

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE JEWISH STUDIES PROGRAM

FROM THE DIRECTOR



Despite the unprecedented challenges wrought by the global pandemic last spring, the Jewish Studies program's students and faculty responded in innovative

ways. We offer news of our past year's courses, public programs, and student achievements. We also want to acknowledge the passing of our friend and sponsor **Yetta Chaiken** (May 13, 1922 – April 9, 2020), who generously ensured a place for Jewish Studies at UD by creating an endowment to support our work. As a member of the graduating class of 1939, Yetta was dedicated to the University of Delaware and the Jewish Studies Program throughout her life. Her passion for engaged citizenship and education will continue to inform the work of our Frank and Yetta Chaiken Center for Jewish Studies.

Our spring courses included a one-credit lecture series course in partnership with the School of Music: Jewish Studies 201, taught by **Dr. David Winkler**. Guest lecturers focused on the remarkable history of the World War II Jewish "ghetto" of Shanghai, China, an inspiration for the musical *Shanghai Sonatas* that had its world premiere at UD on February 15, 2020. Also during the spring semester, I teamed up with the Department of English's **Devon Miller-Duggan** to offer an interdisciplinary history and literature of the Holocaust (HIST254/JWST254), where we introduced poetry, film, art and other diverse representations of the genocide to the curriculum.

Our current and graduating students also made us proud. In February, **Noah Farnsworth**, an Honors student in Applied Music, presented a lecture on German-Jewish music in Enlightenment Europe for Dr. Zavadviker's course on Key Jewish Thinkers. Our two Klaff Award recipients (both outstanding graduates with the Jewish Studies Minor), went on to great new endeavors. **Patrick Hunter Graves** accepted a spot in an MA program in the history of global racism at the Free University

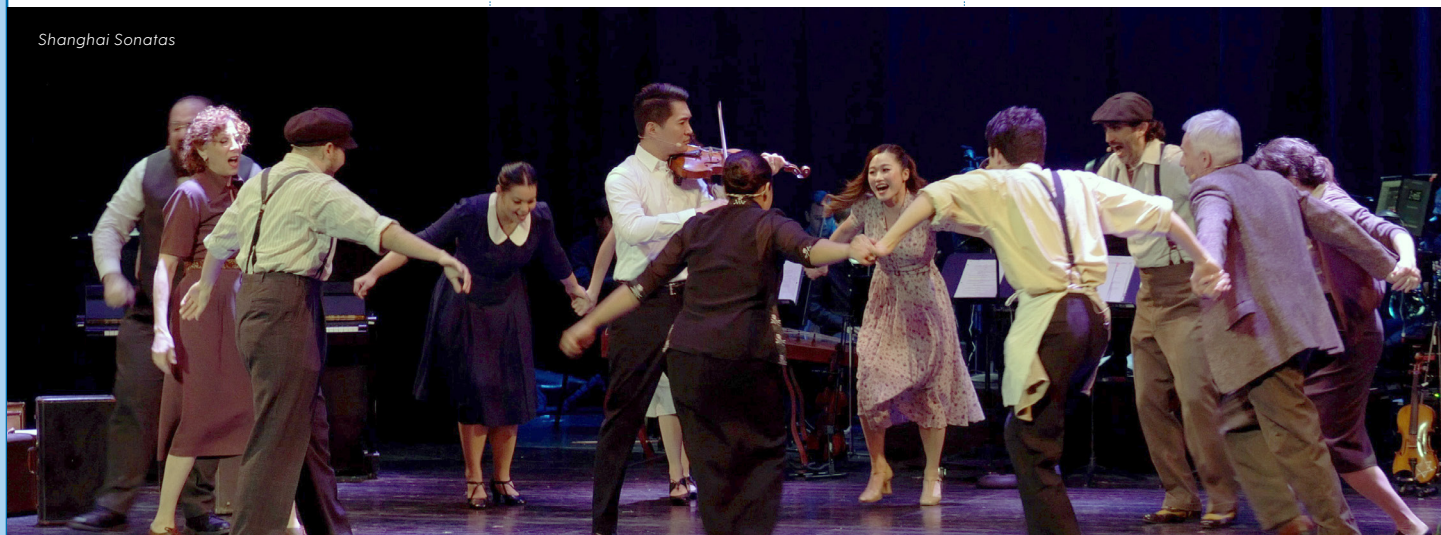
of Berlin; and **Rachel Milberg** plans to attend graduate school for child mental health counseling.

As for programs, we held one in-person lecture last February with **Shani Feinstein**, entitled "An Iranian Odyssey: A Jewish Family's History in the Fertile Crescent," for **Dr. Roger Horowitz's** Introduction to Jewish Culture and History (HIST/JWST146). In Fall 2020, three guest lectures spoke in Dr. Zavadviker's Holocaust course: **Dr. Allan Zaremski** about his parents' survival in the Warsaw Ghetto; the writer and poet **Alan Kaufman** read from letters written by his mother, Marie Jucht, about her experiences as a French Jew (original copies are in Special Collections); and clinical psychologist **Dr. Peter Sandor Gardos** about his grandparents and parents as Hungarian Jews.

Like everyone, we hope for promising changes and a return to in-person classes after spring 2021; whatever may come, though, we have a great line-up of courses and public programs in store for students and the community!

Polly Zavadviker
Director, Jewish Studies Program

Shanghai Sonatas



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: TARA SILBERG



Hi! My name is **Tara Silberg** and I am a recent honors graduate of the University of Delaware, majoring in Human Services and minoring in Jewish Studies. When I began

my studies back in 2017, I was lucky enough to take Dr. Zavadiivker's "Comparative Genocide" course. This course turned out to be my most fascinating study at the time (and to this day!), and I was immediately intrigued by the idea of taking on the Jewish Studies minor. Not long after, I also decided to become more involved in the Jewish Studies Program wherever I could. Alongside Hillel at UD, one of my favorite moments assisting the JSP was during the very successful Holocaust Education Week in spring 2018. Something about not only seeing the successful turnout that week, but also observing so many students not necessarily directly connected to the Holocaust at the events fascinated me, and even inspired my post-graduation plans.

Along with all of the assistance the JSP has provided me during my time at UD, in addition to learning, I received an email from Program Assistant Katie Capallo in October 2019 highlighting the "Israel Institute Honors Symposium" for January 2020. Although I was studying abroad in the Netherlands,

the description of attending a symposium through an "independent, nonpartisan, and non-advocacy 501(c)(3) organization that advances teaching, research, and discourse about modern Israel," immediately motivated me to apply and in turn be accepted for the event! After returning home from abroad and arriving in Tarrytown, New York for the symposium, I immediately felt welcomed and inspired by other attendees. There are a number of elements of the symposium that made it uniquely impactful. First, this event was not simply made up of the Jewish community, but instead attended by a diverse group, with a number of students from different countries and backgrounds. Second, throughout the symposium the attendees discussed what some might see as complicated matters relating to Israel in smaller groups, providing the ability for all of us to both hear and maturely debate each other's opinions in a professional manner. One night, we even played the roles of government leaders (throughout the Middle East) through a simulation of "decision making in turbulent times;" I had the chance to play the role of Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, and I will admit that with my fellow honors students playing their roles, it became pretty intense! Third, and lastly, throughout the symposium we had the opportunity to get to know each other beyond just the talks with speakers and discussion of our academic futures. I absolutely would say that getting to know students with passions also related to Israel but with such different backgrounds than myself not only had an

impact on me that week but has led to my keeping in touch with many of them to this day. I have attained a best friend, shown in the photo above, and I plan on visiting him wherever he is in the future. Overall, such a program not only provided me with a fun time to learn more about Israel, but it also opened my eyes to the possibilities that I face in my desire to spend time in Israel in the near future. These are potential conflict, therefore a need to speak with others, hear all sides of issues, and work matters out when possible in order to prevent violence and crimes against humanity in the Middle East. Seeing the sides of issues is often key when it comes to such topics.

My work as an undergraduate TA in the Holocaust Education course with Dr. Zavadiivker this year, professional experience in the Jewish nonprofit world in the past, and completion of my Jewish Studies minor have led me to narrow down where I want to be career-wise in the coming years. At this time, I am applying to the Master's program of Conflict Resolution and Mediation at Tel Aviv University and plan on applying to other Master's programs that focus on human rights in the coming months. Career-wise, I hope to educate younger generations in the future about our past of the Holocaust and other genocides that have occurred. Potentially I may even begin my own nonprofit to do just that. My favorite quote that I believe is extremely relevant is, "If not now, when? ". I truly plan on making a difference in this world one day.

FACULTY NEWS

Rebecca Davis (History) will have two books published in 2021. *Heterosexual Histories* (NYU Press, 2021), co-edited with Michele Mitchell, includes a chapter by Heather White about the history of the idea of heterosexuality and the idea of a "Judeo-Christian" tradition. *Public Confessions: The Religious Conversions that Changed American Politics* (UNC Press, 2021) includes a chapter about conversions to Judaism. In December 2020, she presented a talk, entitled "Sex in American Religious History," to the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. In April 2021, she will be speaking about her book *Public Confessions* at the virtual meeting of the Organization of American Historians.

Sarah Wasserman (English) has published a new book entitled *The Death of Things: Ephemera and the American Novel* (University of Minnesota Press, 2020). In November 2020, she presented on her book as part of The Association for the Study of the Arts of the Present's "Books in Conversation" series.

Polly Zavadiivker (History) has published two articles in 2020: "Jewish Fever: Myths and Realities in the History of Russia's Typhus Epidemic, 1914-22," in a special issue on epidemics and natural disasters in Jewish history, for the journal *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* n.s. 26:1 (Fall 2020): 101-112; and also co-authored with UD professor of nursing emerita Janice Selekmán an article for a textbook on

cultural competency in nursing, entitled "People of Jewish Heritage," in *Transcultural Health Care: A Population Approach: Cultural Competence in Nursing Care*, Fifth Edition, eds. Larry D. Purnell and Eric A. Fenkl (New York: Springer Publishing, 2020), 557-588. On November 14, 2020, she presented a talk on Vasily Grossman at the National Convention of the Association of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies. She is currently at work on a monograph entitled "A Nation of Refugees: World War I and the End of Russia's Jews."

DR. VIVIAN Z. KLAFF MEMORIAL AWARD WINNERS 2020



Hunter in front of the National Gallery in Berlin, Fall 2020

Hunter Graves, a native of Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, began his undergraduate career in Manhattan, studying acting at the Juilliard School. After two years, he decided that a life in the theater wasn't all he'd dreamed it would be and transferred to the University of Delaware as a Philosophy major. While pursuing his BA in Philosophy, Hunter enrolled in JWST254: the Jewish Holocaust 1933-1945. From that moment on, Hunter has been an avid student of Jewish studies. The tragedy of the Holocaust was not limited to the physical destruction of persons within the Jewish community, but also included the attempted destruction of a culture that spans millennia. In attempting to understand just what was lost under the Nazi Regime, Hunter was drawn into the rich heritage and traditions of Judaism. After a 2017 Trip to Germany and Poland, Hunter felt called to work toward preserving the legacy of Jews in the twentieth century. The mantra adopted by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Never Again" has since become the guiding force in his academic career. In 2019, he made the decision to return to the University of Delaware as a History major with a Jewish Studies minor.

In the summer of 2019 Hunter was selected as the Hellen Pattison Undergraduate Research Scholar and completed a research project titled *SS-Totenkopfverbände: Morality in the Midst of Genocide* under the guidance of Jewish Studies Program Director, Dr. Polly Zavadivker. In this project, he explored the social and cultural factors which allowed

the perpetrators of the Holocaust to turn on their fellow man. Following this research project, in the Fall of 2019, Hunter took a course offered by the Jewish Studies Program and taught by Dr. Zavadivker, Comparative Genocide. In it, Hunter was forced to reckon with the brutal reality that comparable atrocities were carried out before the Holocaust, have been carried out since, and continue across the Globe. This class led Hunter to begin to wonder whether his research into the Holocaust's perpetrators

could be applied to other perpetrator groups throughout History.

Hunter now resides in Berlin, Germany, where he is enrolled in a Joint Masters program in Global History offered by The Humboldt Universität zu Berlin and the Freie Universität Berlin. There, Hunter is continuing his pursuit to bring "Never Again" into reality. The program encourages students to find a regional focus and apply their findings on a global scale, giving him the opportunity to explore how research into the Holocaust can shed light on other acts of mass state-sanctioned violence throughout history and the world. It is his hope that his research will offer up markers and warning signs of atrocities yet to come, and hopefully make it possible for them to be stopped before they begin. Hunter's time as a student in the Jewish Studies program will forever influence his work. He hopes to educate others about the beautiful culture he has come to love which came so close to being lost, and to truly honor the memory of those who paid the greatest price for their heritage by working to ensure that the mantra "Never Again" fulfills its stated purpose.

My name is **Rachel Milberg**, and I am a 2020 graduate, majoring in English and Psychology with a minor in Jewish Studies. The University of Delaware has been such an incredible place for me and has provided me with endless opportunities for growth and success. I am forever grateful for my time here and for all the amazing professors and faculty that have taught me so many valuable things. While at the university, I worked in undergraduate research, I did a lot of theatre, I wrote a senior thesis, and I made the most beautiful friends along the way! As a Jewish Studies minor, I was able to take some incredible classes that taught me so much about Jewish history, literature and art. I interviewed faculty when I wrote stories for the on-campus newspaper about Jewish events or conversations. I was able to travel to Poland and Germany and conduct independent Holocaust historical research. This was my first time traveling to Europe, and Dr. Polly Zavadivker and the Jewish Studies Program helped me to connect to others overseas and to be prepared for the emotional weight of this journey. The Jewish Studies Program has always been available to give advice, and help me to discover different avenues to pursue my interests. My professors from this program have been real mentors for me, supporting and encouraging me every step of the way. Moving forward, I am planning on working in museum education as I apply for graduate school! I am looking forward to what is to come, but I will always be so proud of my experience here, and will miss the University of Delaware immensely! I can't thank everyone enough for providing me with an unforgettable college experience. Thank you! Since graduation, Rachel has been working, channeling her creative outlets by picking up new artistic hobbies and applying to graduate school programs for child mental health counseling.



Rachel on the steps of Memorial Hall, Spring 2020

IN MEMORY OF YETTA CHAIKEN (1922-2020)

The University of Delaware's Jewish Studies Program and its faculty are profoundly saddened to mourn the passing of **Yetta Chaiken**, of blessed memory. Yetta passed away peacefully on April 9 in Wilmington at the age of 97. Our university will always remain in her debt. In 1994, she and her husband Frank (1921-1995) generously endowed a permanent center for Jewish Studies, named in their honor. With foresight and beneficence, Yetta and Frank provided a foundation for Jewish Studies that has sustained its growth as an integral academic program at the university for over twenty-five years now.

Yetta's generosity was legendary. But she will not be remembered for that alone. She was one in a generation. She lived a century, and not only as a witness to American history but as an engaged witness—a maker of history. As a lifelong resident of Delaware she dedicated nearly eight decades of her life to promoting education, civil rights, historical preservation and community-building in this state. In words and deeds, she inspired and enabled hundreds of people—students, scholars, and many others—to preserve, teach and study the heritage of their own distinct communities.

Even a few snapshots on Yetta's rich life should inspire our awe and humility. The daughter of East European immigrants, she grew up in Wilmington as a first-generation American. At a time when most women did not go to college, her parents encouraged her to do so, even buying a used car so she could drive herself to Newark. She entered the University of Delaware in 1939, a time when the climate on campus was fraught

with tension for minority students, and Jews in particular. The university denied admission to African American students at the time; Yetta also recalled that some fraternities denied entry to Jews, while others practiced vicious and antisemitic hazing rituals.



In a search to belong, Yetta found an intellectual home in history classes, also earning her degree in that subject. In a course on the ancient world, she said, "my roots took hold," and she embarked on what remained a lifelong commitment to the study of Jewish history.

Throughout her life she engaged in promoting historical literacy of all kinds. She taught American History at Warner Junior High in Wilmington in the 1950s, and in true pioneer fashion, she created and taught the first middle school-level American women's history course in the state of Delaware. In 2018, when I told her we had offered the

first ever "Women in Judaism" course at UD, she was proud.

Yetta also conducted fifteen oral history interviews for the University of Delaware in the late 1970s. Among them is a 1977 interview with Pauline A. Young, an African-

American activist and author of the first comprehensive history of the black community in Delaware. Thanks to Yetta's effort and vision, the transcript and audio files of these historic treasures are preserved in Special Collections at Morris Library.

It has been my honor to know Yetta since joining the faculty in 2015. In every conversation with her that I can recall, she always mentioned two things: first, how excited she was to be talking about teaching and studying history; and second, that "getting old sucks." Yet even after her vision declined, she continued to regularly travel from Wilmington to attend Jewish studies classes and programs. Two months ago, in February, I saw her

at the premiere of the musical *Shanghai Sonatas*. As we sat together in the lobby of Mitchell Hall before the show, she said she had enjoyed a long and good life, and was grateful to see Jewish Studies thriving at the university. How can one respond to such a statement?

In her absence, her words sustain me and give me purpose. All of us who have benefited from her presence in the world can and must carry on the work to which she committed her life. That is her legacy. Through these times of uncertainty and transition, it can provide us with a roadmap, a north star, a moral compass.



Jewish Studies Program
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SPRING 2021 COURSES & EVENT

LITERATURE & CULTURE

ARTH/ENGL/JWST202: Biblical & Classical Literature

Instructor: Lawrence Nees nees@udel.edu
TR 2:00pm – 3:15pm

ENGL/JWST348: Contemporary Jewish-American Literature

Instructor: Sarah Wasserman swasser@udel.edu
TR 12:30pm – 1:45pm

THEA/JWST212: Jews and American Pop Culture

Instructor: Leslie Reidel lreidel@udel.edu
TR 9:30am – 10:45am

LLCU/JWST333: Israeli Film: Reflecting Dramatic Change

Instructor: Eynat Gutman eynat@udel.edu
TR 11:00am – 12:15pm

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

JWST101: What is Judaism?

Instructor: Nick Renner nrenner@udel.edu
TR 11:00am – 12:15pm.

PHIL/JWST302: Introduction to Jewish Mysticism

Instructor: Karl Hein hein@udel.edu
MW 3:35pm – 4:50pm

HISTORY & POLITICS

HIST/JWST250: Comparative Genocide

Instructor: Jenn Jensen jenjenns@udel.edu
TR 12:30pm – 1:45pm

HIST/JWST304: Jews and Food

Instructor: Roger Horowitz rh@udel.edu
MW 5:00pm – 6:15pm

HIST380/JWST381: History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Instructor: Rudi Matthee matthee@udel.edu
MWF 2:30pm – 3:20pm *Meets in-person on campus*

POSC/JWST482: America in the Middle East

Instructor: Daniel Green dgreen@udel.edu
MW 3:35pm – 4:50pm

HEBREW LANGUAGE

HEBR105: Hebrew I

Instructor: Eynat Gutman eynat@udel.edu
MW 1:25pm – 2:15pm, TR 2:00pm – 2:50pm

HEBR106: Hebrew II

Instructor: Eynat Gutman eynat@udel.edu
MW 2:30pm – 3:20pm, TR 3:30pm – 4:20pm

COMING UP ON MARCH 8TH: A LECTURE WITH NANCY SINKOFF OF RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

“Gender and the (Dis)Continuities of the European Jewish Enlightenment: Hannah Arendt, Lucy S. Dawidowicz, and the New York Intellectuals”

Online via Zoom

March 8, 2021

7:00 p.m.

RSVP udel.edu/007892