

**The Crown Family Center
for Jewish and Israel Studies**

Judd A. and Marjorie Weinberg
College of Arts and Sciences
Northwestern University
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About our logo

The icon in the middle of our center's logo is a Hebrew letter *nun* as it would appear in a Torah scroll. *Nun* is the equivalent of the English *n*, which is the first consonant in Northwestern. Specific rules govern the production of

a Torah scroll. Not only are the scrolls handwritten, but a specific calligraphy is employed in a scroll in Hebrew. Seven letters receive distinctive calligraphic flourishes—called *tagin* (literally, “crowns”) in Hebrew—above them. Though the crowns are decorative rather than semiotic, the Babylonian Talmud (Menahot 29b) claims that Rabbi Akiva, a legendary second-century sage, used to derive meaning from them. As a result of this legend, the crowns in the Torah have come to represent the seemingly boundless creativity of the Jewish interpretive tradition. Our logo captures features of the Crown Center's name and inspires us to think creatively about Jewish texts and Jewish lives.

Consider a gift to Jewish studies at Northwestern

Please help enhance our programming and support our students with a donation of any size. There are three ways to give:

- Go to www.giving.northwestern.edu/nu/wcas and select Jewish Studies Program from the Departments and Programs drop-down menu.
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THE CROWN FAMILY CENTER FOR JEWISH AND ISRAEL STUDIES

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THE CROWN FAMILY
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Barry Scott Wimpfheimer, *director*
Nancy Gelman, *program administrator*

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On the cover:
Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern,
Madonna without a Child, 2009

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From the Director



The Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies has both on-campus and off-campus faces. On campus, the center is home to an undergraduate program that includes one major and two minor curricula, as well as to a Graduate School cluster supporting graduate training across departmental boundaries. Faculty from a variety of specializations participate in these educational offerings. Off campus, the center produces an annual slate of

programs for the public and supplements our four endowed lectures with additional speakers and conferences.

Both faces reflect the mission of providing opportunities for people to engage with Jewish history, religion, literature, and culture. Unlike Jewish religious or social institutions, the Crown Center is not primarily engaged in identity formation. Our classes and public programs are open to people of all faiths and are designed to encourage rigorous and sophisticated conversations about Jewishness and Judaism. We aim to produce course offerings and public lectures that further critical thinking about the Bible, Israel, the Holocaust, Yiddish culture, and many other topics drawn from Jewish history. These courses and lectures stand apart from the kinds of textual discussions and religious reflections one might expect in a synagogue or Jewish communal setting.

The Jewish Studies Program at Northwestern was founded in 1984. In 2000 the Chicago-based Crown family endowed our enterprise as the Crown Family Center for Jewish Studies. This past year Lester and Renée Crown added to our endowment in order to rename us as the Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies. This is our first newsletter; we hope you enjoy it.

Barry Scott Wimpfheimer
Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Law
Director, Crown Family Center for Jewish and Israel Studies

Artist-historian Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern: Conveying the mythological idea of “always”

by Lisa Stein

As a boy growing up in Ukraine, Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, Crown Family Professor of Jewish Studies, was surrounded by well-known artists who nurtured his talent for drawing. By the age of 10, he was studying with a highly regarded painter, and he continued making art until he was 24.

Petrovsky-Shtern's father, Miron Petrovsky, was a noted philologist in Kiev with a wide circle of friends, many of them accomplished artists. Petrovsky-Shtern remembers learning from such painters as Boris Lekar, Mikhail Turovsky, and most important, the realist painter David Miretsky, who agreed to take the young boy on as a private student. Miretsky encouraged him to develop his talent for etchings, which he said suited the boy's dynamic, graphic style.

But the training with Miretsky was short-lived. In 1972, terrorists murdered 11 members of the Israeli Olympic team in Munich.

Miretsky went with a small group of Jewish mourners to commemorate the tragedy by placing flowers at Babi Yar, a ravine in Kiev that was the site of the largest massacre of Jews during World War II.

“They went there because there was nowhere else to go,” Petrovsky-Shtern explained. “They were arrested for hooliganism, just to scare them. After that event, the person to whom I was a disciple lost his job, packed up, and left. The only person I wanted to study with was no longer there.”

Miretsky left for New York, and Petrovsky-Shtern lost not only his teacher but also his model of how to be a successful Jewish artist in the Soviet Union. By 1979, most of his father's artist friends had also left for

Right: *Cossack, Buy a Horse!*, 2007
Below: *Exodus*, 2012



the United States, and Petrovsky-Shtern decided to pursue an academic career. He studied Spanish and earned a PhD in comparative literature from the University of Moscow, and eventually became a professor at Shevchenko Kiev National University. All the while, he also studied the works of Andrei Rublev, an iconic painter, and



Maria Prymachenko, a Ukrainian folk artist famous for her brightly colored painting of animals, nature, and village life. He drew from their works to create a large fresco that depicted Jesus Christ as a Cossack with a saber and Mary as a villager carrying a bucket.

“I was trying to invent an artistic language: how can I convey a religious message in Ukrainian folk art, which is never used to convey these messages? Then I stopped.”

Petrovsky-Shtern married, started a family, and decided in 1993 to pursue his interest

in Jewish studies. He relocated his family to the United States to study and teach at Hebrew College, Tufts University, and Harvard University, among other places.

It wasn't until he experienced a personal crisis in 2007 that he started painting again. After two publishers reneged on their promises to publish two separate books he had written, he became despondent (the books were published soon after by different companies). His wife, Oxana Hana, took him by the hand and brought him to an art supply store. "She says, 'Here's \$200, get yourself canvases, buy some paints.'"

At first he painted animals—bold, fantastic images of a violet wolf in a landscape, then a green elephant surrounded by villagers—that seemed to come straight from his unconscious. He incorporated Hebrew letters into the scenes, which he has continued to emphasize in his works, and then began painting typically Ukrainian scenes populated by Cossacks, clowns, and circus tamers.



Above: *Pogrom in a Shtetl*, 2007
 Top right: *Self-Portrait*, 2009
 Bottom right: *Elephant in Berdychiv*, 2007

In doing so, he combined the influences of Ukrainian folk painting and Jewish traditions to create a unique, startling, and rich visual vocabulary.

Recently Petrovsky-Shtern has turned to painting Biblical scenes, which were on view with some of his other works in the solo exhibition *Tales, Myths, and Nightmares* in December 2012 at the Spertus Institute in Chicago. These paintings portray people who appear to have stepped out of the shtetl in dark, wrenching scenes. In *Exodus*, a family in a paper boat, on which is written Hebrew text telling the story of Exodus, floats on a red, roiling sea; despite the tenderness the figures show each other,



disaster is clearly imminent. *Babylonian Tower* depicts an equally ill-fated structure, inscribed with Sumerian text, from which people fall to their deaths.

When asked how his artwork relates to his academic research, Petrovsky-Shtern responds by highlighting the gap between the work he does as an artist, which participates in ethnic mythologizing, and the work he does as a critical scholar: "I put on canvas what I cannot and do not want to say out loud in a classroom or put on paper. For example, some of my paintings convey the mythological idea of 'always'—this is what always happens to the Jewish people. That is to say, there are paradigms in history that repeat themselves, such as the events of 70 CE, 1492, 1648, or 1942, that all show the highest level of anti-Jewish persecution and destruction of Jewish life." This participation in Jewish myth-making is particularly ironic given Petrovsky-Shtern's vocational life as an accomplished critical scholar: "On the contrary, in my research I am working against this idea, debunking myths and showing how different are the events that the national memory claims similar."

Adapted from Crosscurrents, fall/winter 2012–13, by permission of the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, Northwestern University.



Meet our faculty

Mira Balberg, a scholar of ancient Judaism, focuses on classical rabbinic texts. Her book *Purity, Body, and Self in Early Rabbinic Literature* was published by the University of California Press earlier this year.

Danny M. Cohen is a learning scientist in Northwestern's School of Education and Social Policy, specializing in social constructions of Holocaust memory and victimhood and in the design of Holocaust education. A member of the Illinois Holocaust and Genocide Commission and the editorial advisory board of the journal *The Holocaust in History and Memory*, Cohen also writes human rights fiction for young adults. He has been a faculty fellow of the Auschwitz Jewish Center.

Yakir Englander, postdoctoral fellow in Israel studies and visiting assistant professor of religious studies, is a specialist in modern Jewish philosophy, with a focus on gender issues. His book *Body and Sexuality in the New Religious Zionist Discourse* (coauthored with Avi Sagi) was published in 2013 by Hartman Institute Press.

Peter Fenves, Joan and Sarepta Harrison Professor of Literature, specializes in European literature and philosophy, especially of the late 18th and early 20th centuries. His most recent book, *The Messianic Reduction*, analyzes the early writings of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem from the perspective of their shared interest in phenomenology, neo-Kantianism, mathematics, and certain tendencies in Jewish thought.

Marcia Gealy's research interests include the use of the Jewish mystical tradition in the writings of Bernard Malamud and the storytelling tradition in modern and American Jewish literature, and she has published articles in both fields. She has been recognized as a Charles Deering McCormick Distinguished Lecturer for excellence in teaching and has been named repeatedly to the Associated Student Government's faculty honor roll.

Rachel Gordan is a postdoctoral fellow in religious studies and Jewish studies. Gordan received her BA from Yale and recently completed her PhD in religion at Harvard, where she wrote a dissertation titled "Post-World War II American Judaism: How Judaism Became an American Religion."

Edna Grad is a foreign language education specialist. She speaks four modern languages and has had training in Latin and classical Greek. Among her publications are two Hebrew-teaching packages (books, workbooks, and audio-exercise recordings) for beginning and intermediate-level college students.

Peter Hayes is a historian specializing in the Holocaust. His latest work, *How Could This Happen? A Reader on the Holocaust*, will be published by the University of Nebraska Press later this year.

Lucille Kerr's interests include 20th-century Latin American literature, Boom and post-Boom literary culture, and Latin American Jewish literature and history. She is the author of *Suspended Fictions: Reading Novels by Manuel Puig* and *Reclaiming the Author: Figures and Fictions from Spanish America*, coeditor of *Teaching the Latin American Boom* (forthcoming), and author/project director of the Latin American Literature and Film Archive.

Jacob Lassner, Philip M. and Ethel Klutznick Professor Emeritus in the Departments of History and Religious Studies, is the author or coauthor of 11 volumes. He is writing a book on the origins of Islamic Jerusalem.

Phyllis Lassner teaches and researches Holocaust representations in literature and film as well as British spy fiction and film. Her current research focuses on how mid-20th-century British spy thrillers resist political oppression by combining propaganda and popular entertainment. Her recent publications in both fields include the book *Anglo-Jewish Women Writing the Holocaust* and several essays.

Tamar Merin, postdoctoral fellow in Israel studies and visiting assistant professor of English, specializes in Hebrew and Israeli literature, with a focus on Israeli women's prose and its dialogic relations with the canon of Hebrew literature. She has completed the English manuscript of her book "Spoiling the Stories: Intersexual Dialogue and the Rise of Israeli Women's Prose."

Marcus Moseley specializes in modern Hebrew and Yiddish literature with a strong comparative perspective. He is the author of the first comprehensive history of Jewish autobiography, *Being for Myself Alone: Origins of Jewish Autobiography* (Stanford University Press, 2006).

Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern is a scholar of early modern and modern Jewish history with a focus on multidisciplinary social and cultural history. He has published five books, most recently *The Golden Age Shtetl* (2014), and is working with a colleague on a documentary history of Jews in the early modern world (1450–1750).

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Elie Rekhess is a historian of the contemporary Middle East, specializing in Palestinian politics, Islamic resurgence, and the Arab minority in Israel. A senior research fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Tel Aviv University, he is currently Northwestern's Visiting Crown Chair in Middle East Studies and cochair of its Middle East Forum. He has authored and edited more than 13 books, including *Muslim Minorities in Non-Muslim Majority States* (2013).

Kenneth Seeskin is Philip M. and Ethel Klutznick Professor of Jewish Civilization and chair of the religious studies department. His work centers on the rationalist tradition in Jewish philosophy. He has written several books on Maimonides and articles on Spinoza.

David Shyovitz is an assistant professor of history specializing in medieval and early modern European and Jewish history. His recent articles include "Beauty and the Bestiary: Animals, Wonder, and Polemic in Medieval Ashkenaz" and "Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Werewolf Renaissance."

Claire E. Sufrin earned her PhD in religious studies at Stanford University and focuses on modern Jewish thought in American, European, and Israeli contexts. Her first book manuscript, "Hermeneutics and History: Martin Buber and the Bible," is nearing completion; an article drawn from the book was published in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* last year.

Anita Turtletaub has taught Yiddish at Northwestern since 2008. Her book of original words and music, *Yiddish Songs for Children*, came out in 2012.

Barry Scott Wimpfheimer specializes in the Talmud and Jewish law. His monograph *Narrating the Law: A Poetics of Talmudic Legal Stories* was published as part of the Divinations Series of the University of Pennsylvania Press.

Laurie Zoloth is a Jewish ethics scholar whose research includes bioethics, justice theory, and the ethics of emerging research. As president of the American Academy of Religion, she is leading inquiry into the obligations of scholars in the face of severe climate change. Her most recent book (coedited with Elliott Dorff) is on Jews and the emerging ethical issues in genetics, genomics, and stem cell research. It will be published this year by the Jewish Publication Society.

Faculty Awards

Five named to teaching honor roll

Five Jewish studies faculty were named to the Associated Student Government's 2012–13 Faculty Honor Roll: Mira Balberg, religious studies; Danny Cohen, School of Education and Social Policy; Marcia Gealy, comparative literary studies and the Writing Program; Elie Rekhess, history; and Ken Seeskin, philosophy and religious studies. Honorees are chosen annually by Northwestern students.

Lassner awarded Rosenthal Prize

Jacob Lassner, Philip M. and Ethel Klutznick Professor Emeritus of history and religious studies, has received the American Oriental Society's second Franz Rosenthal Prize in Islamics and Semitics. The prize is awarded to scholars whose accomplishments come closest in scope to those of Rosenthal himself. Rosenthal (1914–2003), a legendary scholar at Yale, pioneered investigations into Aramaic language, Islamic civilization, and Arabic literature.

The prize is especially meaningful to Lassner because Rosenthal was his mentor and is still a presence in his life. "You're always left with that person perched on your shoulder. [I] want to do things right and not disappoint him," Lassner notes.

Lassner established a footing as a distinguished scholar of the Abbasid period early in his career, publishing his first book, *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages: Texts and Studies*, in 1970. His next monograph, *Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory: An Inquiry into the Art of Abbasid Apologetics* (1986), cemented his reputation as one of the foremost interpreters of the events and people behind the Abbasid revolution. He then expanded his research into Jewish and Muslim exegetical and folkloric interpretations of King Solomon's interactions with the Queen of Sheba in his book *Demonizing the Queen of Sheba: Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam* (1993). In his more recent works, *The Middle East Remembered: Forged Identities, Competing Narratives, Contested Spaces* (2000); *Jews and Muslims in the Arab World: Haunted by Pasts Real and Imagined* (2007; coauthored with S. Ilan Troen); and *Jews, Christians, and the Abode of Islam: Modern Scholarship, Medieval Realities* (2012), Lassner has continued to demonstrate the contemporary relevance of subjects often dismissed as antiquated. He offers his readers insight into the deep structures of history that shape contemporary attitudes and modern political challenges in ways still underappreciated.

2012–13 Events

Allan and Norma Harris Memorial Lecture in Jewish Studies

Michael Berkowitz, a modern Jewish historian at University College, London, presented the Allan and Norma Harris Memorial Lecture in Jewish Studies in October 2012. Berkowitz's talk, "A Requiem for Kodachrome: Jewish (Film) History in 'Nice Bright Colors,'" drew attention to the hitherto unnoticed Jewish ethnicity and musical celebrity of Leopold Mannes and Leopold Godowsky, who invented Kodachrome film in the 1930s.

Ultra-Orthodoxy symposium

Novelist Anouk Markovits (*I Am Forbidden*) gave the keynote public address at the October 2012 workshop "Beyond Survival: American Ultra-Orthodoxy as Religion." The two-day symposium featured Maya Balakirsky Katz (Touro), Shaul Magid (Indiana), Riv-Ellen Prell (Minnesota), Elyahu Stern (Yale), and Northwestern's own Robert Orsi (religious studies) and Yakir Englander (religious studies). It was convened by Barry Wimpfheimer (religious studies) and Rachel Gordan (religious studies).

Aleppo Codex author talk

Matti Friedman spoke at Northwestern in fall 2012 about his book *The Aleppo Codex*, winner of the Sami Rohr Prize. *The Aleppo Codex* is a nonfiction account of Friedman's investigation into the history of one of the world's most precious manuscripts. This acclaimed monograph is an important early textual witness of the Bible and its Masoretic vocalization.

Renée and Lester Crown Speaker Series

Nathan Englander, award-winning author of the short-story collections *For the Relief of Unbearable Urges* and *What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank*, was the inaugural Renée and Lester Crown Lecturer in November 2012. Before the public lecture, titled "The Ownership of Identity or How I Came to Write My New Book," Englander met with a group of Jewish studies students and encouraged them to produce their own literature.

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Michael Berkowitz

Association for Jewish Studies conference

“A Conversation with Joseph Cedar,” featuring the Israeli filmmaker talking about his award-winning film *Footnote*, was sponsored by the Crown Center at the Association for Jewish Studies conference in Chicago in December 2012. Cedar was interviewed by Barry Wimpfheimer, director of the Crown Center. *Footnote* portrays the troubled relationship between a father and a son who are both professors in the Department of Talmud at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. It won the Best Screenplay Award at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival, garnered nine prizes at the 2011 Ophir Awards, and was nominated for a Best Foreign Film Oscar in 2012.

Manfred H. Vogel Memorial Lecture in Judaic Studies

Barbara Mann, associate professor of Jewish literature and Simon H. Fabian Chair in Hebrew Literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary, delivered the Manfred H. Vogel Memorial Lecture in April 2013. She spoke on “Makom: The Place of Space in Jewish Cultures.” The annual lecture honors the late Northwestern professor of religious studies, who studied and taught in the fields of modern Jewish thought, the philosophy of religion, and Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Philip M. and Ethel Klutznick Lecture in Jewish Civilization

Arthur Green, professor of Jewish philosophy and religion at Hebrew College, delivered the annual Philip M. and Ethel Klutznick Lecture in Jewish Civilization in May 2013. “Hasidism in the Modern Jewish Imagination” mapped out the ways in which Hasidism has been employed within Jewish thought outside the enclaves of the Hasidic world. It was cosponsored by the Crown Center and the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago.

1 Barbara Mann **2** Anouk Markovits **3** Yakir Englander **4** The Renée and Lester Crown Speaker Series **5** Riv-Ellen Prell **6** Ken Seeskin **7** Robert Orsi at “Beyond Survival: American Ultra-Orthodoxy as Religion” **8** Arthur Green **9** Matti Friedman **10** From left: Lester Crown, Renée Crown, author Nathan Englander, Steve Crown **11** Nathan Englander meeting with students **12** From left: Jerry Pearlman, Barbara Pearlman, Jane Perkins, and Don Perkins at the Nathan Englander event

Other lectures

October 2012

Miryam Segal (Queens-CUNY), “Hebrew Dialects and the Formation of National Identity”

November 2012

Omri Asscher (Tel Aviv), “Ideological Mediation of Hebrew Literature in the US: 1970s versus 2000s”

Kathryn Imray (Murdoch), “Posthumous Interest in Biblical Homicide Law”

April 2013

Holger Zellentin (Nottingham), “Constantine’s Apotheosis: Rabbinic Legislation on the Late Roman Imperial Cult”



Undergraduate Education

Jewish studies courses, 2012–13

Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences

COMPARATIVE LITERARY STUDIES

- Modern Hebrew Literature in Translation: The European Period, *Marcus Moseley*
- Modern Jewish Literature in Translation, *Marcia Gealy*
- A Tale of Love and Darkness, *Marcus Moseley and Tamar Merin*

ENGLISH

- Writing about Children and the Holocaust, *Phyllis Lassner*

GENDER STUDIES

- Gender, Race, and the Holocaust, *Phyllis Lassner*

GERMAN

- Image of the Shtetl in Yiddish Literature, *Marcus Moseley*
- Imagining Modern Jewish Culture in Yiddish and German, *Marcus Moseley*
- Jews and Germans: An Inter-cultural History, *Claire Sufrin*
- Yiddish for Reading/Translation, *Anita Turtleaub*

HEBREW LANGUAGE

- Hebrew 1, *Edna Grad*
- Hebrew 2, *Edna Grad*
- Topics in Hebrew Literature, *Edna Grad*

HISTORY

- Arabs in a Jewish State: The Arab Minority in Israel, *Elie Rekhess*
- Daily Life in Early Modern Europe: Christian and Jewish Experience, *Dean Bell*
- Historical Background to the Establishment of Israel: 1920s–40s, *Elie Rekhess*

- History of the Holocaust, *Peter Hayes*
- Jewish History, 750–1492, *David Shyovitz*
- Jews and Muslims in the Islamic Middle Ages, *Jacob Lassner*
- Jews in East Europe, 1250–1917, *Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern*
- Nascent State of Israel, *Elie Rekhess*

JEWISH STUDIES

- Job's Tears: Jewish Responses to Suffering from the Bible to *Maus*, *Marcus Moseley*
- Modern Jewish Literature in Translation, *Marcia Gealy*
- Representing the Holocaust in Literature and Film, *Phyllis Lassner*
- Rise of Israeli Women's Prose Fiction, *Tamar Merin*
- Storytelling in American Jewish Literature, *Marcia Gealy*

POLITICAL SCIENCE

- Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, *Wendy Pearlman*

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

- From Diaspora to Zionist Body: Images of the Jewish Body in the 20th Century, *Yakir Englander*
- Gender Theory and Jewish Life, *Yakir Englander*
- Introduction to Judaism, *Barry Wimpfheimer*
- Introduction to the Hebrew Bible, *Mira Balberg*
- Jews and Sports, *Rachel Gordan*
- Judaism in the Modern World: Religion and Literature, *Claire Sufrin*
- Judaism in the Modern World: The Jewish Encounter with America, *Rachel Gordan*
- Law as Literature: Jewish Law, *Barry Wimpfheimer*
- Modern Jewish Thought, *Claire Sufrin*
- Varieties of Ancient Judaism: Rewriting the Bible, *Mira Balberg*



SPANISH

- Topics in Latin American and Iberian Culture: Jewish Argentina, *Lucille Kerr*

YIDDISH

- First-Year Yiddish, *Anita Turtleaub*
- Intermediate Yiddish, *Anita Turtleaub*

School of Education and Social Policy

- The Holocaust and Education: The 21st Century, *Danny Cohen*

Cosponsorships, 2012–13

The Crown Center supported student groups on campus through cosponsorship of their events.

January 2013
Second annual Mega-Shabbat

February 2013
Bear Bergman's *Machatunim*

April 2013
Northwestern's 11th annual Black-Jewish Freedom Seder

Jewish studies student awarded Kriegbaum Scholarship

Natalie Bergner (pictured above) received the 2012–13 Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences Katherine L. Kriegbaum Scholarship to support summer research for her undergraduate thesis. Bergner is combining textual analysis with ethnography in her thesis on the Jewish liturgical blessing that thanks God for “not making me a woman.” She is examining both the history of this phrase's composition and the way it poses a specific challenge for contemporary Orthodox Jews who struggle with its meaning.

Jewish studies minors who graduated in 2013

Emily Acker
Kate Cavanaugh (Hebrew studies)
Tamar Kane
Sabrina Kestenbaum
Hazel Levine
Candace Mittel

Graduate Education

Jewish studies cluster

The Graduate School's cluster initiative, which aims to support graduate training across departmental boundaries, has included an official Jewish studies cluster since fall 2012. The cluster ensures that

graduate students in different departments who work on Jewish studies topics are supported with courses, funding, and symposium opportunities and a cohort of fellow students. The initiative prepares graduate students to be active in the international Jewish studies field after receiving their doctorates.

Postdoctoral fellows in Israel studies

The Postdoctoral Fellowship Program, a partnership between Northwestern and Tel Aviv Universities, welcomes two scholars to the Evanston campus every year. The program seeks to advance the teaching of Israel studies at Northwestern University and provide opportunities to enhance the fellows' scholarship.

During the 2012–13 academic year, Northwestern had both Yakir Englander and Tamar Merin on faculty. Englander taught two religious studies courses: From Diaspora to Zionist Body: Images of the Jewish Body in the 20th Century and Gender Theory and Jewish Life. In addition to his charismatic instruction in the classroom, Englander interacted weekly with both students and faculty at such events and discussions as Hebrew Table, submitted two journal articles for publication, and presented papers and delivered lectures at several universities.

Tamar Merin was in her second year as a postdoc in 2012–13. Merin taught The Rise of Israeli Women's Prose in the Jewish studies program and co-taught Tale of Love and Darkness: Eros and Isolation in Modern Hebrew Literature with Marcus Moseley in the Comparative Literary Studies Program. While at Northwestern, Merin has presented academic papers and completed the English manuscript of her monograph “Spoiling the Stories: Intersexual Dialogue and the Rise of Israeli Women's Prose.”

Gift for Israel studies

In fall 2012 Reneé and Lester Crown made a gift to our center to support Israel studies at Northwestern. A new and growing field in the United States, Israel studies allows for the possibility of conversing about Israel without devolving into political advocacy.

The Jewish Studies Program has long offered courses about Israel and for several years has housed two post-docs in Israel studies as part of a venture with the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. The new gift will eventually result in two tenure-line faculty appointments in the study of Israel and will provide for Israel studies programming for both students, in the form of research opportunities, and the public.

2013–14 Crown Graduate Fellowship

The 2013–14 Crown Fellowship has been awarded to Yannay Spitzer, an economic historian who addresses through an economic perspective the impact of pogroms around the turn of the 20th century on North American Jewish immigration. The Crown Family Center for Jewish Studies annually awards the fellowship to a Northwestern graduate student or group of students whose work bears on an aspect of Jewish history, culture, or religion. Spitzer's fields of study include applied economics, industrial organizations, labor economics, Jewish history, history of ideas, and history of economic thought.