In these difficult times, the Bildner Center expresses its deep thanks to our public for making the twenty-fifth anniversary a resounding success. The partnership between the community and Rutgers University that has sustained the Center from its beginnings continues to make it a cornerstone of Jewish intellectual life and a crucial educational and cultural resource on campus and for the wider public. Community support made it possible to establish the Center, and it is the key to its future.

The Bildner Center’s yearlong festivities began with a special reception and public talk by award-winning journalist Gal Beckerman and then featured public lectures by renowned scholars Robert Alter, Nomi Stolzenberg, David Myers, and Rutgers’ own Azzan Yadin-Israel. The annual Jewish film festival offered premieres of innovative new films, many by Israeli directors. The Center hosted two visiting scholars who had a major impact on campus life and community outreach. The Herbert and Leonard Littman Families Holocaust Resource Center became a member of the Community of Holocaust Education Centers at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, enriching our professional development programs for teachers. We continued to support remarkable Jewish studies students with a wide range of awards and mentored a diverse group of student interns.

For more than twenty-five years, the Bildner Center has been Rutgers’ home for the academic study of Jewish life. Our diverse audiences—both on campus and in the broader community—look to us for intellectual, vibrant discussion about the complexities of Jewish history, culture, and experience at a time of rising antisemitism and ignorance. With both in-person and virtual programming, we hope that you will join the conversation.

➤ Celebration coverage on page 4

Rob and Elisa Bildner with Rutgers president Jonathan Holloway (center) at the 25th-anniversary kickoff event
Exploring the Diversity of Jewish History, Culture, and Experience

The Bildner Center connects the university with the community through its insightful public lectures, online mini-courses, annual Jewish film festival, and other cultural and educational events. A national resource for Holocaust education, the Center educates public school teachers on the history of the Holocaust and genocide. The Bildner Center enriches intellectual life on campus by bringing internationally renowned visiting scholars to Rutgers and providing student support through scholarships and internships. The ongoing activities of the Center are made possible by generous donations from community members and foundations. The Center enhances Rutgers’ mission of fostering academic excellence and creating a beloved university community by supporting engagement with Jewish ideas and culture.

PUBLIC PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS, FALL 2022–SPRING 2023

THE ART OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVE
The Raoul Wallenberg Annual Program, funded by Leon and Toby Cooperman
Robert Alter, University of California, Berkeley
Alter delivered a faculty seminar, “The Authentic Paganism of Saul Tchernikhovsky,” cosponsored by the Departments of Jewish Studies and Religion.

AMERICAN SHTETL: The Making of Kiryas Joel, a Hasidic Village in Upstate New York
Funded by the Sagner Family Foundation
Nomi M. Stolzenberg, University of Southern California
David N. Myers, University of California, Los Angeles
Cosponsor: The Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy

TEMPTATION TRANSFORMED: How the Forbidden Fruit Became an Apple
Azzan Yadin-Israel, Rutgers University
➤ Read more on page 6 about Yadin-Israel, Professor of Jewish Studies and Classics.

A JEWISH JOURNALIST’S VIEW OF THE WORLD
The Toby and Herbert Stolzer Annual Lecture
Gal Beckerman, Senior Editor for Books, The Atlantic
➤ See 25th-anniversary kickoff celebration on page 4.

RBG’S LIST OF BRAVE AND BRILLIANT JEWISH WOMEN
The Annual Abram Matlofsky Memorial Program, funded by the Karma Foundation
Nadine Epstein, Editor, Moment magazine
In conversation with Rebecca L. Walkowitz, Dean of Humanities, Rutgers University

FROM FEMME FATALE TO THE NEW JEWISH WOMAN: Gender, Nationalism, and Orientalism in the Art of E. M. Lilien (virtual)
The Ruth and Alvin Rockoff Annual Program
Lynne M. Swarts, University of Sydney
Highlights from the 2022 Rutgers Jewish Film Festival

18 International Films • 7 Filmmaker Discussions

Opening Night
Sponsors enjoyed a dinner reception at the Regal Cinema, North Brunswick, after a screening of Love and Mazel Tov and a talk by Markus Krah, executive director of the Leo Baeck Institute.

Filmmaker Talks
A rare cinematic treatment of antisemitism in 1960s Communist Poland.

Q&A with director Krzysztof Lang

Israelis, Jordanians, and Palestinians join forces to prevent the catastrophic loss of the Dead Sea.

Q&A with director Ido Glass

Cosponsor: NJ-Israel Commission

United States Premiere: How Saba Kept Singing
Winner of the Audience Choice Award for Best Documentary, How Saba Kept Singing explores the relationship between Holocaust survivor David “Saba” Wisnia and his grandson, musician Avi Wisnia, as they travel to Poland and Auschwitz.

Q&A and musical performance by Avi Wisnia

Free Screening for School Groups
Sponsored by Len Littman
A group of 240 middle and high school students attended a separate screening of How Saba Kept Singing at the AMC New Brunswick. Following the film, the students participated in a lively Q&A with Avi Wisnia, who focused on the responsibility of younger generations to remember and tell the stories of survivors.

The Rutgers Jewish Film Festival is made possible by a generous grant from the Karma Foundation.

JEWISH STUDIES AT RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY • 3
25th-Anniversary Kickoff Celebration

For twenty-five years, the Bildner Center has fostered a deeper understanding of the world, presenting programs related to Jewish history and contemporary Jewish life that resonate with current students, the wider community, and the next generation. The Center’s pioneering efforts in Holocaust education as well as its visionary cinema, compelling lectures, and support of academic excellence at Rutgers have had a major impact in New Jersey and beyond.

The yearlong celebration began September 18, 2022, at the Douglass Student Center with a reception for friends and donors to the Bildner Center. Rutgers president Jonathan Holloway and Rob Bildner, son of Allen and Joan Bildner, offered moving remarks about the Center’s important work. Gal Beckerman, an award-winning author and journalist, gave the keynote public talk, “A Jewish Journalist’s View of the World.” Senior editor for books at the Atlantic, Beckerman shared stories and insights from a rich career covering international news and arts and culture at both legendary Jewish institutions like the Forward and prominent secular ones like the New York Times.

Left: Guest speaker Gal Beckerman with Frankie and Mark Busch
Left: Susan and Steven Darien
Above: Nancy Sinkoff and Roy Tanzman
Above: Karen Small, Rob Bildner, Jonathan Holloway, Laura Baron, Sharon Karmazin, and Elisa Bildner

Bildner Center Visiting Scholars, Spring 2023

Norman and Syril Reitman Visiting Professor
Ezra Tzfadya (Ph.D., Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen-Nuremberg) taught an undergraduate course on modern Jewish history and delivered a faculty seminar, “Judaism in the Sectarian Muslim World: Conflict and Normalization Following the Abraham Accords.”

Jerome and Lorraine Aresty Visiting Scholar
Avraham Yoskovitch (Ph.D., University of Haifa) taught an online mini-course for the public, “A Stranger to My Brothers: Apostates in Ancient Judaism,” and delivered a faculty seminar, “Responses to Apostasy: A Comparative Examination of Syriac-Christian and Jewish Babylonian Attitudes in the Early Islamic Period.”
Support Jewish Studies at Rutgers!

Please consider an end-of-year donation to the Bildner Center, which makes the academic study of Jewish history, culture, and religious experience visible and integral components of Rutgers’ beloved community. Our public lectures, film festival, online courses, Holocaust education, and support for student academic excellence counter ignorance about Jewish life. Gifts of all sizes help to sustain the Center’s work as a vital educational and cultural resource and enable us to offer public programming at little or no cost.

We are grateful for the generosity of our donors.

Learn how you can make a meaningful impact!
Contact Whitney Prendergast at 848-932-6455 or whitneyp@sas.rutgers.edu, or visit our website, BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu/donate-now.

All gifts are greatly appreciated.

Many Thanks to Gene R. Hoffman

Gene Hoffman has spent much of his adult life engaged in a passionate exploration of Jewish civilization. His love of learning and commitment to making Jewish history and culture as widely accessible as possible led him to fund the development of the program Jewish Studies Online and a student internship at the Bildner Center.

Jewish Studies Online offers free non-credit mini-courses attended by more than 10,000 people from 47 nations. Taught by scholars from Rutgers and other universities, the asynchronous courses cover the wide world of Jewish history, spirituality, and experience, from “History of the Bible” to “Innovative Orthodoxies” to “Tevye’s Descendants: A Short History of Soviet Jewry.”

The student internship was established in 2019, and four students have held the position, working with the Rutgers Jewish Film Festival or the Herbert and Leonard Littman Families Holocaust Resource Center. The position offers both practical work experience and an opportunity to gain knowledge about Jewish life.

We greatly appreciate Gene’s generosity and his ongoing support of the Center and its programs.

Mai Chiaet, a sophomore in the SAS Honors Program with an interest in media studies, was the Gene Hoffman Student Intern for the Rutgers Jewish Film Festival.

“I learned so much about the intricacies of large-scale programming while also growing a passion for nonprofit and community organizing.”

From left: Bildner Center interns Mai Chiaet, Brooke Ramos, and Tiffany Hu
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 in Jewish studies or choose to minor in Jewish studies, Holocaust studies, the language and culture of ancient Israel, or modern Hebrew language. The department’s core faculty, complemented by eleven affiliated faculty from eight other departments, 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.

Updates from Core Faculty

Michal Raucher is associate professor of Jewish studies and the department’s undergraduate director. She is working on a book, “The New Rabbis,” about new forms of rabbinic authority among Orthodox Jewish women in the United States. Her new research on the experiences and attitudes of American Jews who have had abortions challenges the dominant discourse that religion is antithetical to abortion. Raucher also participated in a research incubator event for scholars of abortion, hosted by the University of California, San Francisco and the Scholars Strategy Network.

Gary A. Rendsburg is Distinguished Professor of Jewish Studies and History and holds the Blanche and Irving Laurie Chair in Jewish History. On sabbatical last year, he taught a course, “Egypt and the Bible,” at Bar-Ilan University and a mini-course, “How the Bible Reached Us,” at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. He also continued his research on medieval Hebrew manuscripts at both the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem and the Vatican Library in Vatican City.

Jeffrey Shandler is Distinguished Professor of Jewish Studies. He completed work on a book, Homes of the Past: A Lost Jewish Museum, to be published in 2024 by Indiana University Press. His book examines a pioneering effort in New York during the 1940s to create a museum that would memorialize the Jewish cultures of Eastern Europe destroyed during the Holocaust.

Nancy Sinkoff is professor of Jewish studies and history and academic director of the Bildner Center. She taught at the University of Paris 8, Vincennes–Saint-Denis; published a book review of Shaul Magid’s Meir Kahane: The Public Life and Political Thought of an American Jewish Radical; and presented a paper, “Into Africa: A Polish Jewish Yiddish Journalist’s Travels through Colonial Africa on the Eve of World War II,” at Warsaw’s POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. She also coedited the volume Polish Jewish Culture beyond the Capital: Centering the Periphery (Rutgers University Press).

Paola Tartakoff is professor of Jewish studies and history and department chair of Jewish studies. She gave talks about her new book project, on stories of miraculous religious conversions around the medieval Pyrenees, at UCLA, Tel Aviv University, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Israel Institute for Advanced Studies, and the annual conference of the Association for Jewish Studies. She also gave a variety of public-facing presentations on the deep history of antisemitism.

Azzan Yadin-Israel is professor of Jewish studies and classics. His latest book, Temptation Transformed: The Story of How the Forbidden Fruit Became an Apple, was published by University of Chicago Press and was the subject of invited talks at Rutgers, UCLA, Penn State, and Princeton (see Bildner Center public program on page 2). He also published an essay on the Mishnah in the Harvard Mishnah Conference volume and developed a new course on the Hebrew Bible, which he taught at Rutgers in the spring.
Celebrating Students in Jewish Studies

Students, faculty, family, and friends gathered on May 3, 2023, at the Marion and Norman Tanzman Hall of Jewish Learning for an end-of-year celebration hosted by the Bildner Center and the Department of Jewish Studies. The event honored graduating seniors, showcased student and faculty research, and recognized student award winners.

Awards for Academic Excellence, Research, and Study in Israel

Naamah Barbut ’24
Gertrude and Jacob Henoch Memorial Award

Spencer Brown ’23
Dr. Benjamin F. and Lillian Glasser Award

Ariel Chananashvili ’23
Baruch S. and Pearl W. Seidman Award

Reese Feldman ’25
Dr. Benjamin F. and Lillian Glasser Award

Yosef Fruhman ’25
Herbert and Jacqueline Klein Award

Samantha Gelberg ’25
Baruch S. and Pearl W. Seidman Award

Joseph Gindi ’26
Herbert and Jacqueline Klein Award

Yebon Kim ’24
Harold and Betty Perl Award

Samuel Lurie ’23
Betty and Julius Gillman Memorial Award

Brooke Ramos ’23
Rudolph and Mary Solomon Klein Award

Jeni Tache ’25
Alexander and Ruth Seaman Award

Reflections of Recent Graduates

“I am grateful to have spent an amazing year as Professor Gary Rendsburg’s research assistant. I edited articles, studied rare rabbinic treatises, and learned firsthand about Jewish studies academia. I also did my senior honors thesis through Jewish studies on the Rothschild Pentateuch, a medieval Hebrew Chumash manuscript. The generous award from the Jewish studies department and the Bildner Center enabled me to travel to Los Angeles to view the original manuscript at the Getty Museum.”

—Samuel Lurie, SAS Honors College; Majors: Jewish Studies and History

“My Holocaust studies minor allowed me to specialize in an area of Jewish studies that intersects with German, philosophy, comparative literature, cinema studies, and history. These are all fields that interest me immensely, but without Jewish studies, I would not have explored them. I also served as the Holocaust Resource Center Intern at the Bildner Center, organizing educational materials for teachers who attend the Center’s professional development programs.”

—Brooke Ramos
SAS Honors College; Majors: Jewish Studies & English; Minor: Holocaust Studies

Graduates

Noah Bergner
Ariel Chananashvili
Genaye Deal
Dena Feldman
Fanya Hoffman
Hyeon Woo Kim
Samuel Lurie

Bryan Pritsker
Nicholas Psomas
Haleigh Purich
Brooke Ramos
Elijah Sadiky
Sarah Safer
Jenna Unger

Students Nadav Warszawski and Samantha Gelberg showcase art of Kol Tzair, a Jewish art collective at Rutgers that they cofounded.
Fall 2023 Public Programs

**Zionism: An Emotional State**
Derek J. Penslar, Harvard University
September 20

**Antisemitism in the Heartland:**
Hubert Humphrey and the Fight for Civil Rights
Samuel G. Freedman, Columbia University
October 16

**Rutgers Jewish Film Festival**
October 26–November 12

Online Mini-Course
**Racial Passing: Efforts to Belong and Assimilate in the United States**
Donavan L. Ramon, Allen and Joan Bildner Visiting Scholar
November 29, December 6 and 13

**How the Nazis Stole My Grandmother’s Cookbook**
Karina Urbach, University of London
December 4 (Virtual)

Free Professional Development for Teachers

**Workshop, Spring 2023**
America & the Holocaust: How Nazi Policy Was Influenced by American Racial Laws
Presented in cooperation with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM)

- Purity, Eugenics, and Lethal Medicine
  Tom White, Keene State

- Navigating Online Resources of the USHMM
  Karen Levine, USHMM Teacher Fellow

- Overview of Revised N.J. Holocaust Curriculum
  Colleen Tambuscio, New Milford High School

**Three-Day Seminar, Summer 2023**
Holocaust in the Former Soviet Union: Focus on Ukraine

- Holocaust in the Soviet Union / Witness Testimony from Lviv
  Waitman Wade Beorn, Northumbria University, UK

- Overview of the Holocaust in Ukraine
  John-Paul Himka, University of Alberta, Edmonton

- Teaching Using Memoir: Clara Kramer
  Natalia Aleksiun, University of Florida, Gainesville

- How the Holocaust is Remembered in Ukraine
  Yurii Kaparulin, Kherson State University, Ukraine

- Unearthed: A discussion with Meryl Frank about her new memoir

- Nazification of Language to Justify War in Ukraine
  Jochen Hellbeck, Rutgers University

Programs meet N.J. mandate to teach about the Holocaust and genocide.

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