

News from the center

CAROLINA CENTER *for* JEWISH STUDIES

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL • WINTER 2011 • CCJS.UNC.EDU



INTRODUCTION TO JEWISH STUDIES SETS FOUNDATION FOR THE NEW MAJOR

This fall, 120 undergraduates are taking the "Introduction to Jewish Studies" course taught by Jonathan Boyarin, associate director for the Center and the Leonard and Tobee Kaplan Distinguished Professor of Modern Jewish Thought.

The course, which was first offered in fall 2009, begins with an overview of Biblical Israel and moves through the Rabbinic, Medieval and Modern periods. Students consider how these formative periods shaped patterns of Jewish learning, worship and daily practice that continue today, and the ways that they have been transformed and even abandoned. But the course does not just give an overview of Jewish history. It also examines the major subfields of Jewish studies today. As part of this component, core faculty from the Center deliver lectures that exemplify the various specialties within the field.

"This is a truly unique course in that it explores the interdisciplinary field of Jewish Studies rather than simply focusing on Judaism or Jewish history. This is what sets it apart from the types of introductory courses that most of our peer institutions use as the foundations for their programs," said Professor Boyarin. He added, "To my knowledge, there isn't even a single textbook out there for a course like this."

Introduction to Jewish Studies is the gateway course for both the minor in Jewish Studies and the new major. The new program, leading to a degree in Religious Studies with a Concentration in Jewish Studies, is the first of its kind at a North Carolina university. Current students planning to graduate in spring 2013, or later, can complete the major in time for graduation, and courses are already offered to help them fulfill degree requirements. For more information regarding the new undergraduate major, visit ccjs.unc.edu.

The Many Contributions of graduate students

Graduate students at UNC are an important component of the learning environment, typically spending five years in pursuit of their Ph.D. degrees. They conduct comprehensive research that enriches undergraduate education and their academic departments, and they work with faculty on research projects, often taking on a significant level of responsibility. When Carolina recruits new faculty, the quality of the graduate students is an important factor. Graduate students also teach courses and serve as teaching assistants, helping Carolina offer more courses to more students. Large lecture courses taught by Jewish Studies faculty, for instance, regularly include hourly discussion section meetings led by graduate students. And then, as Carolina alums, they go on to teach at universities and colleges all over the world, continuing to advance their field of study as both teachers and scholars. Because of their important contributions to the university, graduate student support is a top priority for the Center and the College of Arts and Sciences.

At Carolina, Jewish Studies touches on many different academic disciplines, and as such, graduate students who pursue Jewish Studies topics are based in many different academic departments and explore a wide range of subjects for their doctoral research projects. For instance, Joseph Gindi, a fourth-year doctoral student in the Religious Studies Department, is researching the use of classical Jewish texts by contemporary Jewish environmentalists, while Emma Woelk, a second-year Ph.D. student in the Carolina-Duke Graduate Program in German Studies, is conducting research on Yiddish theater in East Germany. Sarah Workman, a second-year Ph.D. student in English literature, is interested in 20th century American literature and contemporary Jewish-American fiction, while Anna Kushkova, a second-year Ph.D. student in the Department of



Anna Kushkova, second-year graduate student, conducting field research with the Petersburg Judaica Center, located at the European University, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Anthropology, focuses on the ethnography of East European Jews. She has already conducted five years of field research in Ukraine and Russia. Samuel Kessler, a second-year doctoral student in the Religious Studies Department, focuses on Science and Religion, while Patrick Tobin, a fifth-year Ph.D. student in the Department of History, examines West German trials for crimes of the Holocaust. He has just returned from a year of research in Germany, funded by a Fulbright Scholarship. The graduate students come to UNC with outstanding academic credentials from other leading universities, such as Harvard, Georgetown, Wesleyan, Brandeis, Vassar, and New York University.

"Supporting our graduate students is an essential component to sustaining the excellence of Jewish Studies at Carolina," said Jonathan Hess, director. "Without funding, Carolina cannot compete for the top graduate students, who

*continued inside. See **grad students***



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 and
Slavic Languages and Literatures

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

from the director's desk

The crucial role of graduate students

The future has never looked brighter for Jewish Studies at Carolina. Our undergraduate major is firmly in place, and we have faculty teaching courses on everything from the "Archaeology of the Dead Sea Scrolls" to "Mamas and Matriarchs: Jewish Women in America." This fall, 120 undergraduates are taking the core course for the major, "Introduction to Jewish Studies," taught by Jonathan Boyarin, and interest in Jewish history and culture is at an all-time high. Jodi Magness has 300 students studying the ancient Jewish world in her "Introduction to Early Judaism" course, and David Lambert's lecture course on the Hebrew Bible is more popular than ever, with 240 students enrolled.

Those of you who are Carolina alums are no doubt pleased at the tremendous developments we've made since your own undergraduate days. What you may not realize is that we've also made great progress in expanding Jewish Studies offerings and opportunities at the graduate level. Indeed, so much of what enables Carolina to recruit and retain its world-class faculty is the quality of our graduate students. Jodi Magness, the Kenan Distinguished Professor for Teaching Excellence in Early Judaism, came to Carolina after a decade teaching at Tufts University because she wanted to work at a research institution where she could both teach undergraduates and work closely with graduate students like Carrie Duncan, whom we feature in this edition of *News from the Center*.

Every year, Carolina competes with the best universities in the country for top graduate student talent. The graduate students we bring in

play a crucial role in the life of the university, through both the research they conduct and their contributions to teaching. A course like Magness's 300-student class on early Judaism only works because students have the opportunity to meet weekly in small discussion sections with graduate student teaching assistants, whom Magness mentors and trains in the art of teaching. When these students leave here with their Ph.D., they move on—as Carolina alumni—to teach at colleges and universities across the country, becoming the next generation of leaders in the field of Jewish Studies.

Carolina's good name and the quality of individual faculty play an important role in attracting graduate students. But so do dollars, and private giving has made the decisive difference in enabling Carolina to offer the type of fellowship support that enables us to recruit top graduate students. We already have a number of students who have come here from all over the world to work with our renowned faculty. Annegret Oehme, a first-year graduate student in German Studies, came here from her native Germany to study Old Yiddish literature with Ruth von Bernuth. Anna Kushkova, from St. Petersburg, was lured by Jonathan Boyarin to continue her ethnographic research on remnants of shtetl life in Eastern Europe here at Carolina. In each of these cases, private support was crucial, and as Jewish Studies continues to grow in coming years, private giving for graduate students will play an even greater role in our vision of making Carolina a national leader in the field of Jewish Studies.

news briefs

THE UHLMAN FAMILY SEMINAR, scheduled for April 27-28, 2012, will focus on the theme of Jewish Cultures of the American South. Seminar speakers include Marcie Ferris from UNC and Adam Mendelsohn from the College of Charleston. For event details and registration information, visit the events page on ccjs.unc.edu.

JONATHAN BOYARIN, associate director for the Center, has a new book out this fall, *Mornings at the Stanton Street Shul, A Summer on the Lower East Side*, which shares the intimate life of one of the last remaining Jewish congregations on New York's historic Lower East Side.



JODI MAGNESS, the Kenan Distinguished Professor for Teaching Excellence in Early Judaism, released a new book last spring, titled: *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*, which analyzes recent archaeological discoveries and period texts to reconstruct everyday activities — dining customs, Sabbath observance, fasting, burial customs, and more. The books are available at UNC's Bull's Head Bookshop or your favorite book seller.



KATHY E. MANNING, member of the Center's advisory board, was recently honored by the Jewish Women International as a 2011 Women to Watch honoree for her leadership in enhancing the well-being of Jews worldwide.



Jews and the Civil War was the topic of our first community lecture this academic year. The lecture, held on September 19th, was given by Adam Mendelsohn of the College of Charleston and was this year's Sylvia and Irving Margolis Lecture on the Jewish Experience in the American South.

2011 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, 2010 to June 30, 2011. 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
- Chancellors' Circle \$10,000 to \$24,999
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- 1793 Society \$2,000 to \$4,999
- 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 impact Carolina

Jewish studies

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Greensboro, NC

The Stuart S. & Birdie Gould Foundation
New York, NY

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Charlotte, NC

grad students (from page 1)

naturally have to go where they can afford to study.”

Some recent gifts to the Center are already making a positive impact on our graduate students, and for the first time ever in the Center's history, graduate students have a number of research and travel grants available to them this year.

The Rhonda A. and Robert Hillel Silver Fund for Graduate Support in Jewish Studies, funded in 2011 with a pledge of \$72,000, will provide a new source of expendable funding for graduate students working in the field of Jewish Studies at Carolina. The fund will support three years of Silver Fellows in Jewish Studies, helping one graduate student per year who is either studying for the comprehensive exams or working to complete the doctoral thesis.

The Howard R. Levine Student Excellence Fund in Jewish Studies, which was created last academic year through a \$500,000 pledge, is providing grant opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students this year. And another new fund was recently created by members of the Center's advisory board, including Toby Osofsky, '03, with a matching corporate gift from her employer, Pfizer, Inc. This new fund is likewise supporting graduate students and makes it easy for friends and young alumni to make annual contributions that can be pooled with other gifts to make a meaningful and lasting impact on our nation's future professors and researchers.

Graduate students typically spend their first two years doing advanced coursework, followed by a year of comprehensive examinations and pre-dissertation research. The last two years are usually spent researching and writing their dissertations. To help offset all these years of education, most graduate students at Carolina are on fellowships that cost the university more than \$20,000 per year, which is usually paid by the academic departments to cover teaching and research assistantships. Private funds play a critical role in graduate funding as well, by establishing graduate fellowships that help recruit the best and brightest to Carolina, and by providing much-needed funding for research, travel and presenting papers at academic conferences.

“The Center is thrilled to be offering grants this year to help graduate students with their research,” added Hess. “As we near our 10th anniversary, I am hopeful that we can continue to expand our ability to assist graduate students through fellowships, summer stipends, and travel grants. Perhaps even by creating a named, endowed Jewish Studies fellowship that could support a new Jewish Studies graduate student every year.”

a students for generations to come.” —JONATHAN HESS



Carrie Duncan at Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, Turkey, during her travels last academic year.

graduate student profile Carrie Duncan

IN MEMORIAM

Barry Fine, '52, long-term supporter and advocate of the Center and avid Tar Heel fan, passed away this August in Chapel Hill. He was a regular attendee of the Center's community events and held leadership volunteer positions at the university and other organizations in the community. Barry directed some of his philanthropic gifts to support graduate students, providing essential financial assistance to young scholars working in the field of Jewish Studies. We are thankful for his generosity and guidance, and also for the generosity of his family and friends who recently made donations to the Center in his memory.

For as long as Carrie Duncan (Ph.D. candidate, Religious Studies) can remember, she has been interested in multicultural interactions, particularly when these cultures occupy the same geographic space. As a child, she loved maps and has always been drawn to the Middle East and Jerusalem. "I am interested," she says, "in how different groups negotiate their identities within larger cultural identities." Now in her final year of a Ph.D. program in the Ancient Mediterranean Religions division of the Religious Studies Department, she has been able to pursue this fascination by conducting archaeological digs in Israel and Jordan, deciphering ancient inscriptions, and teaching undergraduates to read Biblical Hebrew. Across such diverse experiences, she has not only provided valuable research into Jewish life in the past, but also contributed significantly to Jewish life on today's UNC campus.

Duncan first came to UNC after receiving an M.A. in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations from Harvard University. She seized the

opportunity to rejoin her undergraduate mentor, Professor Jodi Magness, who had joined UNC in the Religious Studies department. Duncan is currently completing her dissertation on gender and religious authority in Jewish Diaspora communities, which is being funded by a prestigious Charlotte W. Newcombe fellowship. She argues that religion permeated all facets of early society, so it makes an excellent "lens through which to view ancient cultures." Her work, which draws on evidence from ancient synagogues and funerary plaques, is significant for making sense of how these communities organized themselves through the use of public images and language. Changing her focus to the future, her goal is to secure an academic position in Jewish Studies for the coming academic year.

In addition to her academic work, Duncan has contributed significantly to Jewish Studies on campus. She has taught numerous campus and online courses on the Hebrew Bible, Judaism and early Christianity, and has served multiple times as a teaching assistant in similar courses. Particularly since so many students come in with some background in these areas, Duncan loves being able to "get students to rediscover something so familiar in such a new context." In her Biblical Hebrew course, for example, she is able to "open their eyes to complications in original texts that often get smoothed over in English."

For Duncan, Jewish Studies has ultimately meant more than academic and teaching experiences. From 2007-2010, she worked at the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies as a graduate assistant and played an important role in building up the program and conducting outreach to fellow graduate students. Being able to highlight the interdisciplinary nature of Jewish Studies to fellow graduate students as well as undergraduates has helped Duncan in her own thinking and affirmed to her the value of Jewish Studies at UNC. As she says, "One of the things I've loved the most has been the opportunity to bring Judaism and Jewish Studies to a group and culture that is not often exposed to it." Thanks to Duncan's efforts over the past years, more students than ever at UNC have been able to share in this opportunity.

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.

winter 2011

UPCOMING EVENTS

COMMUNITY LECTURES

March 19, 7:30 p.m.

CHRISTINE HAYES
We're No Angels

April 16, 7:30 p.m.

VANESSA OCHS
Material Culture and Jewish Identity

ACADEMIC LECTURES

December 5, 5:30 p.m.

OMAR KAMIL
Competing Memories – The Arabs and
the Holocaust

February 6, 5:30 p.m.

SIDRA DEKOVEN EZRAHI
To Write Poetry After Aushwitz is
Barbaric

February 27, 5:30 p.m.

JONATHAN EULKIN
Anti-Semitism: The History of an Idea

March 1, 5:30 p.m.

RUTH VON BERNUTH
The Wise Men of Chelm

UHLMAN FAMILY SEMINAR

April 27–28
Jewish Cultures of the American South

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.

a closing word message from the dean



Dear Friends,

On behalf of the College of Arts and Sciences, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for supporting outstanding teaching and scholarship through the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies.

Your support means more to us now than ever before.

As you may know, the University's permanent state budget allocation for 2011-2012 was cut by nearly 18 percent — much deeper than expected. For the College, this means a loss of about \$10.5 million, on top of three consecutive years of significant state budget cuts. Though we received an allocation of tuition and enrollment-increase funds to help offset the impact of this cut, it is still daunting.

The good news is that private funding is making an enormous difference by helping us keep the College strong in challenging times. For example, as a result of private support, we were able to hire Flora Cassen, the first JMA and Sonja van der Horst Fellow in Jewish History and Culture. Dr. Cassen, who specializes in medieval and early modern Jewish history, joined the Department of History this fall.

In this way, your commitment to Jewish Studies also strengthens academic departments across the College where Jewish Studies faculty teach.

I am also grateful that we can now celebrate the launch of the undergraduate major in Jewish Studies — quite a feat to accomplish at this time.

Jewish Studies at Carolina would not be where it is today without you. Thank you for your support now and in the future. I look forward to working with you to ensure that Jewish Studies at Carolina continues to thrive.

Sincerely,

Karen M. Gil
Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences