

News from the center

CAROLINA CENTER *for* JEWISH STUDIES

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL • SPRING 2012 • CCJS.UNC.EDU

A NEW JEWISH STUDIES CERTIFICATE PROGRAM FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Fall 2012 will be an exciting time for the Center: the new B.A. degree for undergraduates will officially be on the books, and Carolina will also start a Jewish Studies certificate program for graduate students. This is the first certificate program of its kind at any college or university in North Carolina, and it is offered in conjunction with similar efforts at Duke University.

"We already have many graduate students who are taking coursework and conducting research in the various academic disciplines related to Jewish Studies with the intention of gaining greater expertise in the field," said Jonathan Hess, director. "This program provides the recognition they are due while establishing clear guidelines for any student wishing to pursue a graduate-level certificate in Jewish Studies."

The program is available to degree-seeking graduate students studying in the humanities and social sciences at Carolina. It includes opportunities for graduate students to explore Jewish languages, culture, literature and history in both their coursework and research endeavors.

Certificate requirements include:

- Completing three graduate-level courses on a topic related to Jewish Studies.
- Submitting a major seminar paper or a section of a broader thesis or dissertation on a topic related to Jewish Studies.
- Demonstrating relevant language skills either by taking advanced language courses or by using primary language texts in a major research project.

For more information regarding the certificate program, contact Jonathan Hess at jmhess@email.unc.edu.

Yaakov Ariel:

The Jews and the Evangelicals

In recent years, there has been a growth of interest, both public and academic, in the relationship between Evangelical Christians and Jews. Often, this interest focuses on American foreign policy in the Middle East. Professor Yaakov Ariel of the Department of Religious Studies considers this to be merely one aspect of a much larger inter-religious encounter and has spent a number of years exploring the multiple dimensions of the Evangelical-Jewish relationship.

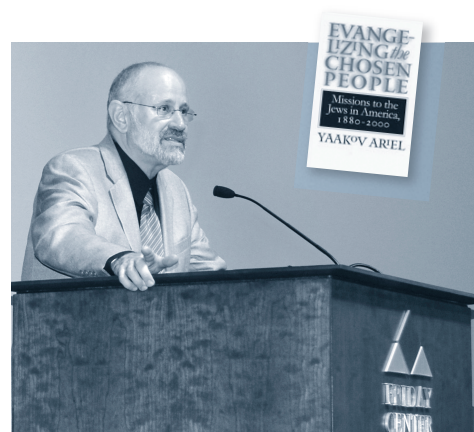
"It is a fascinating story and the only instance I know of," Ariel explains, "in which members of one religious tradition are seeing members of another religious tradition as necessary elements on the road to salvation."

A prolific scholar with a diverse body of interests, Ariel's work has often addressed this important and enigmatic relationship. His previous book, the award-winning *Evangelizing the Chosen People*, offered an in-depth study of Christian evangelizing missions towards Jews in America and how this relationship changed over the past century.

His current book project (his fourth) continues with this theme. *An Unusual Relationship*, forthcoming with New York University Press, takes a broader approach than his previous work. Ariel says, "I am trying to build an overarching picture of Evangelical and Jewish relations, and am asking the question: Where are the roots?"

This question led Ariel to explore an overlooked trove of Evangelical literature dating back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries aimed at Jews. By studying these fascinating materials, Ariel argues for a more nuanced understanding of the Evangelical mission to the Jews. "It is not just about teaching Jews Christianity, but about engaging with them."

Ariel began his academic career studying Medieval History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the 1970s. After receiving a Master's Degree there, he decided to cross borders—both



disciplinary and geographic. He began a Ph.D. program at the University of Chicago in Religious Studies and received his Ph.D. from the Divinity School in 1986.

In 1994, Ariel joined the Department of Religious Studies at Carolina. In the eighteen years since, he has offered twenty different courses addressing topics as varied as The Protestant Tradition, The Holocaust in History and Memory, and Judaism in Our Time. Outside the classroom, Ariel has advised or served on the committee for over twenty graduate students, including students from other departments, such as Art History, Communications, and Peace, War, & Defense.

Since coming to Carolina, Ariel has seen tremendous growth in the offerings and opportunities for Jewish Studies. "When I first arrived, any talk of anything Jewish was very rare; today we even have competing events. I think it's impressive how the Center has taken off, including its contribution to the public."

For Ariel, Jewish Studies offers a diversity of voices that can get lost in the often strictly defined disciplines of academia. "I learn from anthropologists, from scholars of literature, from Holocaust scholars. I learn all the time. I'm not just a teacher or a scholar—I'm a student."

from the director's desk

The wise men of Chelm and the research university



Dr. Jonathan M. Hess

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news briefs

NEW COURSE OFFERING

This fall, Carolina will offer its first ever Capstone Course: Themes and Methodologies in Jewish Studies. Students planning to major in Jewish Studies are required to take the Capstone Course, which will be offered every fall semester, and will feature different instructors and a range of topics, but will always delve into a compelling aspect of Jewish Studies. The first Capstone Course, Literature and Jewish Modernity, taught by Jonathan Hess, will explore the multi-lingual body of literature that emerged in the 19th century and continues to be produced today in Europe, North America, North Africa and the Middle East. The course is open to majors and non-majors.

upcoming events

Our 2011–2012 public events have come to a conclusion. Thanks for joining us!

We are now busy planning next year's program, which will include some special events to celebrate the Center's 10th anniversary. Events will be listed in the next newsletter, posted online, 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.

Last month, Professor Ruth von Bernuth took a break from the year she is spending in Jerusalem on a Yad Hanadiv Jewish Studies fellowship to come back home to Carolina and deliver a lecture on the origins of "The Wise Men of Chelm," a classic of modern Yiddish folklore. Drawing on her current research project on the relationship of Yiddish literature between 1450 and 1700 to German literature of the same period, von Bernuth explained to an audience made of Carolina students, faculty and community members how this exemplar of Yiddish culture had its origins not in the Polish city of Chelm but in a long German tradition of literature about fools.

Von Bernuth's research creates new paradigms for how we think about Jewish culture and its relation to the non-Jewish world. It also serves as an example of how research in the humanities can invigorate our classrooms and provide transformative experiences for our students. Now in her fourth year at Carolina, von Bernuth has developed a number of new courses in her period of expertise in both German and Yiddish literature, and both undergraduates and graduate students have sought her out as a mentor for their own research. In this sense, the case of von Bernuth serves as a wonderful reminder how the mission of the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies to foster new research enables us to create new courses, reach more students,

and enrich the quality of education for all students—particularly those who may never have heard of "The Wise Men of Chelm."

When Frank Porter Graham Professor of History Christopher Browning began his career almost 40 years ago, there was no recognized field called Holocaust history at universities in the U.S. It is in large part because of Browning's groundbreaking research—books such as *Ordinary Men* (1992) and *The Origins of the Final Solution* (2004), among many others—that thousands and thousands of students all over the world now study the Holocaust.

Our Chancellor Holden Thorp has garnered national attention for his vision of the research university as an "engine of innovation." With its support for groundbreaking research in the humanities, the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies fosters innovation. Whether rethinking the boundaries of Jewish culture, lobbying to get fields like Holocaust history recognized, or reflecting on the roles Jews play in contemporary American life, Jewish Studies pushes the boundaries of knowledge, creating new paradigms for studying the world we inhabit. This issue of *News from the Center* focuses on the pioneering research going on here in Chapel Hill in the field of Jewish Studies—by our world-class faculty, by our talented graduate students, and by the exceptional undergraduates we have the privilege to teach in our classrooms.

In February, photographer Gil Cohen-Magen shared images and stories from his decade-long project capturing the traditions and daily lives of Israel's ultra-Orthodox.



graduate student profile

stephanie gaskill

Stephanie Gaskill, a native of Toledo, Ohio, has dedicated the past year to researching black Protestants' attitudes toward Israel. A graduate student based in the Religious Studies department, Gaskill became interested in studying religion while she was completing her Master's degree in History. "I had started my graduate career intending to study diplomatic history, but found myself again and again gravitating toward topics that addressed religion. I am fascinated by the role religion has played (and continues to play) in foreign policy decisions."

This broader interest led her to pursue research on Christian Zionism, which in turn has broadened her interest in many other topics within American religious history. "This topic is interesting to me because it addresses the underlying relationship between African-Americans and Jews. Both historical scholarship and popular perception portray this relationship as one that has been on the decline since the 1960s because of social and political disagreements. But the role religion plays in interactions between African-Americans and Jews has often been overlooked. Viewing this relationship through the lens of religious history reveals an important point: neither African-Americans nor Jews are monolithic groups, and religious convictions help to account for the varying ways they can interact with one another. More specifically, black Protestants' support for Israel subverts the traditional notion that African-Americans have grown more antagonistic toward Jews and adds an important element to current discussions of black-Jewish relations."

Gaskill was recently awarded a Graduate Student Research and Travel grant, made possible by generous private gifts to the Center. With this travel grant, Gaskill will be able to travel to

Detroit to conduct several weeks of field research at Glenn Plummer's Ambassadors for Christ Church. "Plummer is unique in that he is an African-American minister who is very outspoken about his support for Israel. This support is especially intriguing given the fact that

Plummer carries out his ministry in an area suffering greatly from the recession, raising questions about why he and his congregation in particular are devoted to supporting Israel. I hope to determine the reasons for this support and what it says about black-Jewish relations in America more broadly."

Carolina was Gaskill's top choice for graduate school. "This program is a perfect fit for me because I am able to work with two incredible faculty members who are experts in my two main areas of interest." Gaskill's two faculty advisors are Yaakov Ariel, an expert on Christian Zionism, and Laurie Maffly-Kipp, an expert on African-American religious history. "I also cannot say enough about how much I appreciate my department as a whole. My professors and fellow graduate students are not only brilliant, but also unbelievably supportive, both inside

and outside the classroom. I really cannot imagine myself anywhere else."

Gaskill, who holds a B.A. in History and English, and an M.A. in History, all from Bowling Green State University, expects to complete her Ph.D. program in 2015. She then plans to pursue a career as a professor at a small liberal arts college.

Private support for graduate student fellowships and graduate student research, travel and summer stipends, help nurture young scholars, create relevant scholarly works, train the next generation of leading teachers and researchers, and further Carolina's commitment to student-focused research. For more information, contact Margaret Costley at the Arts and Sciences Foundation at (919) 843-0345 or at margaret.costley@unc.edu.



"This program is a perfect fit for me because I am able to work with two incredible faculty members who are experts in my two main areas of interest."

grants

PRIVATE GIFTS PROVIDE GRANTS TO STUDENTS AND FACULTY

Thanks to generous private support, this year the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies was able to offer several grants supporting undergraduate students, graduate students and faculty.

"Private gifts have funded the various grants that have made a tremendous impact on our students and faculty members," said Jonathan Hess, director. "We are very grateful for the support."

Funding for these awards was made possible by the Howard R. Levine Student Excellence Fund, the Rhonda A. and Robert Hillel Silver Fund for Graduate Support, the Jack O. Spies and Family Jewish Studies Fund, the Jerry and Huddy Cohen Faculty Excellence Fund, the Hal and Holly Levinson Fund, and two new funds created by the Center's advisory board members: the Graduate Student Expendable Fund and the Board Director's Fund.

Undergraduate Research and Travel Awards:

Abigail Lewis, to review archived materials housed at Yale University relating to her honors thesis project on Holocaust testimonials regarding the return of survivors to France; **Haley Sklut**, to study abroad at the Rothberg International School at Hebrew University; **Katie Zolot**, to improve Hebrew language skills during a semester abroad at Hebrew University

Graduate Student Research and Travel Awards:

Brian Coussens, to travel to Israel to work on excavations in Huqoq; **Leila Family**, to conduct research on the risk of breast cancer for Ashkenazi Jewish women; **Stephanie Gaskill**, to travel to conduct interviews and research on the changing significance of black Protestant support for Israel; **Daniel Schindler**, to create a typology and chronology of the pottery excavated from Huqoq; **Emma Woelk**, to attend an intensive Yiddish language program in New York City, so as to further her long-term work on Yiddish Theater in postwar Germany

Graduate Student Summer Stipend:

Joseph Gindi, for summer 2012, to focus exclusively on research pertaining to his dissertation on how contemporary Jewish practice shapes, and is shaped by, discourses of Jewish law.

Continued on next page. See GRANTS.

GRANTS, continued

Faculty Course Development / Course Enhancement Awards:

Yaron Shemer, to create a community film series, with international filmmakers in attendance, as part of the Israeli Cinema: Gender, Nation, and Ethnicity course;

Hannah Sprintzik, to revise the Hebrew language program so that it better meets the needs of Jewish Studies majors, and to enhance extracurricular activities for Hebrew language students; **Shai Tamari**, to plan a student trip to D.C. for the Challenges to Peace-Making in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict course

Faculty Research Awards:

Greg Flaxman, to travel to Jerusalem to present a paper at the Israeli Film and Documentary Conference; **Hannah Sprintzik**, to travel to California to present a paper at the National Association of Professors of Hebrew conference;

Yaron Shemer, to present a paper at the Association for Israel Studies conference, held in Israel this summer; **Rosa Perelmutter**, to present a paper at the Latin American Studies Association conference in California; **Ruth von Bernuth**, to present at the 15th Annual Symposium for Yiddish Studies, held in Germany

Rhonda A. and Robert Hillel Silver Graduate Fellowship:

This non-service fellowship, made possible through the generosity of Rhonda and Robert Hillel Silver, '77, supports a graduate student working in Jewish Studies in the advanced stages of his or her career at Carolina. This fellowship enables a student to focus full time on his or her scholarship, improving quality and shortening the time required to complete a Ph.D. degree. Applications are under review.

student profile Abigail Lewis, '12

Although many undergraduates begin their college careers with an idea of their future, many completely change plans during their course of study. Not so with Abigail (Abby) Lewis, '12. "Ever since high school," she says, "I knew I wanted to study history."

For the senior from Apex, North Carolina, UNC has presented her with many opportunities to pursue her ambitions of higher study in history. Early on at Carolina, she increasingly came to concentrate her studies on the history of the Holocaust. "I took a class on analyzing camp and gulag memoirs and then gravitated towards that field of study." Currently a senior honors student in the Department of History, Lewis has gone on to take numerous upper level and even graduate level courses in history, in addition to learning German and French.

This past summer, she had the chance to use these language skills when she conducted research in Paris for her honors thesis, which she found exhilarating.

"It was fun to sit down in a French library and read original French documents. That's fun for me. Maybe that's nerdy, but hanging out in libraries in Paris for a job sounds awesome to me." She added, "I guess I have a thing for libraries."

During fall semester, she received a Carolina Center for Jewish Studies Undergraduate Research Grant to conduct additional research utilizing the Fortunoff Video Archive of survivor testimonies, which is housed at Yale University. "Without the Center's funding, my project would

primarily be reading published memoirs and watching interviews available at UNC, but thanks to this funding, I have had access to a greater breadth of resources and I will have a more well-rounded project."

Focusing on French survivor accounts, Lewis' research explores Jewish identity in Europe in the wake of the Holocaust. She is also interested in the ways memories of survival change over time.

"What people say in 1946 versus what they say in 1970 reveals a great deal about the way their own thinking about survival and about witnessing changes over time."

Lewis will present her research at an honors symposium in the spring, and she intends to convert the thesis into an article for an undergraduate journal. The thesis represents the capstone of a four-year program of intensive historical studies. She will attend graduate school in the fall to pursue a Ph.D. in Jewish History.

While Lewis has come a long ways towards her goal of becoming a historian, her career at Carolina has not been without regrets. "I wish I had figured out my interest in Jewish Studies earlier, so I could have picked up the minor!"



Abigail Lewis, overlooking Paris, during a recent trip to France.