along with two Stanford University colleagues, Ari Y. Kelman and Aliya Saperstein, Hahn Tapper co-wrote "Counting on Whiteness: Religion, Race, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Jewish Demography," published in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. They examined 192 national and local community portraits and studies conducted between 1970-2020 that focused on Jewish American populations. The article analyzes how omissions regarding intra-communal racial and ethnic diversity played a significant role in the "religio-racial formation" of Jewish Americans as white. Contrary to this internally and externally imposed stereotype, some 20 percent of Jewish Americans identify as people of color. [Read the article »](#)

Your generous support of the Swig Program in Jewish Studies and Social Justice will help us engage students in both theoretical and practical approaches of social justice and activism rooted in the Jewish traditions.

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Swig Program in Jewish Studies and Social Justice

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