Congratulations, 2021 Graduates!

We are so proud of all our graduating undergraduate students — including those who have earned the B.A. in religious studies/jewish studies, a minor in Jewish studies or modern Hebrew, and the many students who have participated in JWST courses and programming.

We also wish to congratulate our 2020-2021 Ph.D. graduates! This semester:

- Robin Butler successfully defended her dissertation “Sephardic Immigrants in Paris: Navigating Jewish Community, Culture, and Citizenship, 1918–1945”;
- Lea Greenberg defended her dissertation “Curious Daughters: Language, Literacy, and Jewish Female Desire in German and Yiddish Literature from 1793 to 1916”;
- and Max Lazar defended his dissertation “Jerusalem on the Main: Jewish Integration in Frankfurt, 1914–1938.”

Congratulations, and best of luck with your upcoming career positions as a post-doc, visiting professor, and history teacher.

Post-Doctorate Fellowships

In the upcoming years, the Center hopes to create opportunities for recent Jewish studies graduates to continue their work at Carolina by way of post-doctorate fellowship positions. Many of the Center’s graduate students have moved on to other universities for post-doc positions, but the Center does not offer any of these transitional fellowships. This type of position is a win-win, as it gives the scholar time to further develop teaching and writing skills before applying for tenure-track faculty positions, and it gives the hosting institution, and its students, exposure to new research and teaching interests.

“Creating opportunities for recent graduates to come to Carolina to further their training is an important goal for not only our Center, but for Jewish Studies academic programming worldwide,” said Ruth van Bernuth, director. “As our Center continues to grow and take a leadership role in Jewish studies, it’s important for us to create these training programs.”

Post-doc fellowships are not new to Carolina, but they currently are not offered specifically in the field of Jewish studies. The Center seeks a permanent endowment or long-term expendable fund to support a post-doc program. Please contact us for additional information at jewishstudies@unc.edu.

Exploring Career Options

The Center’s affiliated graduate students have been very successful in gaining coveted positions after they complete their Ph.D. programs. Many go on to hold tenure-track faculty positions at peer institutions, while others leave Carolina for post-doc fellowships, lectureships and adjunct teaching positions. Some graduating students instead looked outside of the university environment and have landed positions at museums, non-profits and secondary education.

Last year, the Center teamed up with Jewish studies centers across the country—and internationally—to help students with career planning and networking.

In March, the Center’s Graduate Student Network hosted Noam Pianko, past president of the Association for Jewish Studies and the Samuel N. Stroum Chair of Jewish Studies at the University of Washington, to talk about the future of Jewish studies as an academic discipline and as a career goal. At the meeting, students asked questions on how to diversify their portfolios, how to prepare syllabi for teaching applications, and where to find non-faculty opportunities on and off, university campuses.

A few weeks later, in April, the Center hosted several center directors who met with our graduate students to talk about the various career paths available. This networking opportunity allowed students to ask very specific questions about their interests and preparation for the job market. Special thank you to the Center directors for joining our graduate students: Moderator: Laura Lieber, Duke University. Participants: Steve Weitzman, University of Pennsylvania; Jonathan Boyarin, Cornell University; Eva Mirozczek, UC Davis; Anna Shternshis, University of Toronto.

This upcoming year, the Center will continue to work with the Graduate Student Network members to ensure they feel prepared for life after Carolina and their graduate programs.
NEWS BRIEFS

Michael Figueroa was awarded tenure and promoted to associate professor; effective July 2021. Figueroa is based in the department of music, and served as the Center’s associate director for three years. His recent research focused on music in the Israeli-Palestinian nhạc. Subsequently, in his first book, City of Song: Music and the Making of Modern Jerusalem (Rutgers University Press, forthcoming 2021). He is also co-editor, with Armegant Fauer, of Performing Commemoration: Musical Reenactment and the Politics of Trauma (University of Michigan Press, 2020).

Samuel Zahn ’22, has been selected as a 2021 Thurner Scholar. Zahn is a Robertson Scholar pursuing a history and political science double major. He serves as president of the UNC Chabad Student Group, and in 2019, Zahn helped create “Confronting Antisemitism,” a course dedicated to studying and discussing antisemitism. The course was offered in spring 2020 and spring 2021 and is planned for spring 2022.

Dikier Czarnecki, department of history, gave a public talk in April, entitled “A Street In New York?” Jewish from Eastern Europe and the American Immigrant Experience” organized by Carolina Public Humanities and co-sponsored Wake Technical Community College and the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies. In Spring 2021, he was awarded the Peter Vines Creative Teaching Award from the department of history.

This semester, the Center welcomes two new graduate students to Carolina, recruited with the remarkable commitment to their studies and friendships and collaborations. Carolina’s students have shown a remarkable commitment to their studies during remote instruction, but we cannot overlook that we will have an adjustment period and need to fully support them during this semester’s transitions. As such, we will create numerous programs for both undergraduate and graduate students to build connections and help them take advantage of everything Carolina has to offer. We are offering a mix of in-person and online community lectures this upcoming academic year. The best way to stay informed of our programming is to visit our website (jewishstudies.unc.edu) or social media sites (@uncjewishstudies). I hope you will join us on campus or online and participate in these discussions.

There are many other plans in the works, including a gift online at jewishstudies.unc.edu. For those of you in the triangle area, I am cordially inviting you to a gift envelope but you can also make a gift online at jewishstudies.unc.edu. Your support of the Center makes all of us at the Center very much looking forward to the start of fall semester... and a return to the vibrancy that naturally occurs every autumn on college campuses.

Ruth von Berndt, Director

NEWS BRIEFS

Formal Review of the Center

Last April, the College held its formal five-year review of the Center, a process that assesses what was accomplished during this time period and sets goals for the next five years. The review committee met online with administrators, faculty, staff and students before writing a report of findings and recommendations. Key points from this review process are:

- Events programming: In addition to its annual community lectures, the Center organized several international and interdisciplinary academic conferences and special events. Three conference have produced academic publications. This was a major leap forward in the Center’s development and positioning as a leading center in Jewish studies.

Graduate Students: The Center supports students working in a subfield of Jewish studies, aided in part by the Center’s various recruitment grants/fellowships and research and travel grants. Each year, programming for graduate students steadily increased and included guest speakers to the Graduate Student Network.

During the past five years, several graduate students earned the degree in Jewish studies.

Undergraduate Students: academic programming for undergraduates included the religious studies/Jewish studies major, and the minors in Jewish studies and modern Hebrew. There are more than 110 Jewish studies courses taught at Carolina. A new course titled “Confronting Antisemitism” was introduced, and the Capstone Course in Jewish studies was offered each year with a different topic and faculty leader. A new undergraduate student advisory committee was created last year to help identify programs and support needed for undergrads.

Much of the committee’s report focused on administration of the Center, including staffing levels, office space, reporting structure, faculty participation and budget/fund raising priorities, with a particular emphasis on the Center’s long-term needs. All action items from the review are under discussion and planning is underway.

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Upcoming Events

We are pleased to announce that we are planning for an assortment of in-person and remote lectures for the 2021-2022 academic year. Upcoming event topics will range from Yiddish studies to Biblical studies and Holocaust studies.

We have several current grad students and recent graduates slated to continue our Emerging Scholars lectures which will introduce attendees to new areas of research in the Jewish studies field.

We also hope to offer a spring semester Yiddish workshop, which will combine in-person and online talks and discussions.

The fall semester event schedule will be posted on our website and social media sites in late August. To receive email updates, please join our list serv (details on back cover and on our website: jewishstudies.unc.edu).

We hope you will join us on campus or online for our upcoming events.

Patricia Rosenmeyer, the George L. Pickard Professor of Classics in the department of classics, co-organized a three-day international workshop on “Modern Jewish Receptions of Classical Antiquity,” held online in May. The 16 presentations, including participants from the UK, US, and Israel, covered a wide range of fresh texts from the 20th, and explored how authors writing in Hebrew, Arabic and Yiddish were inspired by classical sources, whether through allusion, imitation or translation.

Gabrielle Berliner’s students in FAMT/FOLK 330: Jewish Folklife and Ethnography collaborated with Elowhene (a living museum and artist residency set inside a former textile store in Greensboro) to research Southern Jewish histories and traditions as they relate to that building, including the Gray family, and Greensboro more broadly. The students produced final media projects and participated in Elowhene’s Radical Teller event. The class research will contribute to the development of a new tour of the museum about Southern Jewish history and culture through the lens of the Gray family.

Seymour and Carol Levin Distinguished Professor

Professor, Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures

Patricia Rosenmeyer

Ruth von Berndt, Director

Seymour and Carol Levin Distinguished Professor

Director, Jewish Studies

Michael Figueroa

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