

# Haverim

A Newsletter for the Friends of the Northeastern University Jewish Studies Program

**LORI LEFKOVITZ**

## ON PIVOTING



Dear Haverim (Friends),  
Our captivating Ruderman scholar last September, Michael Pollan, who spoke with me to an overflow audience about psychedelics and spirituality, might have prepared us for the unanticipated surreal existence in which we now find ourselves. The fall semester described in these pages—which now seems like life on a remembered home planet—had been rich with inspiring and important events and programs. The Jewish Student Union was meeting often in our lounge space, and we enjoyed our annual study

the trope of the familiar face in second and third-generation Holocaust memoirs.

Students of Holocaust literature should know—but how can we really know such a thing?—the impossible truth that history turns on a dime. Now the word was “pandemic,” and after brief confusion, in what seemed like an instant, we were told to go home, develop strategies to teach remotely, postpone or reimagine events. Trauma Studies teaches that a consequence of trauma is a loss of trust in your own capacity to interpret the world; not only is the ground shaking, but you are no longer sure that the laws of physics apply.

The verb that came with COVID 19 was “pivot.” I teach literary analysis. Meaning, I tell students, depends on context. With pivoting, contexts changed, and self-confidence faltered. The focus of my writing shifted. Professor Rabinovitch put together a blog—to which I hope you will subscribe—for our Jewish Studies community to stay connected in our new reality. Between Purim and Passover, I wrote about anticipatory time as women’s time, the season between Esther’s heroic story of thwarting a totalizing genocidal decree and the Passover’s story of a quiet conspiracy among midwives, slave women, and an

*(continued on page 2)*

REFLECTING ON HOW OUR TEAM CONFRONTED THE CHALLENGES OF REDIRECTION PUTS ME IN A PLACE OF DEEP GRATITUDE ...

retreat at Camp Ramah in the Poconos. We were in the middle of everything: planning (under the new, skilled leadership of Professor Simon Rabinovitch) our annual set of speakers and events for Holocaust and Genocide Awareness week scheduled for late March; I was teaching my course on Modern and Contemporary Jewish Literature; and I was looking forward to summer to return to a writing project on concepts of time and

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Egyptian princess, caregivers saving the life of a single baby at great personal risk. In parallel secular and Jewish worlds, everyone was cleaning with a vengeance and reflecting on plagues—mythic and immediate—the earth apparently rebelling against humanity’s onslaught against nature; after being too much in motion, careless of our custodianship of the ecosystem, we halted. Professor Laurel Leff wrote about a new appreciation for Shabbat, Sabbath rest.

Months into physical distancing, people joked that they didn’t know the day... or how many days had elapsed. I wrote about being in the Omer, the deliberate accounting for each day between Passover and Shavuot, counting as a spiritual practice, using a grain measure as a commitment to confront food insecurity, and counting towards the receiving of law, taking personal responsibility for social order. I taught the Book of Ruth to several community groups before Shavuot as a story about moving on after tragedy, the resilience of women who have each other’s backs, the promise of a baby whose genetic future includes King David and the Messianic line, a baby born to people who had every reason to feel hopeless but whose perseverance, unbeknownst to them, carried infinite promise for everyone.

Pivot. Empty streets exploded with protestors, brokenhearted and enraged by murderous racial injustice, awoken to another lesson of the Holocaust, that unchecked brazen authority has long been capable of persecuting the innocent, shooting someone in her own home or killing without provocation in open streets, that being a bystander is complicity. With this consciousness, faculty are revisiting syllabi and curricula. Simon’s new digital course on Ethnic Boston, which will highlight the

history of Jewish Boston, will help students think about Jews and race relations in our city.

I hope that our Jewish Studies students benefit from understanding Judaism as an ancient, time-honored meaning system that runs along a parallel track to contemporary popular culture, that Judaism is a way to organize life that can inform our understanding and ability to cope with emerging experience. One Hebrew translation for “pivot” might be “teshuvah,” a word usually translated as “repentance” but that more literally suggests “turning.” Now, approaching the Jewish New Year, we might reflect on our recent, urgent efforts to pivot for the insights they offer on the turning that is embedded in the word “teshuvah.” When one pivots, however slightly, and continues to walk straight, you end up far from where you would have been had you not turned. Maybe the pause of COVID 19—and the pivot—helped create what we hope will be the inflection point on tolerance for racism and racial injustice.

Reflecting on how our team confronted the challenges of redirection puts me in a place of deep gratitude, which in this context, I most want to express to the Northeastern University College of Social Science and Humanities, our Jewish Studies students, and our faculty, who always come through, to Simon Rabinovitch, whose activism as the newest member of our core faculty has already been transformative, to our donors, and to Deborah Levisohn Stanhill, our administrator, who does the work of implementation that transforms our visions into reality.

Be safe. Look out for announcements of our upcoming events. And please, stay in touch. I look forward to hearing from you.

## THE JEWISH STUDIES BLOG

To keep the Northeastern Jewish Studies community connected, we decided to bring some of our academic and public engagement into people’s homes via a new blog. You will find postings on everything from our students’ research, to reactions to our current state of affairs (both life during a pandemic and creating a more just society), to topics of cultural interest such as Sephardic music or summers in the Catskills.

We encourage students, faculty, and anyone interested to submit proposals for posts (including texts, images, video, and sound) on any topic in Jewish studies. Please contact Simon Rabinovitch for more information or to submit an entry, and please be sure to visit ([nujewishstudiesblog.org](http://nujewishstudiesblog.org)) and subscribe!

We look forward to seeing everyone at our live events when circumstances permit!



Summer Vacation in the Catskills via the Catskills Institute Website

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## Professor Amir Grinstein brings Israeli entrepreneurship to Northeastern

BY JESSIE SIGLER

*Jessie Sigler '20, describes Professor Amir Grinstein's entrepreneurship projects and her involvement this summer as the projects pivoted.*

Professor Amir Grinstein’s entrepreneurship program, Bridging Political Conflict: A Marketing and Entrepreneurial Experience in Social Change, involves collaboration between Northeastern University and the non-profit 50:50 Startups, an entrepreneurship program that helps create equally owned tech



ventures by Palestinian and Israeli entrepreneurs.

The Northeastern collaboration, the

culmination of a year-long effort by the incubator’s startups, had planned to arrive at Northeastern in Summer II 2020. The program, launched in Summer 2019, would have brought an initial cohort of five to seven startups to campus. Although unable to travel, the work of 50:50 Startups and its entrepreneurs continues in Israel and through virtual mentorship. I was supposed to play a support role for the program



50:50 STARTUPS' FIRST COHORT AT AZRIELI COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING IN MARCH

on campus this summer, but instead became a virtual engineering mentor for one of the startups, which I’ve found deeply rewarding and engaging.

At the macro-level, the planned summer program at Northeastern aims to utilize entrepreneurship to create relationships and trust between Israelis and Palestinians. At the micro-level, the program will help the entrepreneurs develop their ideas, get access to state of the art entrepreneurship education, mentorship, and the leading eco-systems for technology markets and investment. Interested Northeastern students (and clubs such as TAMID) would have supported the program as consultants

and mentors in Summer 2020. Instead, these plans will hopefully come to fruition in Summer 2021, and the proposed 2021 version of the program will offer academic credits to participants.

Professor Grinstein, the Patrick F. & Helen C. Walsh Research Professor and Thomas E. Moore Faculty Fellow in the D’Amore-McKim School of Business, also teaches a popular Dialogue of Civilizations program, *Entrepreneurship and Global Consulting in Israel*. During the Dialogue, students tour all over Israel, visit companies, and complete consulting projects for startups in a joint team with Israeli students at Ben Gurion University in Be’er Sheva. Due to Covid-19, this year’s Dialogue was moved online but remained well attended. The Dialogue is made up of two classes, the first of which is typically taught in Boston by Professor Cheryl Mitteness before students leave for Israel. Professor Mitteness also moved her class online this year, so students were able to experience both classes. In Professor Mitteness’s class, students received an interactive lecture from a different local entrepreneur each day, and in Professor Grinstein’s class, students received

interactive lectures on topics from virtual team building to the Israeli startup environment. Northeastern students also completed consulting projects with Ben Gurion University students for a range of startup companies, meeting virtually across six time zones (many of the Dialogue students are international themselves). The companies involved spanned from an alternative protein company (Kinoko-Tech) to a company making coolant systems for electric car battery charging (Carrar). I served as a program assistant and found that despite the challenges of the virtual format, students gained a lot from the Dialogue and came away valuing the experience.

**For more information about Bridging Political Conflict or Entrepreneurship and Global Consulting in Israel contact Prof. Amir Grinstein at [a.grinstein@northeastern.edu](mailto:a.grinstein@northeastern.edu)**

**For more information on 50:50 Startups, visit [5050startups.org](http://5050startups.org)**

*Jessie Sigler graduated in May 2020 with a degree in Computer Engineering and minors in Jewish Studies and History.*



IALOGUE OF CIVILIZATION STUDENTS IN ISRAEL, 2018

# Delving into the Digital Humanities: A new course for Jewish Studies and Northeastern

Professor Simon Rabinovitch has created a new course in the digital humanities, with a focus on ethnic Boston, and particularly the Jewish community.



COLUMBUS AVENUE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL (A.M.E.) ZION CHURCH, ORIGINALLY TEMPLE ISRAEL



THE SEGEL BUILDING, A WHOLESALE AND RETAIL BUILDING BUILT IN 1896

## BY PROFESSOR SIMON RABINOVITCH

This past fall I taught for the first time Northeastern's introductory course to Jewish religion, history, and culture (JWSS/PHIL 1285). As part of the course I took the students to a couple of spots in Boston relevant to Jewish history in the city. We strolled down the street from where our class met, to the Columbus Avenue African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Zion Church, which was built in 1885 as Temple Israel, Boston's first Reform synagogue. The prosperous German Jews who built the synagogue hired a German Jewish architect, Louis Weissbein, to design a building in the Bavarian *Rundbogenstil* (round-arch) style, but with the local New England Protestant flourish of two added peaked steeples. The Temple Israel congregation did not stay put in their South End location very long before building a new and even grander building on Commonwealth Avenue (today Boston University's Morse Auditorium) completed in 1906 (for more on this see David Kaufman, "Temples in the American Athens: A History of Synagogues in Boston" in the book *The Jews of Boston*, edited by Jonathan Sarna, Ellen Smith, and Scott-Martin Kosofsky).

We talked about what we saw in the exterior of the A.M.E. Zion Church and what the Jews in the 1880s who planned this building as a symbol of their prosperity and integration in the city might have been thinking about in the design. We also talked about the changes in the city itself and the African-American congregation that has made the building its home ever since. The A.M.E. Zion Church was founded in 1838 (as a breakaway from an even older congregation) by seventeen members of Boston's free black community, including its first minister, the abolitionist and temperance activist Rev. Jehiel C. Beman.

We took another trip to Boston's North End, the neighborhood that absorbed much of Boston's Eastern European Jewish migration (in addition to the West End, bulldozed to create today's Government Center). We talked about the economics of migration and the social and religious life of the neighborhood. We found the sites of commerce such as the Segel Building, a wholesale and retail building built in 1896, and the "Greenie Store," a grocery store founded in 1892 by the Rabb family, who would expand this business into what is today the Stop & Shop grocery chain. We found the sites of the mikveh (bath house), the Hevra Kadisha (burial society), the Jewish Settlement House for new

immigrants, the Hebrew Industrial School, and what were once the schools and synagogues on the little alley known as Jerusalem Place. In putting this walking tour together I relied in part on records assembled by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston in a spreadsheet that tracked "Massachusetts Synagogues and their Records, Past and Present." This spreadsheet, which captures in raw data the migration of Boston's Jews within the city over a century, and the excitement my students and I had in walking the neighborhoods, provided the inspiration for a new class I am offering in fall 2020 called Digital Histories of Ethnic Boston.

The main idea behind Digital Histories of Ethnic Boston is that the class will alternate between learning how to use and create digital humanities (DH) tools and going out into the streets and neighborhoods in person to learn about the history of the Jews in Boston, as well as their interaction with the city's other ethnic and religious groups. We'll explore why Jews moved in and out of different neighborhoods in Boston and the impact of economic and cultural changes, suburbanization, and government policies such as "redlining." And we'll think about what DH tools can and cannot do to enhance our understanding of social and historical changes.

Throughout the semester the students and I will work collaboratively on a DH project of the students' own design. Those of us at Northeastern interested in digital humanities are extremely fortunate that resources available for DH teaching and scholarship have been created within the University. **NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks** is a major center for DH research and pedagogy and helped me design a course that would integrate modules led by their Digital Integration Teaching Initiative (DITI) about text and data analysis as well as using DH tools for mapping, story-telling, and visualization (we will be focusing on the tools Tableau and StoryMap). In cooperation with the Northeastern University Library, we will be creating a website that will integrate our data into the library database. Northeastern has already created several important resources for digital history and social science focused on Boston, such as the **Boston Research Center (BRC)** and the **Boston Area Research Initiative (BARI)**.

Stay tuned for what these creative Northeastern students build!

Professor Simon Rabinovitch is Associate Professor of History, and core faculty in the Jewish Studies Program.



RACHEL KADISH



JULIE LINDAHL

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

### RACHEL KADISH AND JULIE LINDAHL IN CONVERSATION

In October the Jewish Studies Program welcomed author Rachel Kadish and memoirist Julie Lindahl, who spoke about their difficult family histories – Kadish, the descendant of Holocaust survivors, Lindahl, the descendant of SS members. They talked about conversations that bridge the seeming abyss between them, about the act of writing as compulsion, catharsis, and truth-telling, about common family idiosyncrasies, and family stories that history demands be told. They discussed confronting the past so that future generations would no longer feel its weight.

Kadish and Lindahl also discussed the role of the arts as a bastion against extremism. They argued that storytelling provides nuance and encourages empathy toward others, which makes it harder to see only your own viewpoint. The role of artists in society is vitally important right now.

Their joint project is called "Voices Between" and can be found at [storiesforsociety.com](http://storiesforsociety.com). Kadish's most recent novel is *The Weight of Ink* and Lindahl's memoir is *The Pendulum*.

As this year's Writer in Residence in the English department, Kadish offered a number of other events and classes about *The Weight of Ink*. This story, partially set in England in the 1660s, features an intellectually rebellious young Jewish woman who scribed for her rabbi, and in a parallel story set today, an ailing scholar discovers the letters that enable her to recover a surprising history.

This program was co-sponsored by the Department of English as part of the Visiting Distinguished Writer Series, the Jewish Studies Program, and the Holocaust and Genocide Awareness Committee.

## What Can Psychedelics Teach Us About Spirituality?

Author Michael Pollan visited Northeastern in September as the 2019 Ruderman Lecturer. He engaged in a wide-ranging conversation with Professor Lori Lefkowitz about his new book, *How To Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence*. Among other topics, Professor Lefkowitz engaged Pollan in a discussion of spiritual experiences arising from the use of psychedelics, and some of his conclusions, such as the importance of awe in the human experience, which echo religious experience.

While at Northeastern, Pollan also taught a lively master class in writing to a group of students representing the Jewish Studies



Program, the Writing Program, the School of Journalism, the English Department, and the Psychology Department.

Later, the Ruderman family, whose Ruderman Family Foundation sponsors the annual Ruderman lecture, discussed with Pollan the potential use of psychedelics in treating mental illnesses, in keeping with their foundation's focus on disabilities.



SHARON (RUDERMAN) SHAPIRO, MICHAEL POLLAN, AND JAY RUDERMAN

## A REPORT ON MICHAEL POLLAN'S LECTURE

BY SEBASTIAN STOCKMAN

Journalist, author, and sustainable-food celebrity Michael Pollan was on campus to discuss his latest book with Ruderman Professor and Director of Jewish Studies (and Director of the Humanities Center and Professor of English) Lori Lefkowitz.

Pollan's book, *How to Change Your Mind*, is a departure from his focus on food, as you can tell from the subtitle: "What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence." That about covers it!

Make all the "whooooo, the colors, man" jokes that you want, but once you get that out of your system, Pollan has some pretty profound points to make.

Pollan told us that he got interested in psychedelics while doing "a pretty straight piece of journalism" for *The New Yorker*. That piece examined the use of psilocybin (you might know them as "shrooms") in the treatment of patients with terminal illnesses. The results were startling. For many, psilocybin "made death seem less horrible." As it "expanded their notions of connection," many of the patients "had lost their fear of death completely."

Pollan was taken with the idea of "a six-hour journey into your mind that could shift your outlook on something as profound as death."

He then went looking for the semi-underground (because technically-illegal) network of therapists who administer psychedelics as treatment. After interviewing a few therapists who were either "too crazy or too casual about it," Pollan found one who fit, and became "a very reluctant psychonaut," and, to judge from his remarks, a cautious convert to the therapeutic use of these substances.

In a controlled environment under the guidance of therapists (which he stressed was crucial), Pollan had some experiences that changed his "understanding of what the word 'spiritual' means."

He described an "applied mysticism" that provided an experience of "the spiritual absent the supernatural," including one in which his self "burst into little Post-it notes. I was spread out like a coat of paint, or butter, on the ground. It was almost like I had consciousness without self."

It's hard to traffic in metaphors like these and still be taken seriously but Pollan, by dint of his distinguished career, has credibility to spare. While he doesn't



consider this book advocacy journalism, he does believe psychedelics should be decriminalized, if for no other reason than for the purpose of further study.

"We don't know everything about how they work," he said. "But we know even less about some psychotropic drugs that psychiatrists now legally prescribe."

"Psychedelics dislodge mental habit. As we get older we come up with serviceable algorithms for dealing with the problems that life presents ... A lot of mental suffering is the result of minds that have grown too rigid."

(Did you get that? Don't take these drugs until you're my age.)

Professor Lefkowitz (who, fun fact, went to high school with Pollan and was his creative-writing classmate in 11<sup>th</sup> grade) and Pollan noted that "reading, movies, concerts, dance, play-going," and even crossword puzzles can help us get out of these ruts, too.

Not all of Pollan's experiences were positive. There was one, with something called 5meO-DMT, that Pollan called "a category five mental hurricane." 5meO-DMT, as the half-dozen students near me who raised their hands when Pollan asked if anyone had heard of it already knew, is the "smoked venom of the Sonoran Desert Toad." The trip sounded terrifying: "There was no matter, there was no form, there was no space," Pollan said. "The best thing, it only lasted



10 minutes. I felt gratitude that there was something rather than nothing."

On the other end of the intensity spectrum, Pollan was unsure what to make of microdosing, or the practice of taking a very small daily dose. He noted that Albert Hofmann, the discoverer of LSD, microdosed and lived to be 102. But that's anecdotal. There aren't great studies on it, though it is a Silicon Valley fad "as something that can make you calmer and more productive."

"It's so of our time," Pollan said. "That we're taking this transcendent experience and turning it into a productivity drug."

*Professor Sebastian Stockman is Associate Teaching Professor in the Department of English at Northeastern.*



NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY STUDENT EMILIO GUIDO AND SLAVE LABOR CAMP SURVIVOR THEOFANIS ORFANOS

## FILM SCREENING

# LAUGH NOW: A PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE, LIBERTY & THE HOLOCAUST

BY MOLLIE CHASE

With a student research grant from the Jewish Studies Program, Northeastern University student Emilio Guido produced and directed a documentary about Theofanis Orfanos, a Greek native who was captured by Nazi German forces at age fifteen and forced to work in a forced labor camp. Guido, who studied Communication Studies and Media and Screen Studies, spent much of the previous year dedicated to researching, compiling archival footage, shooting, and editing the film – all with the goal of sharing this man’s powerful and rich story. The final product, *Laugh Now: A Perspective on Life, Liberty & the Holocaust*, was screened at Northeastern in November, with the assistance of the Jewish Studies Program. The program included a post-screening discussion with Mr. Orfanos and his daughter.

Guido came across Orfanos’s story by chance, through a series of introductions and connections. It all started when Orfanos’s son wanted to share his father’s story, one of survival and perseverance. Orfanos was captured by Nazis in his home country of Greece and was dragged to a forced labor camp in Germany; against the odds, he not only survived this experience but overcame it and went on to live a full and prosperous life.

“AGAINST THE ODDS, HE NOT ONLY SURVIVED ... BUT OVERCAME IT.”

The initial vision for his story was to share it through a written project – but when Guido heard about the incredible journey, he knew it was something that had to be captured and communicated through visuals. To talk more about the next steps, Guido met Orfanos, and was captivated by the 92-year-old’s openness and charisma. More importantly, he was in awe of Orfanos’s journey, and the project took off from there.

“Through this documentary, I hope that viewers can experience Theofanis’s life story in a way that is close to how he, himself experienced it.”

“His Holocaust survival story is unique in that he is not Jewish, but rather, was captured for being part of the resistance movement against Nazis. He is able to share the experience and perspective of being Greek during this time,” said Guido, who graduated in June.

As part of his research for the film, Guido collected a lot of historical knowledge about the time period and the cultural dynamics. He wanted to ensure Orfanos’s stories were framed for viewers with an accurate and digestible historical context.

“Orfanos told so many stories,” added Guido. “I tried to pack as many as I could in 46 minutes so each viewer can take away different stories.”

One aspect of this project that stands out to Guido is how gracious Orfanos is despite all that has happened to him in his life, which viewers will see right away in the film.

“Theofanis tells his story so vividly,” said Guido. “I tried to do the best I could to tell it visually from his perspective so we could get as close as we can to experiencing it the way he did. There is no hate in his heart; he tells stories of supporting his family, complete strangers, and the importance of a humanity that works together.”

Guido, who was an Executive Producer for NUTV, Northeastern’s only student-run video production club, directed all aspects of the film himself. He has experience in filmmaking, having made two short films before: *Echoes of What Used to Be* and *Catch Your Breath*. His dedication highlights the passion that so many students at Northeastern have for their crafts – and all of the work they are willing to put into their creative visions. Guido coordinated everything from renting equipment to scheduling the interviews to handling all the editing and audio mixing. He worked with a Berklee College student on the score, and worked with the Jewish Studies Program on publicity. CAMD Professor Nathan Blake served as the faculty advisor for his student research grant from the Jewish Studies Program.

“I am very excited about sharing this film with the Northeastern community and beyond,” Guido concluded. “Holocaust stories tend to be just about the Holocaust itself, but surviving and growing beyond those months or years is a critical part of the experience that should also be told. This was a project that was just too important to pass up, and I hope everyone who sees the film can learn something from the stories Theofanis shares with us.”

*This article was adapted from an article by Molly Chase, Senior Marketing and Communications Manager, College of Arts, Media and Design. The film is available on YouTube.*



JSU STUDENTS IN JEWISH STUDIES MEETING SPACE

## THE JEWISH STUDIES PROGRAM AND THE JEWISH STUDENT UNION

The Jewish Studies Program works with the Jewish Student Union (JSU) by providing space for meetings and a *parashat hashavua* (weekly Torah study) series. Students find the Jewish Studies offices a comfortable place to hang out and a quiet space for doing work.



TALI GLICKMAN, HANNAH BERNSTEIN, DEENA NOTOWICH AT JSU RETREAT

On the weekend of October 25-26 the Jewish Student Union, with Professor Lori Lefkovitz, had their annual JSU retreat at Camp Ramah in New England. It was a weekend of community building, Jewish learning and fun! Attendees participated in Shabbat traditions such as shacharit and havdalah. Professor Lefkovitz led a Torah learning study on the parsha, which happened to be Bereshit. Participants discussed their Jewish journeys and Jewish identities.

IT WAS AN INCREDIBLE WEEKEND!

– Tali Glickman, Student and President of the JSU



DOV WAXMAN DELIVERS LECTURE



FROM L TO R: DEAN UTA POIGER, PROFESSORS BERNA TURAM, TOM VICINO, DOV WAXMAN, AMILCAR BARRETO, LORI LEFKOVITZ, COSTAS PAPAPOPOULOS

## Sixth Annual Israel Studies Lecture

On a snowy night in December, Professor Dov Waxman delivered the 2019 Israel Studies Lecture, the sixth in a series he started when he joined the Northeastern faculty five years ago. In his talk “The Religionization of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: From Myth to Reality,” Waxman gave an overview of the role of religion in the history of the conflict. Contrary to popular misconceptions, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not primarily over religion, but it has always played a part in the conflict and today religion is one of the main reasons for the intractability of the conflict.

Waxman explained that over time, religious nationalism has gained importance and influence on both sides. On the Israeli side, religious nationalism

are becoming more mainstream. Political and financial support for them comes from American evangelical Christians who believe it is a religious duty to return Jews to Israel as a prelude to the “Restoration.”

On the Palestinian side, religious nationalism is primarily represented by Hamas. Hamas’ Islamist nationalist ideology traces its conflict with Jews to 7th-century Arabia and depicts Zionism as part of Western anti-Islamic oppression. It believes that Palestine belongs to Muslims and therefore there should be no territorial compromise in any of the land of historical Palestine. Because of the perceived failures of the more secular Fatah party, along with the good reputation Hamas had built through its social service initiatives, Hamas was able to gain political success in the last Palestinian national elections in 2006. Hamas receives financial support from private donors and from the Iranian regime who also consider Israel a usurper of Islamic lands. Iran especially supports the military wing of Hamas.

On both sides, religious extremists believe their religion forbids them from conceding territory. Their opposition to any two-state solution, and the potential for disruption and violence as part of their opposition, are obstacles to any political and diplomatic resolution. Waxman believes that the only way forward is to acknowledge the religious dimension in the conflict. He advocates for abandoning a purely secular peace process, and incorporating moderate religious leaders in future peace negotiations.

This spring, Waxman began a new position as the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation Chair of Israel Studies and the Director of the Nazarian Center for Israel Studies at UCLA.

Following the lecture, Waxman’s colleagues spoke about his accomplishments while at Northeastern, and thanked him for all he did for their departments, students, and the university.

CONTRARY TO POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS, THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT IS NOT PRIMARILY OVER RELIGION, BUT IT HAS ALWAYS PLAYED A PART IN THE CONFLICT AND TODAY RELIGION IS ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS FOR THE INTRACTABILITY OF THE CONFLICT.

took off after the 1967 war when victory galvanized the belief among religious Zionists that they were at the beginning of the messianic era. These Israelis, many of whom live in settlements deep inside the West Bank, believe that Jews have an inalienable right, given by God, to live in the entire Land of Israel (of which the West Bank, or Judea and Samaria, is the heartland), and moreover, that it is a religious imperative to live there, as part of the hastening of the arrival of the Messiah. To abandon any territory would be a violation of religious law. Although representing only around a third of all Israelis living in the settlements, these messianic religious nationalists are a powerful force in Israel. Increasingly, their ideas about sovereignty over the land

## HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE AWARENESS WEEK

In anticipation of a full schedule of programming for Holocaust and Genocide Awareness Week in late March, the powerful and moving art exhibit sponsored by the General Consulate of Israel to New England, “Beyond Duty, Diplomatic Heroism During the Holocaust,” was on display in March in the International Village lobby. The exhibit featured the stories of nine heroic diplomats, who at great personal risk and with grave personal consequences, often defying their own governments, used their status as diplomats and the tools of their offices to save Jewish lives.

The remainder of the program of events was halted in its tracks by the pandemic shutdown. Fortunately, our featured distinguished speaker, Professor David Nirenberg, Dean of the Divinity School at University of Chicago, will deliver his planned Morton Lecture “Does the Past History of Anti-Semitism Tell Us Anything About Its Future?” in spring 2021, in whatever format

is most appropriate when the time comes. The survivor lecture has been postponed until such time as conditions are again safe. Our 2020-21 Gideon Klein Award winner, Kalah Karloff, will present her completed project in the coming year as well.

Please watch for details on the HAGAC website: [cssh.northeastern.edu/humanities/program/holocaust-and-genocide-awareness/](http://cssh.northeastern.edu/humanities/program/holocaust-and-genocide-awareness/)

Meanwhile, two student presentations originally planned for Holocaust and Genocide Awareness Week 2020, including the Gideon Klein project, will now take place online on September 24 at 5:00 pm. Please see the next page for details of the projects by our student awardees.



## MILES CONVENES WORKSHOP ON JEWS IN MUSLIM AND SHARED DIASPORIC LANDS

As recipient of a Special Initiatives Fund award from the American Academy for Jewish Research (AAJR), Professor William (Bill) Miles, affiliated faculty of the Jewish Studies Program and Professor of Political Science, convened two workshops on “Jews in Muslim and Shared Diasporic Lands.” The purpose of the AAJR Special Initiative grant is to “encourage projects of academic collaboration between Jewish studies programs (or faculty) between two or more institutions, either in the same city or in cities in close geographical proximity to each other.” Professor Miles collaborated with Alan Verskin, Associate Professor of History at the University of Rhode Island, to apply for the grant and organize the workshops.

The first workshop took place in October at Northeastern and included representatives from Brown University and Stonehill College, as well as the University of Rhode Island and Northeastern. The first session of the workshop, “Diasporic Encounters from the Past,” examined historical examples of Muslim-Jewish interaction, from Yemen to the Eastern Mediterranean to Iraq, along with textual treatments of Jews in the Qur’an. The second session dealt with “Contemporary Manifestations”: French films about Muslim-Jewish interactions; literature of and about Iraqi Jewish emigrants; perceptions of Jews and Muslims in Italy; and legacies of the rabbi of Timbuktu.

In February, a second workshop was convened in Kingston, RI. This workshop featured a screening and discussion of *Where Are You Going, Moishe?*, the story of a Moroccan Jewish community and family.

The grant for these workshops from the American Academy of Jewish Research has been renewed for 2020-21.



## Jewish Studies Student Scholars: What Are They Up To?

Jessie Sigler, the 2019–20 Ruderman Scholar, worked with the Holocaust and Genocide Awareness Committee to improve the accessibility of the committee’s online archive of Holocaust survivor talks and other videos. This effort served as her Capstone project for completing the requirements of her minor in Jewish Studies. The Holocaust and Genocide Awareness Week archive has videos of survivor talks from each year’s events since 1993. The overarching goal of this project was to make the survivor talk videos more accessible to those who want to learn more about the Holocaust, and help those who wish to learn about a specific aspect of the Holocaust find appropriate videos. The project entailed creating transcripts of the survivor testimony videos in the archive and determining what fields should be associated with the videos based on their content in order to improve video searchability. Transcripts will also accomplish the following: 1) allow those who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have auditory processing issues to experience the testimonies, and 2) make it much easier to read and search through the testimonies in order to associate fields. Sigler worked with Debra Mandel in the Snell University Library and helped to craft a major grant application for further project funding. (Under Mandel’s leadership, the Library will continue this project, with future efforts



JESSIE SIGLER, THE 2019 RUDERMAN SCHOLAR AND Yael SHEINFELD, THE 2019-20 GIDEON KLEIN SCHOLAR

aimed at improving the experience of the website itself, in addition to the accessibility of the videos. Grant funding is being sought to continue the work.)

**Yael Sheinfeld, the 2019–20 Gideon Klein Scholar,** created an animated film focused on the children’s book, *The Children’s Tree of Terezin*, a story of hope and humanity, by Dede Harris and illustrated by Sara Akerlund. Collaborating with Bea Tolan, an animation student at Northeastern, Sheinfeld also conducted a filmed interview with the book’s author/illustrator team to accompany the animated film. She is now finalizing the film’s narration, overseeing animation production, and compiling additional materials to include within the film (photographs, songs, etc.).



### PLEASE JOIN US.

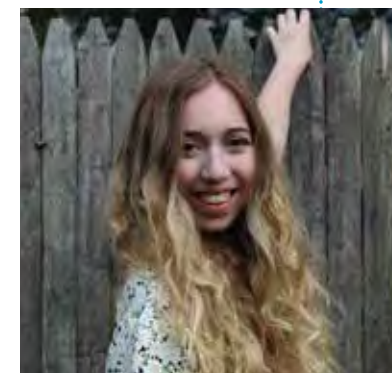
Jessie and Yael are looking forward to presenting their finished products on a Zoom event **SEPTEMBER 24, 2020, from 5:00–7:00 PM.**

Go to [bit.ly/HAGAW2020](https://bit.ly/HAGAW2020) for more information.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO...

### Gideon Klein Award winner Kalah Karloff

Kalah Karloff is a fourth year Communications and Music Industry student from Marlborough, MA, passionate about her work in media production, music and songwriting, and musical theater. For her Gideon Klein project, Karloff will research how music was used as a form of torture by the Nazis in concentration camps and how the effect of music on the human body changes with changed contexts. She will analyze the music and lyrics of songs to explore the reason behind the choices made by the Nazis, and consider the implications for our own time. She will present her work as part of Holocaust and Genocide Awareness Week 2020-21.



KALAH KARLOFF

### 2020 Ruderman Scholar Deanna Schwartz '22

Deanna Schwartz is a rising junior majoring in journalism and minoring in Jewish Studies, English, and Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies. She is Managing Editor of *The Huntington News* and active in Northeastern Hillel.

Schwartz decided to minor in Jewish Studies in order to continue to examine her Jewish identity and learn about Judaism in a new way. She is especially interested in Jewish pop culture and modern identities, and Jewish representation in the media. She has also taken the opportunity to learn about the Holocaust with Professors Leff and Bormann.

Through her Journalism classes at Northeastern, her Jewish Studies classes, and her affiliation with Hillel, Schwartz realized that she enjoys reporting on the Jewish community and shedding light on Jewish issues. She hopes to pursue a career in Jewish journalism.



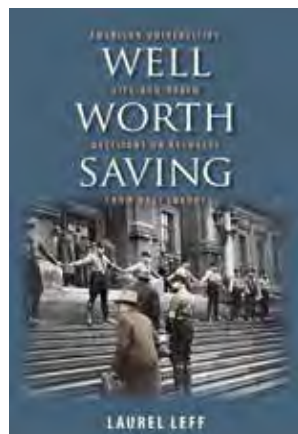
DEANNA SCHWARTZ

### And to:

...Jewish Studies minors **Jessie Sigler** and **Carly Rutkovsky**, on their graduation from Northeastern. For her capstone module, Sigler, a Computer Engineering major, worked with Debra Mandel, Director of the Media Lab at the University Library on making the Holocaust Awareness Committee Digital Archive more searchable. A description of her project is on page 12. Rutkovsky, a Psychology major, prepared a Prezi presentation about how Congregation Emanu-El of Westchester, NY developed an exemplary program to instill Jewish self-identify in teens and increase family involvement in communal life, starting with the bnai mitzvah year and continuing through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

...**Professor Bill Miles** on the renewal of his grant from the American Academy of Jewish Research, for his cross-institutional collaboration project on The Jews in Muslim and Shared Diasporas. Prof. Miles, along with Prof. Alan Verskin of the University of Rhode Island, held two workshops in 2019-2020 sponsored by this grant (see page 11).

## BOOK LAUNCH FOR LAUREL LEFF



LAUREL LEFF

BY JESSIE SIGLER

On December 11<sup>th</sup>, Associate Director of the Jewish Studies Program and Associate Professor of Journalism Laurel Leff launched her new book, *Well Worth Saving: American Universities' Life-and-Death Decisions on Refugees from Nazi Europe* (Yale University Press) in an intimate event at the Alumni Center. Professor Leff discussed the book in conversation with Steve Whitfield, the Max Richter Professor of American Civilizations Emeritus at Brandeis University. Leff said that she sees *Well Worth Saving*, which examines decisions by American universities to reject the applications of refugee scholars seeking employment (and thus safety from Nazism) as a prequel in some ways to her previous book, *Buried by The Times: The Holocaust and America's Most Important Newspaper*. The acclaimed *Buried by the Times* detailed the failure of the New York Times to report on the Holocaust as it was happening, despite the knowledge at the paper's disposal. Leff blended fascinating insights from both books as she fielded questions from Whitfield, faculty, and students. When asked what surprised her the most when she was writing the book, Leff described the depth of the anti-Semitism present at prestigious universities during the period. Leff described the types of official memoranda that went back and forth between colleges and the emergency committee trying to place scholars, in which colleges would often request candidates who did not look or act "too Jewish" or would outright refuse to hire any Jewish faculty, despite a candidate's talent and skill.

Faculty and students present at the book launch asked complex questions and delved into the moral implications of the rejection of refugee scholars. Deanna Schwartz, a second-year Journalism student and Jewish Studies minor who was present at the event, said "Professor Leff is an amazing professor and I'm so glad to have the opportunity to take multiple classes with her." Schwartz took Leff's "First Amendment and the Media" class in the fall, and her class "America and the Holocaust" this spring.

Jessie Sigler was the 2019 Ruderman Scholar and graduated in May with a degree in Computer Engineering and minors in Jewish Studies and History.

## SELECTED NEW PUBLICATIONS IN JEWISH STUDIES



Jonathan Kaufman, Professor of Journalism and Director of the School of Journalism, published his new book, *The Last Kings of Shanghai: the Rival Jewish Dynasties That Helped Create Modern China*, in June (Viking Press). Writes David Shribman in the *Boston Globe*: "The Last Kings of Shanghai" examines the little-known history of two extraordinary dynasties. Two families – both emerging from the Jewish quarters of Baghdad – built a financial empire that shaped Shanghai, protected the Jews who fled the charnel house of World War II Europe for China, suffered in the upheaval of the Japanese occupation and the Communist revolution, and eventually rebuilt their reputations and their fortunes in the modern China."

Lori Lefkowitz published two book chapters: "The Sense of Beshert: Contingency in Nicole Krauss's *History of Love* and Dara Horn's *The World to Come*" for MLA Options for *Teaching Jewish American Literature* edited by Rachel Rubinstein and Roberta Rosenberg, and "Invisible Ink: The Limits of Recovery," with Julia Epstein which appeared in *Translated Memories: Transgenerational Perspectives in Literature on the Holocaust* edited by Bettina Hofmann and Ursula Reuter (Lexington Books).



Laurel Leff published *Well Worth Saving: American Universities' Life-and-Death Decisions on Refugees from Nazi Europe* (Yale University Press). (See page 14)

Bill Miles has published new work, including a book chapter about wildlife in Israel and Africa: "Stop the Sahara! Combating Climate Change and Desertification in the Niger-Nigeria Borderlands, with Wildlife Lessons from the Negev," in *Bewildering Borders: The Economy of Conservation in Africa* edited by Werner Zips and Manuela Zips-Mairitsch (LIT Verlag Münster), and an article about the Druze in Israel and elsewhere: "The Divided Druze: Legacies of Colonial Partition for an Historically Persecuted Minority" in *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 42:4 (2019).

Simon Rabinovitch published a chapter on "Jewish Politics: History and Historiographical Implications" in *The Routledge Companion to Jewish History and Historiography*. He is working on a forthcoming book with Yale University Press, *Religious Freedom and the Jews: Collective Rights in Modern States*, as well as several digital humanities projects.

Northeastern faculty have been writing about current events through the lens of their disciplines. In June, Max Abrahms published an op-ed on John Bolton in *USA Today*.

To read an interview with Prof. Leff about her new book, please see the Dec. 3, 2019 edition of [insiderhighered.com](http://insiderhighered.com).

## JEWISH STUDIES COMMUNITY LECTURE SERIES

The Jewish Studies Program is co-hosting an online adult education speaker series with B'nai Tikvah of Canton. The featured speakers are all Jewish Studies affiliated faculty.



**AUGUST 31, 8 PM**  
**Finding Home: A History of the Jews of Boston**  
SIMON RABINOVITCH,  
Associate Professor  
of History



**SEPTEMBER 12, 9 PM**  
**Blacks and Jews: Can the Alliance Be Rebuilt**  
JONATHAN KAUFMAN,  
Professor and Director of  
the School of Journalism



**OCTOBER 16, 8 PM**  
**The Rabbi of Timbuktu**  
BILL MILES,  
Professor of  
Political Science

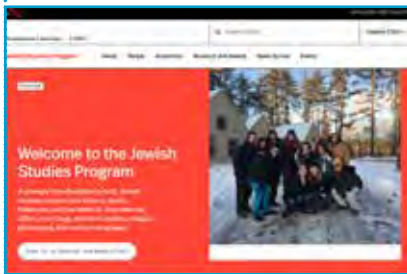
For more information, please call the B'nai Tikvah office (781-828-5250), or visit [bnaitikvahma.org](http://bnaitikvahma.org) the week before.

## Thank you to...

Carl DMSB '71 and Carol Chudnofsky for their generous gift to the Jewish Studies Program in memory of Robert "Bo" Lyons CPS '59, who passed away in November 2019.

Bo Lyons was a beloved football coach at Northeastern, and later an assistant athletics director, known for his love and care for his students as well as the sport. The Jewish Studies Program looks forward to planning a program that will appropriately honor Bo Lyons' memory.





## JEWISH STUDIES ONLINE...

Earlier this summer, the Northeastern University College of Social Sciences and Humanities rolled out new websites for every program and department. The new Jewish Studies website features streamlined content and an easy to navigate menu, along with links to more information across the university. [cssh.northeastern.edu/jewishstudies/](http://cssh.northeastern.edu/jewishstudies/)

Information about upcoming events can be found both on our home page and on the events page (click on the main Events tab). It also includes a student research guide that provides an annotated list of online resources for student research.

The online edition of this issue of *Haverim* can be found on the *Haverim* tab under the News Stories menu. Let us know what you think! [cssh.northeastern.edu/jewishstudies/category/haverim-newsletter/](http://cssh.northeastern.edu/jewishstudies/category/haverim-newsletter/)

## LET'S CONNECT

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