

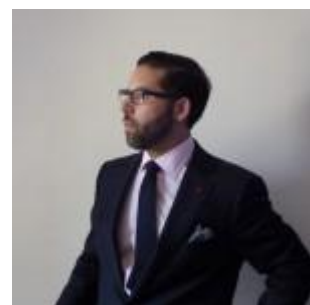
## Faculty Profiles 2011-2017



### **Gabrielle A. Berlinger: Jewish Folklore at Carolina**

“Believe it or not, my interest in Jewish ritual life and material culture has its roots in Vietnam,” said Gabrielle Berlinger. “While studying abroad in Vietnam as an undergraduate, I conducted a project on ancestor worship, specifically around the ancestor altars that families construct in their homes. There, I became interested in the intersection of sacred and domestic space—how ritual practice can transform ordinary space into extraordinary space.”

Publish Date: Fall 2016



**Michael Figueroa** grew up surrounded by music and knew he wanted to base his life around it in some way or another. He entered college as a double major in guitar performance and music composition but instead ended up with a degree in musicology. Regarding his new course, offered in spring 2015, he said, “I created the ‘Hearing the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict’ course because studying the region’s music allows students to learn about the various cultures involved in the conflict from a much different perspective than mainstream outlets, such as cable news, print, and social media. It is important to me that students grasp the human side of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and learning Israelis’ and Palestinians’ musical cultures is a powerful way to accomplish this.”

Publish Date: Fall 2015



In the midst of her first year on the faculty at Carolina, **Andrea Dara Cooper**, the Leonard and Tobee Kaplan Fellow in Modern Jewish Thought and Culture, has had four new academic courses approved by the College that she will begin teaching in the next academic year. “My interests in Jewish studies began quite early on. Since my time at Hebrew Day School in Toronto, I have been driven to explore a rich tradition of Jewish thought through a modern academic lens,” said Cooper.

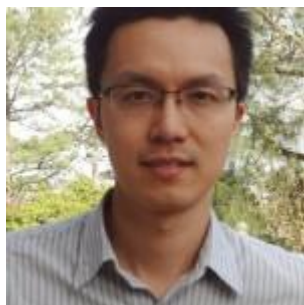
Publish Date: Spring 2015



### **Karen Auerbach**, Department of History.

“The House at Ujazdowskie 16” by Karen Auerbach, tells of the personal journey of post-World War II Jewish families. The book is also the result of Auerbach’s own journey, which began as a simple desire to learn more about her grandmother’s life but then evolved into a major career change, years of living abroad, and an intensive research project. “I am thrilled to be at Carolina, where there are distinguished History and Slavic studies departments, plus a rapidly growing Jewish studies program,”

Publish Date: Spring 2014



**Joseph Lam**, assistant professor, Department of Religious Studies, grew up in a multilingual household and has always been fascinated with languages—he is a native speaker of Cantonese and can read and/or converse in about 15 modern and ancient languages. He has recently led the effort to transform Carolina’s Classical Hebrew program, leading to a significant increase in the number of students enrolled. “I enjoy those moments when a student learns something truly new or discovers a different perspective on a familiar topic. Being able to facilitate and witness those ‘aha!’ moments is one of the privileges of teaching,” said Lam.

Publish Date: Fall 2013



**Jodi Magness**, Professor, Department of Religious Studies.

Professor Magness has been on more than 20 different archaeological excavations in her career, but this summer's findings at Huqoq still managed to deliver a few surprises to this veteran. Namely, the discovery of stunning mosaics on an ancient synagogue's floor. "My move to Carolina gave me two new experiences. First, I suddenly had many colleagues working in archaeology. Second, Carolina's Ph.D. program gave me the opportunity to work closely with outstanding graduate students."

Publish Date: Fall 2012



**Yaakov Ariel** Professor, Department of Religious Studies

A prolific scholar with a diverse body of interests, Professor Ariel's work has addressed the enigmatic relationship between the Jews and the Evangelicals. "I learn from anthropologists, from scholars of literature, from Holocaust scholars. I learn all the time. I'm not just a teacher or scholar – I'm a student."

Publish Date: Spring 2012



**Flora Cassen** *JMA and Sonja van der Horst Fellow in Jewish History and Culture*, assistant professor, Department of History

As a child growing up Jewish in Belgium, Flora Cassen was naturally curious about European history. She now explores the rich history of Jews in Europe. "I am interested in how Jews lived during the 15th and 16th centuries. They were subjected to a whole series of religious and legal restrictions, but in spite of that, they achieved remarkable success. Their resourcefulness was very impressive."

Publish Date: Fall 2011



**Marcie Cohen Ferris** Associate professor, Department of American Studies.

Professor Ferris's academic and research contributions have helped create Carolina's expertise in the history of the Jewish South. "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 culture so we can better understand what it means to be Jewish in this unique American region."

Publish Date: Winter 2010



**David Lambert** Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible, Department of Religious

Studies. For Professor Lambert, studying the Hebrew Bible means much more than simply reading the ancient text. He extends his study to explore how the Bible is interpreted through the ages, and how different cultural assumptions alter how people approach the Bible. "My hope is that students in my classes will learn to identify some of the different ways in which our cultural background affects how we read the Bible and to contrast our initial, instinctual readings with possible alternatives."

Publish Date: Fall 2010



**Evyatar Marienberg** *E.J. and Sara Evans Assistant Professor of Jewish History and Culture*, Department of Religious Studies. A historian of religions, with a particular focus on the study of the beliefs and practices of lay Jews and Christians, Professor Marienberg joined Carolina with the driving goal to expand course offerings. “I am happy to be at such a beautiful campus, with outstanding students and faculty colleagues. I hope to give students some new learning opportunities and help this impressive program continue to grow.”

Publish Date: Fall 2009



**Ruth von Bernuth** Associate professor of early modern German Studies Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures. Professor von Bernuth’s focus on Germany’s early modern period (15th – 18th Centuries) has filled a special academic niche in UNC’s German department, and her new research focus on Yiddish literature is likewise filling an important curricular need for Jewish Studies. “There are so few people working on old Yiddish, but my current research project is introducing me to wonderful colleagues around the world and exposing me to remarkable writers and publishers from centuries ago.”

Publish Date: Spring 2011

# Gabrielle A. Berlinger

Department of American Studies. Publish Date: Fall 2016



## Jewish Folklore at Carolina

As a folklorist who studies Jewish cultures, Gabrielle A. Berlinger, the Babette S. and Bernard J. Tanenbaum Fellow in Jewish History and Culture, and assistant professor, department of American Studies, is interested in all forms of expression that are passed down from one generation to the next, either through practice or oral transmission. These may include cooking traditions, stories and jokes, ritual customs, religious beliefs, music and dance, occupational knowledge, and art practices. Whether learning about Jewish paper cutting traditions, the art of making tefillin (leather boxes containing Biblical verses, worn during prayer), or how to cook and eat Yemenite Jewish malawach or a

Polish Jewish blintz, folklorists are interested in the relationship between individual makers and the greater societies of which they are a part, and how this relationship is communicated through artful expression.

“Believe it or not, my interest in Jewish ritual life and material culture has its roots in Vietnam,” said Berlinger. “While studying abroad in Vietnam as an undergraduate, I conducted a project on ancestor worship, specifically around the ancestor altars that families construct in their homes. There, I became interested in the intersection of sacred and domestic space—how ritual practice can transform ordinary space into extraordinary space.”

During her first year of graduate school in folklore studies, Berlinger wrote a paper on domestic Jewish ritual objects in which she explored the entanglement of sacred and secular material worlds in the Jewish home. She later decided to conduct fieldwork during the holiday of Sukkot to further investigate the role of ritual in the creation and meaning of home. This study became the focus of her dissertation project, engaging themes of home and migration, domestication and wilderness, spirituality and materialism, and individuality and community. Her current book project documents sukkah construction, decoration, and use in Indiana, New York, and Israel between 2007 and 2015. Through case studies based on observation and interviews, she explores the relationship between experiences of im/migration and the meaning of “home” through this ritual architectural practice.

Berlinger earned her M.A. and Ph.D. from Indiana University, department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology, in 2013, and her B.A. in Anthropology from University of Pennsylvania. She was an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, Cultures of Conservation, at the Bard Graduate Center in New York City from 2013-2015, and in fall 2015, Berlinger joined Carolina’s faculty.

“Last academic year, I had the good fortune of introducing two new courses to the Jewish Studies

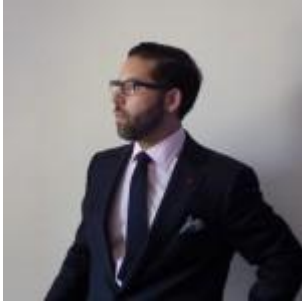


curriculum, open to both undergraduate and graduate students across the University. In the first course, ‘Jewish Folklore and Ethnography,’ students learned ethnographic skills to conduct individual fieldwork projects and engage with local cultural advocates and community scholars. The students’ fieldwork has also helped launch a digital archiving project that I began this year, ‘Mapping Jewish Experience in North Carolina,’ in which students document contemporary Jewish expression across the state,” said Berlinger.

“The second new course I taught this year was a Jewish Studies Capstone seminar called, ‘The Material Life of Jewish America,’ in which the students researched and curated a final class exhibition about Jewish material culture across the UNC student population. The exhibition opened on May 4 in the Center’s office in Pettigrew Hall and contains items such as an Old Well Mezuzah, t-shirts from Jewish sororities and fraternities on campus, and photographs of students displaying Jewish expression through body adornment, such as jewelry and tattoos.”



# Michael A. Figueroa



Department of Music. Publish Date: Fall 2015

## Insight Through Music

The Center has more than 20 affiliated faculty members working in a broad spectrum of academic fields, even in some disciplines that may be unfamiliar to most of us, such as ethnomusicology, which is the study of music in human culture.

For ethnomusicologists, people are our primary archive,” said Michael Figueroa, assistant professor in the department of Music. “The object of our studies is not always simply the music itself; often, music is the first point of inquiry for larger research questions. For my research, this has meant looking at music to research issues related to politics, national identity, and many other topics.”

Figueroa grew up surrounded by music and knew he wanted to base his life around it in some way or another. He entered college as a double major in guitar performance and music composition but instead ended up with a degree in musicology.

“I suppose I had an ‘aha’ moment in an ‘Intro to World Music’ class (a class that I now teach at UNC!) where I got a glimpse of how expansive the musical world was and what one could learn about the world through studying its music,” said Figueroa. “Later, I found Israel Studies through the backdoor of language. I entered graduate school with a general focus on Middle Eastern music. I enrolled in an intensive Hebrew course and became engrossed in Israeli culture, its music, and its literature.”

Figueroa joined Carolina in 2014 as a lecturer and was promoted to assistant professor in July. He holds a B.A. from Northwestern and a Ph.D. from University of Chicago. His research has been supported by grants and fellowships from Fulbright, the American Musicological Society, Targum Shlishi, and the Ford Foundation. He teaches a range of courses in the Department of Music, including: “Music and Globalization in the Middle East,” “Hearing the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” “Introduction to Black Music,” “Music and Poetry,” “Introduction to World Musics,” and “World Musics in Theory and Practice.”

“I created the ‘Hearing the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict’ course because studying the region’s music allows students to learn about the various cultures involved in the conflict from a much different perspective than mainstream outlets, such as cable news, print, and social media,” noted Figueroa. “We looked at those news sources in the course, too, but in general I try to lead with culture and allow politics to follow. It is important to me that students grasp the human side of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and learning Israelis’ and Palestinians’ musical cultures is a powerful way to accomplish this. The idea that I am helping shape the intellectual culture of UNC is incredibly rewarding. The students here are very engaged and hardworking, so teaching is one of my very favorite parts of this job. In both undergraduate and graduate school, I had wonderful faculty mentors who helped guide me onto this path, and so I try to form similar relationships with my students now that I am a faculty member.”

Figueroa’s current book project investigates how Israelis and Palestinians use music and poetry to shape their understandings of national territory, with a focus on the critical moment of the Six-Day War of 1967.

“I work with musicians and authors who write about the region’s contested territories—Jerusalem, chief among them. Of course, many of the songs and poems I analyze engage with familiar rhetoric rooted in religious or historic symbolism, but my focus is really on the everydayness of these weighty, often contradictory claims. What is it like to live in a conflicted space? How do people engage these issues through expressive culture? How are these sentiments performed in public spaces at particular times of year? The book will address these questions and more, while hopefully saying something to a general readership about the relationship between music and conflict. It is important to me that Jewish Studies and Middle Eastern Studies be engaged with the bigger questions asked in my discipline, and I hope my research will embody that ideal in significant ways.”

# Andrea Cooper

Department of Religious Studies. Publish Date: Spring 2015

In the midst of her first year on the faculty at Carolina, **Andrea Dara Cooper**, the Leonard and Tobee Kaplan Fellow in Modern Jewish Thought and Culture, has had four new academic courses approved by the College that she will begin teaching in the next academic year: “Modern Jewish Thought” (RELI 224), “Post-Holocaust Ethics and Theology” (RELI 420), “Human Animals in Religion and Ethics” (RELI 79) and “The Sacrifice of Abraham” (RELI 426). Cooper also teaches “Introduction to Jewish Studies,” which acquaints students to the field of Jewish studies as a discipline that spans many academic subfields.



“I am very passionate about the field of Jewish Studies, which is by nature interdisciplinary and therefore provides an excellent liberal arts education that encompasses a wide variety of subjects in the humanities and social sciences,” said Cooper. “I enjoy having the opportunity to introduce students from various backgrounds to this exciting and growing field.”

Cooper earned her Ph.D. from the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University. During her graduate studies, she held a doctoral scholarship from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, the NYU-Cambridge Mainzer Visiting Fellowship at the University of Cambridge Centre for Gender Studies in Cambridge, England, and was a doctoral scholar in residence at NYU’s Tikvah Center for Law & Jewish Civilization.

“My interests in Jewish studies began quite early on. Since my time at Hebrew Day School in Toronto, where I studied in Hebrew, French and Yiddish, I have been driven to explore a rich tradition of Jewish thought through a modern academic lens,” said Cooper. “I am very fortunate to be here at Carolina, in the department of Religious Studies, which offers such a comprehensive breadth and scope in its approach. I am also thrilled to be involved with the Center for Jewish Studies, which has a robust program of curricula and events.”

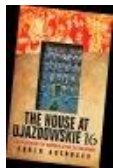
Cooper is currently working on her first book, which examines representations of the family in modern Jewish thought and explores issues of gender and ethics in the work of major figures in the field.

“I consider how their philosophical approaches are shaped by constructions of gender difference. By paying close attention to the theme of family, I focus on some of the more opaque and complicated aspects of these works, and bring them into conversation with contemporary issues,” said Cooper.



# Karen Auerbach

Department of History. Publish Date: Spring 2015



*“In a turn-of-the-century, once elegant building at 16 Ujazdowskie Avenue in the center of Warsaw, 10 Jewish families began reconstructing their lives after the Holocaust. While most surviving Polish Jews were making their homes in new countries, these families rebuilt on the rubble of the Polish capital and created new communities as they sought to distance themselves from the memory of a painful past.”*



So begins the publisher’s description for “The House at Ujazdowskie 16” by Karen Auerbach, Carolina’s newest Jewish studies faculty member. The book, published in 2013, tells of the personal journey of post-World War II Jewish families. The book is also the result of Auerbach’s own journey, which began as a simple desire to learn more about her grandmother’s life but then evolved into a major career change, years of living abroad, and an intensive research project.

“My grandmother was born in Argentina, the daughter of immigrants from Poland, raised in Warsaw, and moved to New York in 1923,” explained Auerbach. “My desire to learn more about her life inspired me to travel to Poland when I was

21, and ever since that first trip, I have become more and more interested in the Polish people.”

Subsequent trips to Poland ultimately led her to focus her research on the apartment building at Ujazdowskie 16. A former journalist for The Philadelphia Inquirer, Auerbach’s professional curiosity was piqued, and she began researching the post-war histories of the building’s residents.

“In addition to working with the family members living in Poland, I also traveled to France, Germany and the U.S. to interview individuals who emigrated after the war,” said Auerbach

Auerbach lived in Poland, off and on, for nearly four years, during which time she learned Polish and began the journey that eventually led her away from journalism and into the world of academia. She attended Brandeis, where she continued her research and earned her doctoral degree. She also studied Yiddish and began doing Yiddish translations, which surprisingly again brought her back to her grandmother.

“My grandmother’s first language was Yiddish but I never heard her speak it. But when I heard others speak Yiddish, I could hear the same speech patterns that my grandmother had when she spoke in English. I became very aware that the Yiddish language was an important part of her life,” said Auerbach.

Auerbach came to Carolina from Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, where she was the Kronhill Lecturer in East European Jewish History and remains an affiliated research fellow in history. She previously held visiting positions at the University of Southampton in England, and Virginia Tech and Brown in the U.S. She was a postdoctoral fellow at the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies at University of Michigan and held research positions at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies in Washington and the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. She holds a Ph.D. from Brandeis, and a B.A. from Rutgers.

“I am thrilled to be at Carolina, where there are distinguished History and Slavic studies departments, plus a rapidly growing Jewish studies program,” added Auerbach, who is the inaugural Ambassador Stuart E. Eizenstat Fellow in Jewish History and Culture. This semester she is teaching two courses: “The Search for Modern Jewish Identity” and “Ghettos and Shtetls? Urban Life in East European Jewish History.” Next year she will continue teaching history courses with a focus on Jewish studies and Holocaust studies.

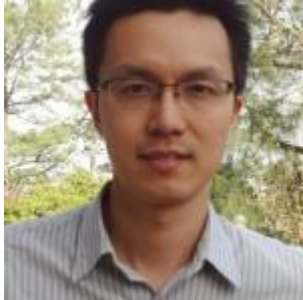
Auerbach’s research interests focus on the social history of Polish Jews in the 19th and 20th century, especially issues relating to Jewish integration, urban life, and the evolution of Polish Jewish identifications. She is beginning another research project focusing on Jewish publishers of Polish books in the 19th and early 20th century.

“We are thrilled to welcome Karen Auerbach to Carolina. She has extensive teaching experience in Jewish history and Holocaust studies, and has published numerous articles in English, Polish and Yiddish,” said Ruth von Bernuth, director of the Center. “Our students, faculty and the community overall will greatly benefit from her involvement on campus.”

# Joseph Lam

Department of Religious Studies, Publish Date: Fall 2013

Carolina's Classical Hebrew program in the Department of Religious Studies recently underwent a major transformation, leading to a significant increase in the number of students enrolled.



“Typically, Classical Hebrew is taught via a purely grammatical approach, consisting of instruction on how nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs work in the language, enabling students to read and translate Hebrew with the help of a dictionary. The advantage of this approach is its comprehensiveness,” explains Joseph Lam, lecturer in Classical Hebrew, (promoted to assistant professor in July ’14.) who came to Carolina in fall 2011. “However, the challenge of retaining such a massive amount of vocabulary and grammar leaves little time for many of the other topics related to the Bible that motivated students to take the course in the first place.

Our new two course sequence in Classical Hebrew (RELI 211 and 212) addresses these issues by incorporating additional historical and cultural content into the courses while still maintaining the grammar instruction necessary for further Biblical study.”

The process of learning Classical Hebrew is different from that for other languages where the goal is to communicate with a living community of speakers. Not only is Classical Hebrew an ancient language with no native speakers, but it is also preserved in one relatively small set of religious texts.

“So, an introduction to Classical Hebrew ought to be, at least in part, an introduction to the Hebrew Bible and the history that underlies the Bible. It is these historical and cultural elements that I incorporate into the new course— whether it is the development of the alphabet, or the different terms for kinship in ancient Israel, or the historical phases of Hebrew.”

“The new track in Classical Hebrew allows students to obtain an advanced introduction to the Hebrew Bible. By encountering the Hebrew Bible in its original language, students are able to experience it in a more immediate fashion and begin to define the ways in which this ancient collection of texts differs from the Bible they have come to know in translation,” said David Lambert, assistant professor of Hebrew Bible in the Department of Religious Studies. “There is a tremendous amount of interest within the student body for the study of the Hebrew Bible, so the introduction of this track allows us, when combined with our other course offerings in the area, to offer students a thorough background in the field, one which allows them to obtain real expertise by the time they graduate.”

The first course in the sequence, *Classical Hebrew I*, was introduced last semester. The new course syllabus clearly reflects the attention to both language and culture, with topics ranging from “a brief history of the West Semitic alphabet” and “Divine names in the Hebrew Bible” to “Kings, Judges, Prophets and Priests in ancient Israel” and “Biblical Hebrew Poetry.” This year will be the first time that students can enroll in both new courses in the sequence. Because of the newly incorporated historical and cultural content, these courses now fulfill two general education requirements each, which has led to a marked increase in enrollment. “For fall 2013, we already have close to 50 students registered across two sections,” added Lam. In past years, Carolina typically had approximately 10 students enrolled in the *Introductory Biblical Hebrew* course.

As a result of meeting more general education requirements, students taking these courses come from an array of majors in both the humanities and the sciences, and students are first years through seniors. “This makes for lively and interesting class discussions, as students are able to bring their diverse backgrounds to bear on the topics and texts we address in class,” said Lam.

Lam, who holds a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, grew up in a multilingual household and has always been fascinated with languages—he is a native speaker of Cantonese and can read and/or converse in about 15 modern and ancient languages. At Carolina, he has taught courses in Biblical Hebrew language, broader survey courses in Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern culture as well as an undergraduate seminar on Metaphor in Religious Language.

“I enjoy those moments when a student learns something truly new or discovers a different perspective on a familiar topic. Being able to facilitate and witness those ‘aha!’ moments is one of the privileges of teaching,” said Lam.



# Jodi Magness

Department of Religious Studies, Published Fall 2012



“I knew at age 12 that I wanted to be an archaeologist,” said Jodi Magness, the Kenan Distinguished Professor for Teaching Excellence in Early Judaism, Department of Religious Studies. “I remember being at Girl Scout camp and coming home with suitcases stuffed full of fossil shells. And then in seventh grade, I had a wonderful history teacher who made me fall in love with Ancient Greece. When I was 16, I moved to Israel on my own to finish high school, and that just sealed my fate.”

Her aspirations led her first to Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where she earned her B.A. in archaeology and history, then to the University of Pennsylvania for her Ph.D. in classical archaeology. She was the Mellon Post-

Doctoral Fellow at Brown University before joining the faculty at Tufts University, where she taught for 10 years before coming to Carolina.

“My move to Carolina gave me two new experiences. First, I suddenly had many colleagues working in archaeology, where at Tufts, I was the one and only full-time archaeologist on the faculty. Second, Carolina’s Ph.D. program gave me the opportunity to work closely with outstanding graduate students,” said Magness.

“Last year, both of my graduate students who were looking for faculty positions were able to secure full-time, tenure-track positions, which is amazing in today’s economy. One is now at Brigham Young University and the other is at the University of Missouri-Columbia.”

Professor Magness has been on more than 20 different archaeological excavations in her career, but this summer’s findings at Huqoq still managed to deliver a few surprises to this veteran. Namely, the discovery of stunning mosaics on an ancient synagogue’s floor.

“For my current project, I spent a long time searching for a site. I wanted a very specific location that was never before excavated, and that hopefully would have a synagogue. When I first visited Huqoq, an ancient village near the home of Jesus in his adult years and the birthplace of Mary Magdalene, it was covered in rocks and weeds.”

Professor Magness and her team started working at Huqoq in 2011 and plan to continue for several more years. In summer 2011, the team located the exterior wall of a synagogue, which was constructed of huge stone blocks. This past summer, her team continued to excavate and reached the synagogue’s floor, which was paved with mosaics. One area contains an inscription flanked by female faces, and another section shows Samson and the foxes, an episode related in Judges 15:4.

Her team is comprised mainly of students, who receive course credit for their work and for the lectures, field trips and on-site how-to training offered by Professor Magness. “The students learn a lot, and have wonderful opportunities. For example, the face in the mosaic was the first part of the floor that was uncovered, and it was found by an undergraduate.”

Professor Magness is the author of several books, including *The Archaeology of the Holy Land: From the Destruction of Solomon’s Temple to the Muslim Conquest*, which was released this fall, and *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (2011), *The Archaeology of the Early Islamic Settlement in Palestine* (2003), and *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2002).

She is also highly sought after by the media. She has appeared in and provided expertise for productions for the National Geographic Channel, the History Channel, PBS, and the BBC. This summer she will appear in a new IMAX 3D production titled *Jerusalem* ([Jerusalemthemovie.com](http://Jerusalemthemovie.com)). And on January 28th, she will give a community lecture hosted by the Center. It is free and open to the public, and will be held at the UNC Friday Center starting at 7:30 p.m.

Through the years, Professor Magness has received numerous awards and honors for her work, including a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship for college teachers in 2000 and the Archaeological Institute of America’s Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching in 2008.

# Yaakov Ariel

Department of Religious Studies, Published Spring 2012



## **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.”

# Flora Cassen

Department of History, Published Summer 2011



## Van der Horst Fellow Joins Carolina

As a child growing up Jewish in Belgium, Flora Cassen was naturally curious about European history, and thanks to inspirational teachers and mentors who influenced her studies, Cassen has followed a career path that explores the rich history of Jews in Europe.

Professor Cassen, who joined Carolina's History department this year as the inaugural JMA and Sonia Van der Horst Fellow in Jewish History and Culture, will now inspire Carolina's students just as her teachers guided her studies.

Cassen teaches classes on Medieval and Early Modern Jewish History, specifically focusing on the history of Europe from 10th through 18th centuries. This fall, she is teaching two undergraduate courses: History 490: Jews, Christians and Muslims in Early Modern Europe, and an honors course called The Passion and the Jews. Inspired by the debate that Mel Gibson's movie "The Passion of the Christ" generated, the course explores the alleged role of the Jews in Christ's Passion from the gospels to today through text, art, and film.

"In the future, I hope to create a senior seminar course on Jewish history and introduce graduate-level courses on Jews in Italy and Spain, which will explore their lives in terms of commerce, channels of information and their relationships with Christians and other Jewish communities."

Her current research focuses on Jews in Italy during the 15th and 16th centuries. She is writing a book based on her Ph.D. dissertation, which studies the roots and consequences of anti-Judaism by examining discriminatory marks, typically a yellow hat or yellow badge, that the Jews were compelled to wear in 15th- and 16th century Italy. She is also starting research on Jews in Italy who acted as spies for the King of Spain, despite the fact that Jews were previously expelled from Spain.

"I was shocked when I found out about these spies while doing my research on the yellow badges," said Cassen. "But through their Jewish networks, the spies had very specific information on both Italy and the Ottoman Empire, which was at war with Spain. "In general I am interested in how the Jews lived during this time. As a small minority under Christian rule, they were subjected to a whole series of religious and legal restrictions and had an inferior status, but in spite of that, they achieved remarkable success in building communities and businesses, and developing a rich culture. Their resourcefulness was very impressive." said Cassen.

Cassen previously was an assistant professor at the University of Vermont and last academic year she held a fellowship at Columbia University's Italian Academy, allowing her to pursue her research full time. She holds a B.A. from the Free University of Brussels, an M.A. from Brandeis University and a Ph.D. in History and Judaic Studies from New York University.

"I am delighted to join such a prestigious university, and a history department that is so impressive and collegial," added Cassen. "The reputation of the history department, combined with the thriving Jewish Studies program, makes it a true honor to be joining Carolina."

The JMA and Sonja van der Horst Distinguished Professorship was established by the children of the late Johannes and Sonja van der Horst (Charles van der Horst, Roger van der Horst, Jacqueline van der Horst Sergent '82, and Tatjana Schwendinger) with reparation funds that were awarded to their mother.

# Marcie Cohen Ferris

Department of American Studies, Published Winter 2010



## **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.



# David Lambert

Department of Religious Studies, Published Fall 2010



## The Hebrew Bible Through the Ages

For Professor David Lambert, studying the Hebrew Bible means much more than simply reading the ancient text. He extends his study to explore how the Bible is interpreted through the ages, and how different cultural assumptions alter how people approach the Bible.

Lambert, who joined Carolina's Department of Religious Studies in July as assistant professor of Hebrew Bible, is the newest member of the Center's Jewish Studies faculty. He specializes in the Hebrew Bible, its history of interpretation, and Second Temple Judaism. He also has interests in early Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism.

Lambert initially planned to pursue study of medieval Jewish history, but while an undergraduate at Harvard, he became interested in how Jews in the Middle Ages dealt with certain realities that disturbed them in the Bible, which is the product, after all, of an ancient society that existed almost two millennia earlier. From this, his interest in the Bible and how it has been understood and construed has continued to grow.

"I am excited to join the faculty at Carolina and look forward to working in a Religious Studies department that provides a non-denominational context in which to study the Hebrew Bible," said Lambert. "There are very few faculty positions in my field that are in academic departments such as this, rather than in schools of divinity or theology."

This fall, Lambert is teaching "Introduction to the Hebrew Bible" to over 200 undergraduates. "I am excited that the course is attracting such a large number of students," said Lambert, who cites the long-standing history of studying religion at Carolina as a big attraction to come to Chapel Hill. "My hope is that students will learn to identify some of the different ways in which our cultural background affects how we read the Bible and to contrast our initial, instinctual readings with possible alternatives." Toward fostering such a dialogue, the course will focus on three broad topics: how God is viewed in the Bible, the role of law, and the idea of redemption.

In the spring, he plans to offer some new courses to Carolina's undergraduates. One, "What is Scripture?", will examine how a certain group of ancient works came together to become "Scripture" and what people have understood the idea of "Scripture," its form and purpose, to be over the history of the West. Another will focus on terms in the Bible that we understand as depicting emotion—love, jealousy, pity. Did people in ancient times experience emotion in much the same way as we do?

Lambert is currently completing a book, "Before Repentance," which explores whether the idea of repentance really operates in the Bible, as most have assumed. "The word repentance actually does not appear in the Hebrew Bible. In the post-biblical period, as repentance takes on new significance, people come to read repentance into the Bible, developing new understandings of certain Hebrew terms and a variety of ancient Israelite practices, such as fasting and confession." Professor Lambert previously taught at the University of Texas at Austin and was a post-doctoral fellow at Yale. He received an A.B. and Ph.D. from Harvard University in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations.

# Evyatar Marienberg

Department of Religious Studies, Published Fall 2009



## Faculty Member Creates New Courses

Carolina students will have several new courses to choose from this academic year, led by the newest member of the Jewish Studies program, Evyatar Marienberg, the founding Sara and E.J. Evans Fellow in Jewish History and Culture. Marienberg, who joined UNC's Department of Religious Studies, is a historian of religions with a particular focus on the study of the beliefs and practices of lay Jews and Christians from various periods.

This fall, he is teaching "Jewish Legal Literature" and "Introduction to Contemporary Catholicism" as well as an advanced independent study. In the spring, he'll teach "Introduction to Rabbinic Literature" and "Medieval Jewish Bible Interpretation."

Marienberg's main fields of interest are Rabbinics, Social History of Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe, and Contemporary Catholicism. Most recently, he was assistant professor of Talmud and Rabbinics at The Jewish Theological Seminary and also was a Starr Fellow at Harvard in spring 2008.

"I am thrilled to be here, to be someplace where I can pursue my interests in both Rabbinics and Contemporary Catholicism. All my previous positions required me to focus on one or the other," said Marienberg.

Born in Israel, Marienberg studied for several years at Yeshivat Ha-Kibbutz ha-Dati of Ein-Tzurim. Later, during a five-year stay in Paris, he studied Catholic theology at the Institut Catholique de Paris and religious studies at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes en Sorbonne. He was then appointed a visiting fellow at the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Yeshiva University and, then became an assistant professor in the Department of Jewish Studies at McGill University in Montreal. Before heading to the Jewish Theological Seminary, Marienberg spent four years at Paideia Institute in Stockholm and Tel Aviv University, as well as a year as a Carey postdoctoral fellow at the Erasmus Institute at the University of Notre Dame.

"I am happy to be at such a beautiful campus, with outstanding students and faculty colleagues. I hope to give students here some new learning opportunities and help this impressive program continue to grow," added Marienberg. "I am also very thankful to the donors for establishing this faculty chair and giving me the opportunity to come to Carolina." The endowed chair is named in honor of E.J. Evans, '28, who was owner of the Evans United Department Stores and mayor of Durham for 12 years (1951-1963), and his wife, Sara, who was a leader in the Jewish community. Eli Evans, founding chair of the Center's Advisory Board, is one of the couple's two sons.

# Ruth von Bernuth

Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures, Published Spring 2011



## Faculty Member Researches Relationship Between German and Yiddish Literature

Junior faculty members play a critical role at Carolina, and for the Center, by helping to expand course offerings, extend the curriculum, and further new and important research. During the past few years, several new assistant professors have joined Carolina, including Professors Marienberg, Lambert, and Shemer, who are all helping the Center meet increasing student demand for Jewish Studies courses.

Another assistant professor to join Carolina in recent years is Ruth von Bernuth, who is based in the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures. Her focus on Germany's early modern period (15th to 18th Century) has filled a special academic niche in the German Department, and her new research focus on Yiddish literature is likewise filling an important curricular need for Jewish Studies.

"When I was seeking a faculty position, I knew Carolina was a perfect fit for me because of its strength in several areas, specifically its Early Modern program, German department and the Center for Jewish Studies," said von Bernuth. In fact, Carolina was the only institution to receive an application from von Bernuth. "There really is no other institution that could provide the same level of opportunity for me and my particular research interests."

Since joining Carolina in 2008, von Bernuth has taught a range of courses, furthered her own research initiatives, and helped guide undergraduate research. Last year, one of her students was honored with one of the Center's first undergraduate research awards. The student, Trey Meeks, used the funding to travel to Germany to complete the duo's translation of a Yiddish prayer book.

"What truly sets von Bernuth apart from her peers is the energy and enthusiasm she expends turning her research interests into innovative new courses for our students. Indeed, I know of no other colleague who's done more to promote undergraduate research on campus. We're thus very excited that she's proposed a new undergraduate course on early modern Jewish literature. And when we get our major in Jewish Studies on the books—in the very near future—she'll be a natural choice to teach the capstone seminar for Jewish Studies majors as well," said Jonathan Hess, director of the Center.

Chapel Hill is a long way from the East German town where von Bernuth grew up. Her experiences growing up in East Germany and then witnessing the fall of the wall and the remarkable transformation in her home country give von Bernuth a unique perspective for Carolina undergraduates. She has also introduced some students to her parents, who have come to Carolina to share their personal experiences of life in Leipzig.

Her current research project is focused on Yiddish literature written in central and eastern Europe between 1450 and 1700 and explores representative works of the major genres of writing in Yiddish—biblical texts, heroic epics, early novels and songs. Von Bernuth is currently writing a book based on her research, tentatively titled, "Shared Worlds, Shared Texts: Early Modern Contacts Between Old Yiddish and German Literature." She will spend much of next academic year in Israel, thanks to a visiting fellowship from Yad Hanadiv. While in Israel, she will work with Chara Turniansky, a highly renowned expert on old Yiddish literature. She also has received a fellowship award from YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City, giving her access to many of the works she is planning to study for her book.

"I feel so privileged to have so much time to focus on one project," added von Bernuth. "There are so few people working on old Yiddish, but this project is introducing me to wonderful colleagues around the world and exposing me to remarkable writers and publishers from centuries ago."