

News from the center

CAROLINA CENTER *for* JEWISH STUDIES

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL • SPRING 2010 • CCJS.UNC.EDU

faculty research **ADVANCES THE FIELD OF JEWISH STUDIES**

This year has been one of remarkable growth, with an increase in the number of Jewish Studies courses offered to a record number of Carolina students and an impressive increase in attendance at the Center's public events. Plus, more Jewish Studies faculty members are working on research projects, publishing books and giving scholarly lectures.

"As part of a public university, we have a three-part mission of teaching, research and community service," said Jonathan Hess, director. "As we bring new faculty to Carolina, we not only expand our course offerings for students, but also build a research hub in many facets of Jewish Studies."

The research efforts of the Center's faculty benefit scholars worldwide and advance the field of Jewish Studies. They also enhance their teaching efforts at Carolina, exposes graduate students and undergraduates to new intellectual ideas, and position the university as a major center for Jewish Studies. For many of the Center's faculty, private funds have helped provide access to important resources that allow our scholars to complete their research projects.

Three new books from the Center's faculty were published this academic year.

- **Christopher Browning's** latest book, titled *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave Labor Camp*, was released in January by W. W. Norton & Co. It is a case study of the Jewish

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a love for Carolina prompts Levin family to create new endowment for Jewish studies faculty

Seymour M. Levin, '48 and Carol Cole Levin of Greensboro, N.C., have recently expanded their support of the Center by establishing a new faculty endowed chair in Jewish Studies.

"Our love for Carolina and a dream for a Jewish Studies major led us to create the new endowment," said Seymour Levin. "I want this university to be the very best, and I think the Center and the Jewish Studies program are doing great work for the campus and its students."

The Seymour and Carol Levin Distinguished Professorship Fund in Jewish Studies is the seventh endowed faculty chair for the Center. When fully funded, the endowment will help the Center recruit or retain an outstanding Jewish Studies faculty member.

"Our program has grown at such an impressive rate thanks largely to our generous donors who have made it possible for the Center to bring talented, distinguished faculty to Carolina. Both our students and the general community benefit from the caliber of faculty here in Chapel Hill, and this endowed professorship will expand our efforts," said Jonathan Hess, director. "We are thankful to Seymour and Carol Levin for their generous gift and their ongoing enthusiasm for the Center."

"The growth of the Jewish Studies program is a good thing for the entire campus," Levin added. "It's important to have so many students learning about



different cultures and faiths from such wonderful faculty members."

Seymour Levin was born in Burlington, North Carolina. After starting his education at Carolina, he left to serve in the United States Navy and then returned to campus and graduated with a B.S. degree in Commerce. He has three children and six grandchildren. Carol Cole Levin, a native of Mississippi, is an artist with two sons, one of whom is a Carolina alumnus (John Hand, 1991). She has two grandchildren with a third due this spring.

State funds provide basic faculty salaries for Carolina's distinguished scholars while permanent endowed chair funds, created by philanthropic gifts, further support teaching and research. By creating a reliable source of annual support, endowed faculty chairs provide a powerful incentive to come to, and stay at, Carolina.



from the director's desk

seven years of remarkable growth and achievement

Dr. Jonathan M. Hess

Director, Carolina Center for Jewish Studies

Moses M. and Hannah L. Malkin
Distinguished Term Professor of Jewish
History and Culture

Professor, Department of Germanic
Languages and Literatures

jmhess@email.unc.edu
(919) 962-4866

The Carolina Center for Jewish Studies turns seven this month. Of all our achievements in the past seven years, the one I find the most impressive is the way Jewish Studies has been able to establish itself as a dynamic field on campus that connects with so many departments and programs in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Students now enter Carolina and take for granted that they can study three years of Modern Hebrew, take courses in Israeli cinema, learn about Judaism in the ancient world, and study subjects as diverse as Jews in the American South and Rabbinic legal literature. Pay a quick visit to our Web site and look through our course offerings. I guarantee that you'll be able to sense the excitement that more than 1,000 Carolina undergraduates experienced this year.

As you read through this issue of *News from the Center*, I trust you will share our

passion about what we've been able to accomplish in Chapel Hill. Just as importantly, I hope you will share our excitement for the future. Every gift we have received from alumni and friends has made a difference. With your help, we'll soon be at the point when we can take our program to the next level and launch an undergraduate major in Jewish Studies.

Rather than simply asking you to renew your support, let me invite you to take on an active role in shaping our future. Tell a friend about what we've been doing in Chapel Hill and ask him or her to become a supporter of the Fund for Jewish Studies. Share this newsletter with a fellow Carolina graduate, or become a fan of the Center on Facebook. Help us double the number of friends and alumni who contribute to the Fund for Jewish Studies!

news briefs

FACULTY COURSE DEVELOPMENT

AWARDS: Several faculty members were awarded course development grants to create new Jewish Studies courses or add Jewish Studies content into existing courses in the College of Arts and Sciences. The awards also will allow the university to add Jewish Studies courses to meet student demand.

- **Yaakov Ariel** will create a new course on Christian-Jewish Relations Through the Ages.
- **Jonathan Boyarin** will further enhance the new gateway course: Introduction to Jewish Studies.
- **Evaytar Marienberg** will create several new courses, including Medieval Jews and the Bible; Jewish Legal Literature; Jewish Writing Through

History; and Sexuality and Marriage in Jewish Tradition and History.

- **Yaron Shemer** will create and/or enhance three courses: Israeli Culture and Society; Jerusalem in Israeli Literature, Cinema and Art; and Language, Exile and Homeland in Zionist Thought and Practice.

TECH AGE MEETS EARLY JUDAISM:

Anyone with access to a computer and an interest in learning more about Early Judaism can sign up for an online summer session course led by Carrie Duncan, doctoral candidate in the Department of Religious Studies.

Students and instructor will interact in weekly online discussions, supplemented with online presentations and text-

book reading. Course topics range from the Dead Sea Scrolls, to religious practices, to early Jewish art. The course, titled Introduction to Early Judaism, is offered through the University's Continuing Education program. For more information regarding the course and its fees, and to register, visit: <http://www.fridaycenter.unc.edu/cp/cco/index.htm>

BECOME A FAN: The Center is on Facebook. To become a fan, simply search "Carolina Center for Jewish Studies" or use the link found on our Web site: ccjs.unc.edu.



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factory slave labor camps in Starachowice in central Poland, based on nearly 265 survivor testimonies.

- **Jonathan Boyarin's** new book, *The Unconverted Self*, was published this year by The University of Chicago Press. It explores Jews, Indians, and the Identity of Christian Europe. He is currently putting the finishing touches on an ethnographic memoir about his synagogue on New York's Lower East Side, under contract with Fordham University Press.

- **Jonathan Hess's** newest book, *Middlebrow Literature and the Making of German-Jewish Identity*, released in March by Stanford University Press, studies the ways in which fiction came to assume an unprecedented role in shaping Jewish identity in 19th-century Germany.

The Center's other faculty members are in midst of writing books, publishing research papers and completing other scholarly projects. With 13 faculty members based in seven different academic departments, research interests are quite varied. This is a small sampling of their work in progress:

- **Erin Carlston** is currently working on a book manuscript called *Double Agents*, on literary responses to espionage trials involving Jews, homosexual men and communists.

- **Jodi Magness** has written a book entitled *Aspects of Jewish Daily Life in Late Second Temple Period Palestine*, which is forthcoming from Eerdmans Publishing Co. She is currently working on the publication of her 2003–2007 excavations in the Late Roman fort at Yotvata, Israel.

- **Rosa Perelmuter** had a paper published in the December edition of *Hispanofila*, titled "Yiddish in Cuba: A Love Story." It is part of a work in progress, a personal memoir about growing up Jewish in Cuba, tentatively titled *From Havana to the Hub: Growing Up Cuban-Jewish*.

- **Yaron Shemer** is working on a book manuscript titled, *Identity, Place and Subversion in Contemporary Mizrahi Cinema in Israel*. He also has received fellowships and grants to embark on his next project, *Neighboring Identities: The Jew in Arab Cinema*.

graduate student profile

outstanding faculty attract outstanding graduate students

The Carolina Center for Jewish Studies can take partial credit for graduate student Joseph Gindi's presence on campus. The Center was instrumental in bringing Jonathan Boyarin, the Leonard and Tobee Kaplan Distinguished Professor of Modern Jewish Thought, to campus in the fall of 2007. It is the classic case of having outstanding faculty attract outstanding graduate students.

"When I heard that Professor Boyarin had been hired in the Religious Studies Department, I was drawn to investigate UNC for doctoral work," said Gindi. "As I learned more about UNC, I became excited about the opportunities for studying at the Department of Religious Studies, where I could work with truly excellent scholars in American religion, anthropology of religion, and philosophy of religion."

Gindi is in his second year of graduate study at Carolina, currently working on a Master's thesis under Professor Boyarin's direction and serving as a Teaching Assistant.

"I was also drawn to UNC by the possibility of teaching throughout my graduate career," added Gindi. "I get much of my drive and inspiration from my students. I hope that the ideas they are exploring in my classroom will change their life as much as the ideas I have encountered in my studies have changed mine."

Gindi's scholarly focus is on American Judaism and Jewish culture.

"In particular I am interested in the way Jewish religious concepts shape, and are shaped by, the broader cultural and political context in which American Jews create their Judaism," said Gindi. "I believe, or hope, that thinking critically about Jewish culture and identity in conversation with scholars asking similar questions about other social groups can help all of us build the kind of religions, identities, and communities that embody our best values."

"The Center has been an important, even essential, part of my graduate experience at UNC."



Gindi has been an active member of the Jewish Studies Graduate Student Network since his arrival at Carolina, and he is a regular participant in the seminars and lectures hosted by the Center.

"The Center has been an important, perhaps even essential, part of my graduate experience at UNC. First, it has helped bring new faculty members to campus. And second, through its many events, the Center has enabled me to connect personally with scholars from across the vast field of Jewish studies, and created an opportunity for the community of Jewish studies scholars on campus (both faculty and graduate students) to gather and discuss important and innovative works in the field."

Gindi is the distinguished recipient of the Caroline H. and Thomas S. Royster Fellowship, which provides graduate students not only with financial support, but also with mentoring by senior faculty at the University. Funding opportunities such as this fellowship help academic departments recruit outstanding graduate students, such as Gindi, to Carolina.

Before coming to Carolina, he completed a dual Master of Arts degree program in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies and the Horstein Program for Jewish Professional Leadership at Brandeis University.

spring 2010

events

Our 2009–2010 public events, encompassing seven evening lectures, plus a film screening, seven lunchtime academic seminars, a special four-week community seminar, and the two-day Uhlman Family Seminar, have come to a conclusion and we thank all of you who joined us.

We are now busy planning next year's events. Speakers, topics and dates will be listed in the next edition of this newsletter, posted on our Web site and promoted in advance to our list serv members.

If you'd like to receive updates about upcoming events, please join our list serv by emailing us at ccjs@unc.edu. In the email message, please provide both your email and mailing addresses.

undergraduates receive Research Awards

T. Fielder Valone, Jr., class of 2011, is the first recipient of the Elsie Kaplan "Mother" Shapiro ZBT Undergraduate Research and Travel grant in Jewish Studies. The History major is writing his senior honors thesis on the eyewitness testimony of Lithuanian-Jewish survivors of genocide collected in the immediate aftermath of World War II. Valone will use the \$750 award to help fund a trip to New York City to review the testimony documents at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. His faculty advisor is Professor Christopher Browning. Elsie Kaplan Shapiro was housemother at Zeta Beta Tau for 22 years. This undergraduate research fund was established by her family and a group of fraternity brothers who wanted to ensure that her generous spirit and dedication benefited future generations of Carolina students.

Joseph "Trey" Meeks, class of 2010, was awarded a \$750 undergraduate research award from the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies and the Department of Religious Studies. Meeks, a Peace, War and Defense and German Studies double major, is working with Professor Ruth von Bernuth to finalize a manuscript that transcribes a unique prayer book that was written in 1516. The funding will help Meeks travel to Germany to review the original document. Meeks and von Bernuth have already

received several honors for the initial draft of their manuscript and they plan to publish the completed work after the trip to Germany and a final round of revision.

