



FALL 2021  
ISSUE NUMBER 25

# Jewish Studies at Rutgers

The Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life  
Department of Jewish Studies

## Resilience, Creativity, and Cutting-Edge Programs

Reflecting on a remarkably challenging year, we marvel at how we have navigated the intricacies of online teaching, learning, and community engagement. Our innovative public programs and academic offerings grappled with the complexity of Jewish history and society as well as pressing contemporary social issues.

The Bildner Center and the Department of Jewish Studies both addressed the history and legacy of the Holocaust, antisemitism, and broader themes of social justice. The Center's teacher training programs included a focus on the experiences of women and LGBTQ communities during the Holocaust, and the Department has added a new undergraduate course on antisemitism.

This past year's programming underscored the great ethnic and cultural diversity inherent in the Jewish experience. Mini-courses, open to the public, addressed the history of Soviet Jewry, Jewish counterculture movements of the 1960s, and Judeo-Arabic philosophy and law. Public talks and panels explored Israeli society and culture through modern Hebrew poetry, Jerusalem's hidden libraries, and the origins of, and controversy over, the Israeli national anthem. Talks by Jewish studies faculty highlighted their latest research and new books. Faculty seminars examined varied topics, including rabbinic understandings of Temple "refuse" and Maimonides's debt to Islamic thought. An online exhibition on Jewish farming in New Jersey launches this fall.

In the year ahead, we look forward to building a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community at Rutgers through programs that make Jewish history, culture, and contemporary experience accessible to the broad community.

**Nancy Sinkoff**  
Academic Director

**Karen Small**  
Managing Director

**Paola Tartakoff**  
Chair, Dept. of Jewish Studies

### ACADEMICS

Renowned faculty nurturing outstanding students



2019 End-of-Year Celebration

### HOLOCAUST RESOURCE CENTER



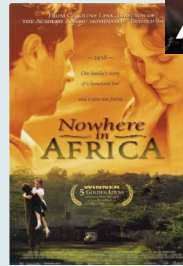
Educating future generations about the Holocaust through teacher training

VISITING SCHOLARS  
Enriching intellectual life on campus and in the broader community



### PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Lectures, mini-courses, and cultural programs



2020 Rutgers Jewish Film Festival Audience Choice Award Winners

## ► BILDNER CENTER PROGRAMS

### Delving into Israeli history and culture through music and literature

#### **Hatikvah: Sacred Readings of a Secular Text** **The Ruth and Alvin Rockoff Annual Lecture**

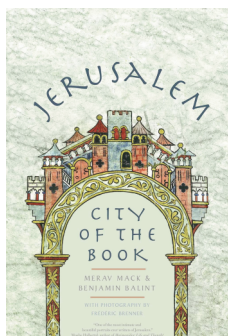
**Edwin Seroussi**, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, discussed the contested history of the Israeli national anthem.



#### **The Amichai Windows**

Book artist **Rick Black** presented his artist book on the modern Hebrew poet Yehuda Amichai, in conversation with **Gary A. Rendsburg**, Rutgers University.

### Navigating the ancient city of Jerusalem by way of its hidden Jewish archives, rare Christian and Islamic libraries, and rich Armenian heritage



#### **Jerusalem: City of the Book** **The Toby and Herbert Stolzer Endowed Program**

**Benjamin Balint**, author, *Jerusalem: City of the Book*  
**Father Columba Stewart**, Saint John's University, Minnesota  
**Bedross Der Matossian**, University of Nebraska–Lincoln  
*Cosponsors: Rutgers–New Brunswick Libraries; Center for Middle Eastern Studies*

### Exploring American Jewish culture and history

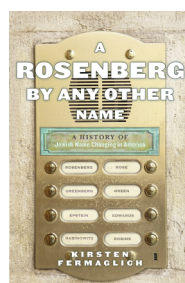
#### **A World Within Worlds: The Music of Anthony Mordechai Tzvi Russell** **The Abram Matlofsky Memorial Program funded by the Karma Foundation**

**Anthony Russell**, an award-winning African American singer specializing in Yiddish song, explored the diverse influences on his work, in conversation with cultural historian **Josh Kun**, USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism.  
*Cosponsor: Department of Music, Mason Gross School of the Arts*



#### **A Rosenberg by Any Other Name: A History of Jewish Name Changing in America**

**Kirsten Fermaglich**, Michigan State University, discussed her groundbreaking book, which reveals that Jewish name changing was a broad-based, voluntary response to an upsurge in antisemitism in twentieth-century America.



► See Rutgers Jewish Film Festival on page 6.

To watch these and other recent programs, visit [BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu](http://BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu).

## ► HERBERT AND LEONARD LITTMAN FAMILIES HOLOCAUST RESOURCE CENTER

### Free professional development programs supported middle and high school teachers during a challenging year.



Jessica Schram and Colleen Tambuscio, Pedagogical Consultant

#### **Teaching Difficult Topics in a Remote Setting**

A panel of teachers presented techniques and strategies to enhance remote instruction and student interaction.

#### **Holocaust History**

This seminar used diaries, testimonies, maps, and photographs to teach about the Nazi rise to power; the challenges of teaching about antisemitism; and the Holocaust in the Ukraine.

**Joanna Sliwa**, Claims Conference  
**Doris L. Bergen**, University of Toronto  
**Alexandra Zapruder**, author, *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust*

#### **Two-Day Summer Seminars**

##### **Gender and Trauma**

An advanced group examined the experiences of women in Nazi concentration camps, LGBTQ history and the Holocaust, and classroom implementation to meet New Jersey's mandates to teach about the Holocaust and genocide, and LGBTQ history.

**Sarah Cushman**, Northwestern University  
**Laurie Marhoefer**, University of Washington

“These programs have afforded me fantastic professional and intellectual opportunities by providing access to expert speakers at a level and breadth that I have not found elsewhere.”  
—Jessica Schram, Northern Valley Regional High School, Demarest

Support provided by the **Marjorie and Egon Berg Holocaust Education Fund** and the **Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences**.

## Reflections of Recent Graduates



**Christine Jensen** found her passion in the Hebrew Bible, leading to a double major in Jewish studies and religion. She is currently enrolled in Rutgers' master's degree program in religion, and she ultimately hopes to earn a Ph.D. in biblical studies.

*"My Hebrew classes were among my hardest yet most engaging at Rutgers."*

The experience of reading the Dead Sea Scrolls in the original ancient Hebrew opened up previously unimagined possibilities for a richer, deeper level of engagement with the material. To think that I came to Rutgers without even knowing the Hebrew alphabet!"



**Annabelle "Nonnie" Sinoff** majored in English with a double minor in Jewish studies and business administration. She served as a research assistant to Professor Gary A. Rendsburg on a two-year project to digitize the Hebrew manuscripts collection at Alexander Library, which will be made publicly available

through the National Library of Israel. This work led to her capstone research project for the Rutgers Honors College, for which she won a prestigious Henry Rutgers Scholar Award.

*"I feel so fortunate to have been so involved in undergraduate research in the Jewish studies department. I was able to do research that I was interested in while having the proven support of the department behind me."*



**Brianna Newman**, who plans to pursue a law degree with a focus on human rights and labor justice, majored in political science with a double minor in Jewish and Middle Eastern studies. Her research included the Jewish community's response to the COVID-19 health crisis and Iranian Jewish participation in the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

*"Professor Paola Tartakoff was an inspiring teacher. Her introductory course in Jewish history gave me context, a foundation of history, and an understanding of trends that I would not have otherwise had. She guided me throughout my college career."*



**Esther Martens**, a computer science major, cultivated her love of Yiddish at Rutgers. She took Yiddish language and literature classes and participated in the Steiner Summer Yiddish Program at the Yiddish Book Center. With the support of a Jewish studies research award, she was able to participate in a Yiddish-language course at the Yivo Institute this past summer.

*"The fact that I consider myself a Yiddishist is in no small part due to the Yiddish-language opportunities at Rutgers. I knew that I wanted to engage with my Jewish identity in a meaningful way, and learning that Rutgers offered Yiddish opened up a whole world for me, culturally, academically, and socially."*

### Graduates in Jewish Studies

Julian Biller  
Aaron Epelbaum  
Christine Jensen  
Grace Logan  
Brianna Newman  
Yael Rabin  
Brandon Roberts  
Kailee Shapiro  
Annabelle Sinoff  
Amber Soffer  
Avraham Sommer  
Samuel Weiner

### Excellence in Jewish Studies Awards

Ilana Berkman '22  
**Dr. Benjamin F. Glasser and Lillian Glasser Award**  
Spencer Brown '23  
**Betty and Julius Gillman Memorial Award**  
Grace Herdelin '22  
**Dr. Benjamin F. Glasser and Lillian Glasser Award**  
Christine Jensen '21  
**Baruch S. and Pearl W. Seidman Award**

Yebon Kim '24  
**Alexander and Ruth Seaman Award**

Samuel Lurie '23  
**Rudolph and Mary Solomon Klein Award**

Brianna Newman '21  
**Louis Fishman Memorial Award**

Brooke Ramos '23  
**Maurice Meyer III and Irma Meyer Award**

Amy Rosen '22  
**Dr. Benjamin F. Glasser and Lillian Glasser Award**

### Research in Jewish Studies Awards

Esther Martens '21  
**Leonard and Adele Blumberg Award**

Steven Weinberg '22  
(Doctoral Candidate)  
**Deborah S. and Herbert B. Wasserman Research Award**

Visit  
[JewishStudies.Rutgers.edu](https://JewishStudies.Rutgers.edu)  
to watch the end-of-year celebration.



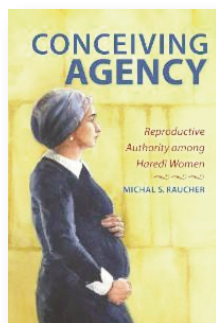
The **Department of Jewish Studies** takes an interdisciplinary approach to the study of Jewish life, offering courses on the historical, social, cultural, religious, linguistic, and political life of the Jewish people from antiquity to the present. Students can major or minor in Jewish studies as well as minor in Holocaust studies, the language and culture of ancient Israel, and modern Hebrew language. The faculty make cutting-edge contributions to research in Jewish studies, hold positions on boards of major academic associations and scholarly journals, and gain international recognition through fellowships and awards. To watch discussions about new faculty books, visit [BildnerCenter.rutgers.edu](http://BildnerCenter.rutgers.edu).

## Faculty News



**Michal Raucher**, assistant professor of Jewish studies, published *Conceiving Agency: Reproductive Authority among Haredi Women* (Indiana University Press), which explores the

ways in which ultra-Orthodox Israeli women take charge of their reproductive lives—challenging male religious authority. Raucher has also received an Emory RISE seed award for her research project “Abortion and Religion: Listening to Women.”

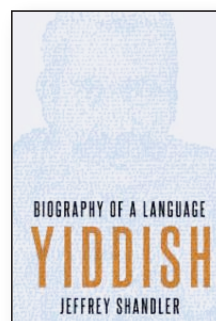


**Gary A. Rendsburg**, the Blanche and Irving Laurie Distinguished Professor of Jewish History, has been awarded a research fellowship by the Getty Villa in Los Angeles to study the spread of Phoenician writing culture to ancient Greece. His work will be part of the 2021–2022 term of the Getty Scholars Program, which will focus on the ancient cultures of the Levant and their relations with the classical world.



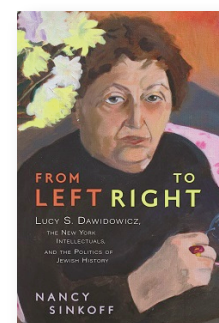
**Jeffrey Shandler**, Distinguished Professor of Jewish Studies, published *Yiddish: Biography of a Language* (Oxford University Press), which tells the story of Yiddish and how it continues to play an important, vibrant, and

evolving role in Jewish life. Shandler received a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) award to serve as the 2021–2022 NEH Scholar-in-Residence at the Center for Jewish History in New York, where he will conduct original research for the project “Jewish Museums Lost and Found.”



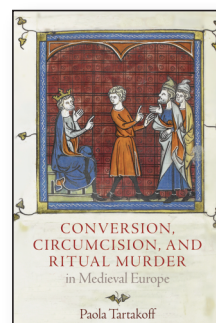
**Nancy Sinkoff**, professor of Jewish studies and history and academic director of the Bildner Center, published *From Left to Right: Lucy S. Dawidowicz, the New York Intellectuals, and the Politics of Jewish History* (Wayne State

University Press), the first comprehensive biography of Dawidowicz (1915–1990), a pioneer historian in the field now known as Holocaust studies. Winner of a 2020 National Jewish Book Award for biography, it was also named a Natan Notable Book by the Natan Fund and Jewish Book Council.



**Paola Tartakoff**, professor of Jewish studies and history, and department chair, published *Conversion, Circumcision, and Ritual Murder in*

*Medieval Europe* (University of Pennsylvania Press), which sheds new light on medieval anti-Judaism, religious conversion, and the predicaments of children whose religious identities Jews and Christians contested.



**Azzan Yadin-Israel** is a professor of Jewish studies and classics. The University of Chicago Press accepted his recent book manuscript for publication. The book analyzes medieval Bible commentary, art history, and historical linguistics to explore how the apple became the forbidden fruit.



**Orna Goldman**, language coordinator and Hebrew-language teaching instructor in the department, is also a translator and the managing editor of *Hebrew Higher Education*, a publication of the National Association of Professors of Hebrew.



## ► DONORS, 2020–2021

### We are grateful for the generosity of our donors

The Bildner Center is a vital part of Rutgers University, offering cultural and educational programs to the public at little or no cost. Yet most of the Center's programs are made possible through endowed gifts and private funding. Given the budgetary constraints of a state university, we increasingly face the need to guarantee the ongoing development of the Center and the Department of Jewish Studies for future generations.

Planned giving through endowment gifts and bequests are meaningful ways to have a lasting impact and to help secure the future of Jewish studies at Rutgers. Please help us maintain the high quality of our courses, educational programs, and communal outreach with your donation.

#### Leadership: \$25,000–\$49,999

- The Karma Foundation, led by Sharon M. Karmazin DC'67, SC&I'69, and Dina Elkins, for its ongoing commitment to the Rutgers Jewish Film Festival.

#### Builders: \$10,000–\$24,999

- The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation for its support of the Rutgers Jewish Film Festival.
- Andrew J. Melnick RC'63, RBS'70, for ongoing support of Israel studies at Rutgers.

#### Pacesetter: \$5,000–\$9,999

- Henry and Jacqueline Schram in support of Holocaust education.

#### Supporters: \$1,000–\$4,999

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- Tahlia DC'00 and Jordan Bliss
- Mitch RBSG'83 and Arlene DC'78 Frumkin
- Hana and Marcel Rozenzweig
- The Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation

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- Hillary GSED'03 and Gene Corburn
- Susan DC'64, SSW'66 and Steven M. Darien RC'63
- Bruce J. Dezube RC'77
- East Brunswick Jewish Center Men's Club
- Barbara and Gerald Essig
- Sharon M. Karmazin and David M. Greene
- Leonard Littman
- Lanny and Lee Livingston
- Theodore J. Stahl RC'53
- Marilyn Marolda Steiner DC'65

#### Support Jewish Studies at Rutgers!

For more information, contact Allison Klein at 848-932-6455, or visit our website, [BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu/donate](http://BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu/donate). All gifts are greatly appreciated.

## ► VISITING SCHOLARS, 2020–2021

### Visiting Scholars Make Outstanding Contributions at Rutgers



**Jerome and Lorraine Aresty**  
Visiting Fellow, Fall 2020

**Marc Herman**,  
Ph.D., Religious Studies,  
University of Pennsylvania

**Mini-Course: Writing the Oral Torah in Islamic Terms**

**Faculty Seminar: Rethinking Tradition in the Middle East: Islamic and Jewish Perspectives**

Respondent: **Paola Tartakoff**,  
Rutgers University



**Norman and Sybil Reitman**  
Visiting Professor, Spring 2021

**Gregg Drinkwater**, Ph.D.,  
History, University  
of Colorado Boulder

**Undergraduate Course: Love and Sex in American Judaism**

**Mini-Course: Jewish Countercultures: Remaking American Judaism, 1967–1990**

**Faculty Seminar: Larry Kramer's Holocaust: AIDS, Hannah Arendt, and the Moral Imperative of Political Action**

Respondent: **Gillian Frank**,  
University of Virginia



**Allen and Joan Bildner**  
Visiting Scholar, Spring 2021

**Jonathan Dekel-Chen**,  
Rabbi Edward Sandrow Chair  
in Soviet & East European  
Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**Mini-Course: Tevye's Descendants: A Short History of Soviet Jewry**

**Digital Exhibition: Jewish Agriculturalism in the Garden State**

**Faculty Seminars:**

- **Echoes of Violence and Their Deployment in Israel and the Diaspora**  
Respondent: **Natasha Zaretsky**, New York University and the Rutgers Center for the Study of Genocide and Human Rights
- **Putting Agricultural History to Work Today: A Global Blueprint from the Jewish Past** (Co-hosted by the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics, Rutgers University)



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**FREE!** Explore Jewish history and culture from your home.  
[BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu](http://BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu)

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for the Study of Jewish Life  
Rutgers University–New Brunswick  
12 College Avenue  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

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## Upcoming Programs

### Dance and Disability in Israel

**Gili Hammer**, Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
October 10

### Jewish Agriculturalism in the Garden State

**Jonathan Dekel-Chen**, Bildner Visiting Scholar  
October 21

### Rutgers Jewish Film Festival

November 7–21

### Mini-Course: Women and Yiddish Literature

**Anita Norich**, University of Michigan  
Nov. 29; Dec. 6, 13

### X-Troop: The Secret Jewish Commandos of World War II

**Leah Garrett**, Hunter College, CUNY  
December 9

**Sign up for E-NEWS updates  
on the Bildner Center website!**

## The Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life

### Department of Jewish Studies

**Visit us:** [BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu](http://BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu)  
[JewishStudies.Rutgers.edu](http://JewishStudies.Rutgers.edu)

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**Nancy Sinkoff**, Academic Director  
**Karen Small**, Managing Director  
**Jenny Gehrmann**, Senior Department Administrator  
**Sarah Portilla**, Program Coordinator  
**Darcy Maher**, Communications Coordinator

## ► BILDNER CENTER PROGRAMS



## Rutgers Jewish Film Festival

Since 2000, more than 250 films screened,  
more than 100,000 tickets sold

One of Rutgers' largest community events, the annual Rutgers Jewish Film Festival presents award-winning films that cover the important issues of our time and brings these stories to the wider public. Our first virtual festival, in November 2020, featured fourteen Israeli, American, and German films, including several New Jersey premieres, and in-depth talks about each film with filmmakers, scholars, and other guests.

- **Opening Night Film, *Aulcie*:** Q&A with Director **Dani Menkin** and basketball legend **Aulcie Perry**
- **Q&A with Filmmakers:** Oscar-winning German director **Caroline Link** (*When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* and *Nowhere in Africa*), award-winning Israeli filmmakers **Ruthy Pribar** (*Asia*), **Talya Lavie** (*Honeymoon*), and **Erez Tadmor** (*The Art of Waiting*), and many others participated in the festival.
- **Festival Sponsors Enjoyed Special Perks:** Access to all films and speakers; recognition on the festival website; opening night virtual cocktail reception with greetings from Rutgers' new president, Jonathan Holloway; exclusive meet-and-greet with *New York Times* film critic **A. O. Scott**

The Rutgers Jewish Film Festival is made possible by a generous grant from the **Karma Foundation** and the support of sponsors.