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Dear Friends:

I write this message seven days after the shooting in Pittsburgh’s Etz Chaim synagogue, widely thought to be the deadliest anti-Jewish attack in American history. The incident is eerily familiar. Over the past four decades, dozens of violent and sometimes deadly assaults have been carried out against Jews. The number of deaths in Pittsburgh was unusually high, but the intent behind the massacre was nothing new. To be sure, Jews do not and ought not live their daily lives in fear, but one cannot fully understand American society without cognizance of a jarring fact evident from the recent past. Sooner or later, someone who dislikes Jews will attempt to kill them.

It so happened that, in the week prior to the assault on the congregants of Etz Chaim, I delivered three lectures in my course, “The American Jewish Experience,” on the history of anti-Semitism. I discussed both familiar and lesser known incidents, from the lynching of Leo Frank in 1915 to the pervasive discrimination against Jews on university campuses between the World Wars to the regular beatings inflicted by members of the Christian Front in the streets of Boston, New York, and Providence during the early-1940s. I’m not the only faculty member to pay attention to anti-Semitism, and far from the most knowledgeable. Amos Bitzan, Rachel Brenner, Simone Schweber, and Marina Zilbergerts teach courses on the Holocaust from different disciplinary perspectives in the humanities and social sciences. Amos also offers a seminar on the history of anti-Semitism in European culture. Chad Goldberg’s class on modern social thought explores positive and negative ideas about Jews in American and European sociology. This is just a sampling.

But there is much more to CJS than the study of persecution and prejudice. What is most important ultimately is the examination of Jewish civilization across the ages. The religious practices of Jews, their beliefs, languages, literary creativity, modes of self-governance, and participation in the larger societies in which Jews live—these subjects form the core of Jewish Studies.

Every year, hundreds of students enroll in our courses. They come from various religious, ethnic, and national backgrounds. When I return to class in two days, I’ll stand before women wearing hijabs, immigrants from Africa and Ukraine, foreign students from Australia and China, senior auditors, native-born Wisconsinites from towns with names previously unfamiliar to me, and Jews (Ashkenazic and Sephardic) from both American coasts and cities in between. The size and diversity of our student body is one of the great strengths of a large, public university. Over the years, CJS’ students have gone on to become rabbis, filmmakers, educators, creators of non-profit organizations, businesspeople, and participants in nearly all walks of life. What we do at UW ripples out into the larger world, a comforting thought these days.

Sincerely yours,

Tony Michels, Director
Mosse/Weinstein Center or Jewish Studies
George L. Mosse Professor of American Jewish History
Everyone at the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies would like to extend Judith Sone our best wishes as she moves from Associate Director to her new position as Hebrew lecturer. Over the last four years, Judith’s wonderful ability to build strong relationships, her amazing organizational skills, and warm personality have greatly benefitted the Center. Though she will be missed at the helm, we look forward to the fulltime use of her outstanding talents as a teacher and the important role she will play in building the Hebrew program at UW–Madison.

Since starting as Associate Director in 2014, Judith has trained employees, organized numerous events, and toiled with the utmost devotion toward the advancement of our educational goals. Judith also acted as the academic advisor to all CJS students. Jewish Studies senior, Hilary Miller, had the advantage of Judith’s guidance during her time at the university. Hilary notes that “after each advising session with Judith, I left feeling more excited about my courses, professors, and schedules for the coming semesters. She has an incredible sense of calm about her that makes all students feel more confident and less overwhelmed.” As editor of Avukah, the UW–Madison’s new undergraduate journal of Jewish Studies, Hilary benefitted from Judith’s unwavering support. “When I approached her with the idea of creating a student journal for the Center a year ago, she was not only open to the concept but also devoted so much time from her already busy schedule to make it a reality. She was extremely encouraging, and I always appreciated her accessibility and responsiveness.”

Chad Gibbs praised Judith’s mentorship during his time as a graduate student employee at CJS. “I learned a great deal from her about the mission of the Center and how the university works that will continue to help me down the road. Judith even connected me with her father to help me with my Yiddish-language studies, and I can’t thank her enough.”

“It was a pleasure to work with Judith,” adds CJS Director, Tony Michels. “She was always level-headed and wise, tireless in her devotion to the work of CJS and its students, and wonderful in her warmth toward community members who frequented our events. I learned much from her and will miss seeing her in the office every day, but I’m thrilled she is now CJS’ Hebrew lecturer. She’s an extraordinary teacher and we’re fortunate to have her.”

Judith taught advanced Hebrew language and literature courses while working as Associate Director. In her new position, she also will offer beginning- and intermediate-level classes, formerly taught by the recently retired Haya Yuchtman.

We thank Judith for her service to the Center and heartily welcome her return to the classroom fulltime.
Faculty news
New Books from Sunny Yudkoff and Steven Nadler

The Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies congratulates faculty members Sunny Yudkoff and Steven Nadler on the publication of their new books this year.

Tubercular Capital: Illness and the Conditions of Modern Jewish Writing (Stanford University Press, 2018) — Yudkoff’s first book — focuses on the lives and texts of Hebrew and Yiddish writers who suffered from what was once known as “The White Plague.” Meanwhile, Nadler’s latest study, Menasseh ben Israel: Rabbi of Amsterdam (Yale University Press, 2018), explores the personal history and contributions of this pivotal thinker.

Tubercular Capital describes how an incurable affliction gave rise to a culture of convalescence among a group of writers, for whom the period of treatment and recuperation gave rise to new opportunities for travel and literary reflection. Moving from eastern Europe to the Italian Peninsula, and from Mandate Palestine to the Rocky Mountains, the book follows writers including Sholem Aleichem, Rahel Bluvshtein, David Vogel, and others as they sought “the cure” and produced works deeply impacted by their own experiences as terminal patients and travelers.

Combining archival research with literary analysis, Yudkoff examines how tuberculosis came to function as an agent of modern Jewish literature. The illness would provide the means for these suffering writers to cultivate their reputations and find financial backing. It served a central role in the public fashioning of their literary personas and ushered Jewish writers into a variety of intersecting English, German, and Russian literary traditions. Tracing the paths of these writers, Tubercular Capital reconsiders the foundational relationship between disease, biography, and literature.

Moving from the “White Death” to the streets of seventeenth-century Amsterdam, Nadler’s latest book, published in the “Jewish Lives” series of Yale University Press, explains how Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657) became one of the most accomplished and cosmopolitan rabbis of his time, and indeed, a central figure of early modern Jewish history. Menasseh was one of the three rabbis of the “Portuguese Nation” in Amsterdam, a community that quickly earned renown worldwide for its mercantile and scholarly vitality.

Nadler begins his work in the early years of Menasseh’s life when he and his family were forcibly converted to Catholicism. They were soon suspected of insincerity in their new faith. To avoid the Inquisition, they fled first to southwestern France, and then to Amsterdam, where they finally settled. Menasseh played an important role during the formative decades of one of the most vital Jewish communities of early modern Europe and was influential through his work as a printer and his efforts on behalf of the readmission of Jews to England. Nadler’s new biography provides a fresh perspective on this seminal figure.

Yudkoff’s and Nadler’s works join recent books by CJS faculty members Chad Goldberg, Jordan Rosenblum, Scott Straus, and Tony Michels on the shelves of the new Goldstein Lounge. Congratulations to both authors.
2018 Fall Faculty Accomplishments

Michael Bernard-Donals was appointed as a WARF Named Professor (Chaim Perelman Professor of Rhetoric and Culture).

Rachel Brenner published chapters in two edited volumes: “Jerusalem: Holy City of Conflict and Desire,” in Teaching the Arab Israeli Conflict in the College Classroom; and “Jerzy Andrzejewski’s Holy Week: Testing Religious Ethics in Times of Atrocity,” in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. She also delivered papers at three difference conferences and became a board member of The Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America (PIASA).

Chad Alan Goldberg was interviewed about his recent book, Modernity and the Jews in Western Social Thought, by Daveeda Goldberg on the New Books Network podcast and by sociologist Alejandro Baer for the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Minnesota. Goldberg’s book was also featured in a post on the Chicago Blog.

Tony Michels delivered lectures and papers at the University of California–Santa Barbara, University of California–San Diego, and The American Jewish Historical Society’s Biennial Scholars’ Conference. He also spoke at Judisk kultur i Sverige, Stockholm’s premier Jewish cultural center, and taught a course in the Yiddish Book Center’s Steiner Summer Yiddish Program. He continues to co-edit the journal Jewish Social Studies.

Jordan Rosenblum published “Thou Shalt Not Cook a Bird in its Mother’s Milk?: The Evolution of a Rabbinic Regulation,” in Religious Studies and Rabbinics, ed. Elizabeth Shanks Alexander and Beth Berkwitz. Routledge Jewish Studies Series (Routledge, 2018), 175-187. He was also invited to present lectures at several academic venues.


Celebrating the Acquisition of the Allan Nadler Spinoza Collection

The Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies has purchased a remarkable collection of works on the seventeenth-century philosopher Baruch Spinoza. The collection was offered to CJS on generous terms by Allan Nadler, an orthodox rabbi, former director of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at Drew University in New Jersey, and a cousin of our own Steven Nadler.

The purchase was made possible by the generosity of Rodger Krouse, co-founder of Sun Capital Partners and a great admirer of Spinoza.

The books in the collection are in Hebrew, German, and mostly Yiddish, and include a number of rare and important works from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Jewish authors of various political persuasions in Europe, America, and Palestine found Spinoza a particularly inspiring figure.

Nadler’s unique collection of over 50 volumes, painstakingly put together over many years and now being catalogued in Memorial Library, will help establish the University of Wisconsin-Madison as a crucial site for research of Spinoza in the Jewish world.
Avukah: The Undergraduate Journal of Jewish Studies at the UW–Madison

Last academic year, dedicated students of the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies published the inaugural issue of Avukah: The Undergraduate Journal of Jewish Studies at the UW–Madison. This new effort consists of four articles on Jewish Studies topics ranging from popular culture to politics, the psychology of trauma, and the legacies of Raphael Lemkin. Editor-in-Chief Hilary Miller, senior in history, political science, and Jewish Studies, reports that the editorial board has even greater plans for the second volume.

Avukah began with the intention of developing greater interest in Jewish topics and building a community of scholarship. Over the process of gathering resources and recruiting faculty advisors, the board “became more than the journal,” Hilary recalls. The board grew into a “peer-oriented” group committed to generating, strengthening, and distributing Jewish Studies scholarship at the undergraduate level.

Explaining her own attachment to this project and what it represents, Hilary states, “Personally, the journal has allowed me to wed my pride in my Jewish identity and my passion for learning in a way that has only enhanced my undergraduate academic and extracurricular experience.”

Building from the first cohort of peer-editors, the board now includes nine members with five sophomores and four seniors. Given the strong representation of second-year students, this effort is poised to continue seamlessly as some graduate and move on to new challenges.

As this newsletter goes to print, Avukah’s editors are selecting and preparing pieces for the next issue. Thirteen drafts are under review, with an expectation of five more submissions before this year’s deadline. The board aims to publish between four and seven of these submissions, with the quality of the finished product their paramount concern.

The Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies is proud to support this flagship student-led effort to spread knowledge of Jewish topics and build a community of interested peers. You can view Avukah, listen to their podcast, and keep up with publication dates at https://avukah.wordpress.com/ or the CJS website.

We recently established the Jewish Studies Graduate Student Association (JSGSA) with the purpose of providing graduate students at UW–Madison an active intellectual network, professional development opportunities, and strengthened interactions with faculty as well as the wider campus community. Though we are only in our second year, we are proud of all we have accomplished so far. Last year, we hosted weekly writing workshops in which students received feedback on upcoming conference papers, articles, and dissertation chapters. While we look forward to continuing these gatherings in the future, we are also expanding our programming beyond this initial peer-review series.

With the guidance of Professor Sunny Yudkoff, the JSGSA will host weekly Yiddish language tables on Mondays and—with the assistance of Judith Sone—weekly Hebrew language tables on Fridays. This October, we hosted a workshop focusing on the use of testimony in Jewish Studies scholarship, with a special focus on using written testimony, in order to make use of this type of source in the classroom and engage in proper collection of oral history. This event featured presentations by Professors Amos Bitzan, Rachel Brenner, and Troy Reeves, the Director of the Oral History Center at UW–Madison.

We are looking forward to our first graduate student symposium, scheduled for the spring, which will build on the topic of using testimony to give our members an opportunity to share new research and develop the skills explored in our fall workshop. The other officers of the JSGSA and I are very proud of how far we have come in such a short amount of time, but we could not do it without the help of the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies. Stay tuned for more! —Erin Faigin
Robert and Lynn Berman Scholarship
Chad SA Gibbs, graduate student in European Jewish history, attended the Missouri Valley History Conference, where he presented a portion of his research. His paper now appears in the Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies under the title, “Lessons from the Treblinka Archive.”

Ida and Isaac Lipton Major/Certificate Award
Ariela Rivkin applied her award toward her certificate in Jewish Studies. As a recent graduate of Russian Language and Comparative Literature, Ariela’s formal classroom experience under the Center’s faculty enhanced her overall studies and sense of Jewish identity.

Ida and Isaac Lipton Study Abroad and Domestic Study Awards
Erin Faigin, a second-year graduate student in American Jewish history, attended the Middlebury Summer Language program in Hebrew, internationally recognized for its rigor and success in helping students attain fluency in the language. Joe Banin, another graduate student in American Jewish history, attended an intensive Hebrew language course in Haifa during July and August. Rachel Retsky went to Israel this June to volunteer with the Israeli provider in Israel. Rachel views this service as an act of tikkun olam, offering care to the underprivileged, especially the elderly, disabled, and individuals who live alone. Patrick Harvey studied abroad at Trinity University Western, in Langley, BC. Patrick took a Septuagint course that focused on the Greek of the Book of Job.

Laurence A. Weinstein Distinguished Graduate Fellowship in Education and Jewish Studies
Shai Goldfarb Cohen is using her fellowship to fund her PhD studies in the Department of Education. Shai is in her second year of the doctoral program where she studies the ways in which traditional Jewish texts and learning practices such as Beit-Midrash learning can be transformed into a technology-based learning system. She is mostly interested in questions such as how do online learning communities of Jewish studies change the ways in which we learn and teach Jewish studies today? How do these online learning sources, tools, collaborations, and digital media redefine what it means to be a part of a Jewish learning community in the 21st century?

David Sorkin Graduate Student Support Fund
Dylan Kaufman-Obstler traveled to VIVO in New York City to conduct archival research and to Los Angeles to collect oral histories about Yiddish schools created under the auspices of the Communist party and affiliated Jewish cultural organizations.

Robert and Beverly Natelson Family Scholarship in Jewish Studies

Andy Bachman Support Fund for Jews and Social Justice
Nesha Ruther worked as a teaching assistant in Ramallah, preparing Palestinian students for the SAT exam and applications to US universities. Alongside these studies, Nesha and her students discussed identity, solidarity, and what justice looks like to Palestinians and peoples worldwide. Nesha hopes that her work will help build bridges between Jewish and Palestinian communities through mutual recognition of humanity and a collective right to opportunity and quality education.

Charles and Gayle Mazursky Student Support Award
Geoffrey Ludvik used his research funds to support the home stretch of his PhD in Anthropology (Archaeology), which he completed on May 11. His dissertation examines the material remains of trade and interregional interactions during the period of Abraham and the Patriarchs (ca. 2000 BCE). Robert Jesse Pruett traveled to the first ASOR/EPHE Symposium (“New Digital Approaches to the Study of the Ancient Near East”) in Paris, France, to co-present a paper titled, “The Wisconsin Palmyrene Aramaic Inscription Project: Reflectance Transformation Imaging and the Digital Humanities.”

Chagai Weiss, a graduate student in Political Science, presented a paper on intergroup relations at the International Studies Association conference in San Francisco.
Members of CJS’ Board of Visitors and family, CJS Director Tony Michels, Rebekah Sherman of the UW Foundation, and Associate Dean Susan Zaesky recently returned from an exciting, six-day trip to Israel, described by one participant as a “lifetime experience.” A week of lectures, tours, discussions, and sightseeing took the group to Jerusalem, the Galilee, Haifa, Tel Aviv, and the Negev.

The itinerary sought to highlight the diversity of Israeli society. While including, but also moving far beyond the standard tourist locations, the group met with representatives of the Israel Democracy Institute, Children for Peace, Women of the Wall, and Rabbi Levi Kalman, a founder of Kol Neshama, Jerusalem’s Reform congregation, and a graduate of UW’s Hebrew and Semitic Studies Department. They were also treated to a “graffiti tour” of South Tel Aviv, luncheons with the journalist Linda Gradstein and Yehonatan Indursky, creator of the critically acclaimed television series “Shtisel.” Tours of the Lebanese and Gaza borders rounded out the trip. There was truly something in the trip for all interests.

“It was a great trip.” Ken Wiseman noted. “Incredible sights, information and company. What a wonderful group.” Richard Roberts added, the “trip was beautifully planned and executed, and it was all we hoped for.” CJS looks forward to organizing another trip to Israel in the future.

Clockwise from top left: Graffiti, South Tel Aviv; Ken Wiseman, Tony Michels, Ken Latimer; Journalist Linda Gradstein; Col. (Res.) Kobi Marom, Metula, Israel; Ken and Adriana Wiseman, Richard Roberts, Michael Stern, Ken Latimer, Col. (Res.) Kobi Marom, Rebekah Sherman, Susan Zaesky, Tony Michels; Nasreen Hadad Haj-Yahya, Israel Democracy Institute; Rabbi Levi Weiman-Kelman and Rabanit Nechama Goldman Barash, Jerusalem; Leaders of Kids for Peace, Suma Qawasmi and Meredith Rothbart; Lesley Sachs, Director of Women of the Wall. Photos: Rebekah Sherman
Thank You from the Center for Jewish Studies

In Partnership

Celebrating the New Bernie D. and Sandra K. Goldstein Family Lounge

At the end of August, the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies celebrated the new Bernie D. and Sandra K. Goldstein Lounge together with students, staff, faculty, and many members of the Goldstein family.

Bernie Goldstein, class of 1949, is a true Badger fan, and an avid supporter of CJS. His gift for the creation of a lounge and library will greatly benefit our community of students and scholars. The Goldstein Lounge will feature a collaboration space, a laptop bar, and a flat screen television decked out with an array of AV options.

The lounge will contain copies of all books assigned in CJS courses as well as works of note for our common fields of study. It will also feature a section dedicated to the study of the Holocaust, in honor of his wife Lenora. As an expression of Bernie’s deep belief in tzedakah, he has established an endowment that will enable CJS to update the lounge’s book holdings and facilities as needed.

Celebrating with us at the ceremony were Stewart M. Goldstein, ’82, and Joshua B. Goldstein, ’15. The Goldstein family currently represents a three-generation commitment to the UW–Madison and, more recently, our educational mission here at CJS. Speakers at this event included Tony Michels, Director of CJS, and Professor Jordan Rosenblum. Both spoke of the ways in which this new facility will enhance the education of our students while giving them a place to meet and collaborate with peers.

Bernie and his grandson, Joshua, delivered moving speeches. Bernie stressed his appreciation for the work of CJS and the pleasure he has taken from attending almost all nineteen annual offerings of the Greenfield Summer Institute, a program he has also committed to support.

We offer our thanks to Bernie and his entire family, and look forward to the completion of the Goldstein Lounge early in the semester. —Chad SA Gibbs

The Center for Jewish Studies Thanks Cheryl Temkin

The Center’s faculty, staff, and director, Tony Michels, offer our sincere gratitude to CJS Board of Visitors member, Cheryl Temkin, for her recent creation of a charitable gift annuity that will benefit the Center for Jewish Studies. The charitable gift annuity is part investment and part gift. It is an excellent option for someone who wants to secure financial stability while offering financial support.

“Working with the UW Foundation to set this up has been a very pleasant and educational experience,” notes Cheryl. “In the process I learned that I can achieve two goals, establishing both an income stream and a permanent gift to CJS. That was a winning combination that simply couldn’t be beat.”

Recounting how her gift came together, Cheryl described working with both Colin Nemeth at the UW Foundation’s Office of Gift Planning and her personal financial adviser. “With their help, we determined the most appropriate charitable arrangement that perfectly fit my needs. CJS is such a vital program for the UW and whatever I can do to strengthen it now and in the future is so rewarding! I hope to continue making contributions in support of the Center for years to come.”

If your objectives include receiving dependable income, possibly reducing income tax and/or capital gains tax and making a charitable gift, a charitable gift annuity may be worth investigating. In basic terms, a charitable gift annuity is a legal contract under which a person, in exchange for a gift, will receive fixed income for life. At the end of the arrangement, the remaining balance is used by the charity in a way defined by the donor.

Our thanks, again, to Cheryl Temkin for her wonderful generosity.

Celebrating the New Bernie D. and Sandra K. Goldstein Family Lounge

Bernie D. Goldstein

Photo: Chad SA Gibbs

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Bernie D. Goldstein

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The Center hosted a number of lectures and luncheon seminars this fall related to the history of Yiddish culture. Dr. Eddy Portnoy, Academic Advisor and Exhibitions Curator at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, commenced our fall offerings as this year’s Kutler Lecturer in American Jewish history. His first lecture, “The Strange Tales of Yiddishland: Sensationalism and Yiddish Journalism,” explored how Yiddish newspapers in the late 19th and 20th centuries developed a distinctly Jewish form of sensationalism that revealed underreported aspects of Jewish life. His second lecture, “The Distorted Mirror: What Yiddish Cartoons Reveal about Jewish Life in the Early 20th Century,” vividly demonstrated the development of a visual language with which Yiddish artists depicted the culture, political life, and scandals that occurred in Yiddish-speaking communities. In addition to his talks, Dr. Portnoy met with graduate students to discuss their research and questions of professional development in the field of Jewish history.

From late October to early November, the Center was busy hosting three back-to-back luncheon seminars. Topics ranged from the political to the historical and the literary. Over lunch with CJS faculty and graduate students, Enzo Traverso, Professor in the Humanities at Cornell University, spoke on the subject of Marxism and the Jewish Question, while Jan Schwartz, Senior Lecturer of Yiddish at Lund University, described the poetics of resistance in Abraham Sutzkever’s Holocaust narratives. The Center, along with the Jewish Studies Graduate Student Association, also sponsored a round table discussion that featured our own superb faculty. Drs. Rachel Brenner, Amos Bitzan, and Troy Reeves all spoke on the subject, “Testimonial Sources and Jewish Studies Scholarship.”

Dr. Anna Shternshis, Professor of Yiddish and Diaspora Studies at the University of Toronto, delivered the bi-annual Tobias Lecture. Her fascinating talk, “Singing and Laughing Against Fascism: Lost and Found Soviet Yiddish Songs of World War II,” evaluated Soviet Yiddish amateur songs that relate to the destruction of the Jewish community in Ukraine, service in the Red Army, and the plight of Jewish refugees in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Shternshis ended our semester series on a high note and left us expectant for another wonderful slate of events in the spring. We thank all of them for coming to share their work. —Preston Atwood
In appreciation of our generous donors

Contributions from July 1, 2017–June 30, 2018
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