

news from the center

CAROLINA CENTER *for* JEWISH STUDIES

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

shalom y'all...

Exploring the Jewish Experience in the American South

One of Carolina's unique academic strengths is its expertise in the history of the Jewish South, and how, over time, Jewish southerners have blended their regional southern identities with their religious and cultural identities.

Professor Marcie Cohen Ferris offers a compelling, and very popular, course to Carolina students who want to learn more about "the braided identity" of Jewish Southerners. In her American Studies "Shalom Y'all" course this fall, 30 students are learning how Jewish settlers forged relationships with white and black gentile southerners, their loyalty to the South as a region, and their embrace of southern culture.

"By tracing the history of Jewish southerners from the colonial era to the present, we're exploring Jewish contributions to the intellectual, political, economic, artistic and religious cultures," explained Ferris. "Using archival resources from the Southern Historical Collection, we can better understand what it means to be Jewish in this unique American region."

Topics for the course range from Colonial Era Savannah and Georgia Jewry and Birth of the Reform Movement in Charleston, to Southern Jews and Slavery, Jewish Confederates, Antisemitism: Southern Style (the Leo Frank story), and Matzoh Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South.

Readings for the course include personal stories such as Emma Mordecai's diary (1864-65); Alfred Uhry's play "Driving Miss Daisy;" and "The Provincials," a personal history of Jews in the South written by the Center's founding chair, Eli N. Evans, '58.

"I created this course to enrich the academic offerings in both Jewish Studies and American Studies, and to provide

undergraduates with unique opportunities for scholarship and research," added Ferris. This semester, her students are exploring topics from family history to southern Jewish fiction to the Hollywood and New York Jewish songwriters and producers who mythologized the "Old South" in popular music and film in the 1920s.

Other courses and events held throughout the year bring the topic of the Jewish South to our students and the greater community. The Center hosts a popular public



event each year that focuses exclusively on this topic. This year's Sylvia and Irving Margolis Lecture on the Jewish Experience in the American South event was a film screening of "Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina" followed by a panel discussion. Held in October, the event was part of the Southern Jewish Historical Society's 2010 conference hosted at UNC, titled "Coming to Carolina: Jewish Life in an Evolving South." In addition to the film screening, the four-day conference included presentations by several of the Center's faculty and brought many other experts to campus.

T. Fielder Valone
(seated at front, on
right) met with the
Center's Advisory
Board members in
April 2010 to give an
overview of his
research project.



student profile

T. Fielder Valone, Jr., '11

*“I suddenly
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In 1998, at age 10, T. Fielder Valone, Jr. was on a family trip that changed his life forever. While visiting Belize, the family decided to take a quick trip into neighboring Guatemala, despite the political unrest in that country at the time. The sightseeing trip took an unpleasant turn, when their van was surrounded on a remote mountain road and the family was held at gunpoint. Their dramatic escape, made while driving in reverse down the twisty, narrow road, introduced Valone to the feeling of terror and the experience of being a victim.

Nearly 10 years later, while doing late-night research for his Holocaust course with Professor Christopher Browning, Valone suddenly connected with the reports of other victims, who realized terror as a constant reality, not just for a few minutes while traveling.

“I suddenly understood the wider implications of facing terror, of being a victim,” said Valone. “As I worked on my paper for the Holocaust course, I developed an intellectual passion to really delve into the subject.”

Valone, a History and American Studies major, is the first recipient of the Elsie Kaplan “Mother Shapiro” ZBT Undergraduate Research and Travel grant in Jewish Studies. He used the funding to help cover expenses for a month-long research trip in New York City this past July. There, he averaged six hours a day examining eyewitness testimonies of Lithuanian-Jewish survivors of genocide, collected immediately after World War II and now archived at YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

As an interesting twist, he was only able to pursue his research project because Professor Jonathan Boyarin, associate director of the Center, had translated the documents from Yiddish to English a few years ago. There are 2,000 pages of handwritten testimonies in total, but Valone decided to focus on those from three rural counties on what was then the Lithuanian-German border.

The testimonials were recorded by a Holocaust survivor who visited displaced person campus between 1946 and 1948.

“The records are very detailed and organized, exploring pre-war and post-war life in addition to the victims’ experiences during the war years,” explained Valone. “A couple weeks after starting work, I was able to meet with Professor Boyarin and really talk through everything I was learning about. It was difficult to get through the testimonials, the accounts were very brutal, they told about neighbor against neighbor, and it was large scale. I really couldn’t chat about it with friends.”

Back in Chapel Hill for his last year, he is busy turning his numerous legal pads worth of notes and hundreds of pages of photocopies into his senior honors thesis.

“This fall, I have about 3,000 pages of additional background reading to do, and then I need to finish the first draft of my paper by January,” Valone explained. “I figure this project is good practice for graduate school, to see if I really enjoy doing sustained intellectual research and to see if writing a dissertation is something I’d like to do.”

Valone serves as the student representative on the Center’s Advisory Board this year. After graduation this May, he plans to pursue a Ph.D. in Modern German History and further his research efforts after taking a year off. He is hoping to spend his gap year in Germany, doing the mirror image of his senior thesis research—reviewing the testimonials of war criminals who were in Lithuania.

Private support for undergraduate research initiatives and graduate student fellowships helps nurture young scholars, create relevant scholarly works, 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.



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

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from the director's desk

Renowned speakers visit chapel Hill

news briefs

DIANA BLOOM, '11, a German Language and Literature major, received a grant from the German Academic Exchange Service to conduct research on Jewish-Gentile relations in the Frankfurter Judengasse, the Frankfurt Jewish ghetto, during the Fettmilch uprising.

STEVEN WERLIN, who is completing his Ph.D. in Religious Studies, was awarded the 2010 Hershel Shanks Prize from the Biblical Archaeology Society. The award is given based on his academic paper entitled "Appetite for Destruction? The Archaeological Evidence for Jewish Iconoclasm."

A **VIDEO** highlighting the activities of the Center and Jewish Studies was recently completed. To view the video, visit our Web site at ccjs.unc.edu. We hope you'll share the video with family, friends and colleagues who may be interested in learning more about the Center.

FACEBOOK 100: The Center is on Facebook and recently reached 100 fans. To become a fan, visit our Web site and click on the Facebook icon, or simply search "Carolina Jewish Studies" on Facebook. The Center hopes to reach 200 fans this academic year—if you are already a fan, please suggest our Facebook page to family and friends.



The primary mission of the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies is to integrate the study of Jewish history and culture into the more general academic mission of the College of Arts and Sciences. Over the course of the past seven years, we've sought to accomplish this mission in a variety of ways. We've hired new faculty in several academic departments. We've developed a slate of course offerings in Jewish Studies that reaches more than 1,000 students each year. For students wishing to specialize, we've developed an undergraduate minor, and we are hard at work on getting an undergraduate major on the books.

Private support has been crucial for all these efforts. And private support has enabled us not just to educate our own students. It's made it possible for us create a vibrant public events program that helps fulfill Carolina's mission as one of the nation's premier public universities. Through our public outreach efforts we send our own faculty to lecture throughout the state, and we enrich our own community in Chapel Hill through a dynamic lecture series on campus.

We kicked off our public events program in late September with a captivating lecture by **Richard Elliott Friedman** exploring the end of polytheism and the emergence of monotheism in ancient Israel. Friedman, one of our generation's leading authorities on the Hebrew Bible, is a scholar whose works are widely read both inside and outside the academy. Not surprisingly,

hundreds came out for the event—students, faculty, and members of the broader community.

Just two weeks after Friedman's visit to campus, we were proud to cosponsor the moving

lecture that Elie Wiesel gave to a packed house in Memorial Hall. Later in October, we presented a screening of the new documentary film, *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina*, followed by a panel discussion. This event coincided with the annual meetings of the Southern Jewish Historical Society in Chapel Hill, and it was an honor for us to have leading scholars of the Jewish experience in the American South gather in Chapel Hill.

If you'll be in Chapel Hill on December 6, let me invite you to come join us for **Hasia Diner's** community lecture. Diner, one of the most distinguished

American Jewish historians working today, will be discussing how American Jewry dealt with the tragedy of the Holocaust in the immediate aftermath of World War II. Diner's topic derives from a recently published book that seeks to debunk the myth that American Jews in the 1950s were silent about the Holocaust. We expect a full house for this event, and we hope to see you there!

As always, let me thank all of you who've supported us in the past for your tremendous generosity. Please know how much your support is appreciated by all of us here on campus.



2010 honor roll of donors to the carolina center for jewish studies

thank you!

The Carolina Center for Jewish Studies in UNC's College of Arts and Sciences gratefully thanks the donors who have supported its students, faculty, and programs during the University's most recent fiscal year, which ran from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010. The Center's Honor Roll recognizes donors who made gifts during this period to support its expendable or endowed funds and whose gifts qualify them for membership in the following giving societies:

- Cornerstone Society \$25,000 and above
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- Dean's Circle* \$1,500 to \$1,999

Gifts made by **young alumni** qualify for the Dean's Circle when they meet the following criteria:

- Gifts of \$1,000 or more from those who graduated 6 to 10 years ago
- Gifts of \$500 or more from those who graduated within the past 5 years

The Honor Roll does not include pledge balances, bequests, or other planned gifts to the Center for Jewish Studies. This list has been prepared with great care to ensure its accuracy. To report a mistake, please contact Margaret Costley at (919) 843-0345 or Margaret.Costley@unc.edu.

Thank you, once again, for generously supporting the work of the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies.

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“We are enormously grateful to these donors whose generosity will

wish studies

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unrestricted giving

Generous gifts to the Center in recent months will provide ongoing, crucial discretionary support for Jewish Studies. By supporting the director's fund with permanent endowments, the gifts will help fund top priority needs, ranging from instructional support, to enrichment offerings for students, to faculty support, to course development grants. Endowment funds provide a permanent source of support since the principal is held in perpetuity, while the fund's annual earnings benefit the Center's mission.

Recent gifts to the fund were made by Gary J. Kaminsky and Lori Kaminsky, who created the **Gary J. and Lori Kaminsky Endowment Fund for Jewish Studies**, and Jeffrey A. Gorelick and Bari L. Gorelick, who formed **The Jeffrey A. and Bari L. Gorelick Fund for Excellence in Jewish Studies**.

"Unrestricted giving to the Center is enormously beneficial because it provides flexibility to use the funds to meet the year's most pressing needs," said Jonathan Hess, director. "We are enormously grateful to these donors whose generosity will impact Carolina students for generations to come."

l impact Carolina students for generations to come." — JONATHAN HESS

Carolina Center for Jewish Studies
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winter 2010

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a closing word message from the dean

UPCOMING EVENTS

COMMUNITY LECTURES

Dec. 6, 7:30 p.m.

HASIA DINER
Fitting Memorials

Feb. 28, 7:30 p.m.

ETHAN BRONNER
The Israeli-Palestinian Dispute

April 10, 7:00 p.m.

TONY KUSHNER
Art, Community and Culture

ACADEMIC LECTURES

Jan. 24, 5:30 p.m.

OMAR KAMIL
Conflicting Memories –
The Arabs and the Holocaust

March 21, 5:30 p.m.

DAN DINER
The Transformation of the Jews:
1750-1950

Please visit our Web site at ccjs.unc.edu for more event information. If you'd like to receive updates about upcoming events, please join our listserv by emailing us at ccjs@unc.edu. In the email message, please provide both your email and mailing addresses.

As the first semester of our academic year comes to a close and I think back over these last few months, I am reminded of the things that make Carolina great—our engaged and enthusiastic students, our talented and dedicated faculty, and our committed alumni. Each of these groups is critical to making Carolina the best it can be.

I want to thank each of you for your commitment to the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies, which continues to grow and expand its reach. We have a first-rate faculty, a wonderful speakers series that brings great minds to campus to help us broaden our understanding, and students eager to learn. This year we were fortunate to hire David Lambert, a scholar of Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism. This fall he is teaching Introduction to the Hebrew Bible.

As friends of the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies, your support has made the difference in the success of this program and will continue to be the critical factor in how well we progress into the future. We all know that these are tough economic times. Despite this, you have stepped up and continued to support this Center, making it possible for us to hire additional faculty at a time when very few faculty hires were authorized, to add courses, and to offer outreach to the community.

Annual support for the Center for

Jewish Studies makes the difference between a successful year in which we grow and advance our program, versus one in which we tread water or even fall behind. I hope that you agree with me that this is a worthy investment of your money and your energies, and that you will renew your annual support for the Center this year. You may use the enclosed envelope to make your gift or make a secure gift online at ccjs.unc.edu.

If you have questions about how to make a gift, how to use appreciated securities to make your gift, or how to establish a permanent endowment for Jewish Studies, please contact Margaret Costley at the Arts and Sciences Foundation at (919) 843-0345 or at margaret.costley@unc.edu.

Carolina and the Center for Jewish Studies will always endeavor to be worthy of your support.

Sincerely,

Karen M. Gil
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

