

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
PROGRAM IN JEWISH STUDIES

Annual Report
2005-2006

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THE PROGRAM IN JEWISH STUDIES
Annual Report 2005-06

S U M M A R Y

The Program in Jewish Studies (PJS) was formally launched in August 2002, when Provost Nicholas Zeppos appointed Jack M. Sasson to a three-year term as its director and commissioned a committee to shape the program. Now concluding its fourth academic year, the Program in Jewish Studies is set firmly among other humanities programs and continues to contribute imaginatively to Vanderbilt's teaching and research missions.

FOURTH YEAR ACHIEVEMENTS

Faculty Development

- Filled a junior tenure-track position in Literatures of the Jewish People: **Allison Schachter**, who has just completed a doctorate at the University of California, Berkeley
- Received authorization to fill a junior tenure-track position in Modern Jewish History
- Negotiated for two visiting professors from Israel, one for the Fall Semester and the other for the entire year, to come to Vanderbilt. One to offer courses on Jewish Arabic writers of medieval and modern times and on Naguib Mahfouz, and the other on modern Jewish history and the history of modern Israel, respectively

Curriculum Development

- Expanded course offerings through First Year Seminars and development of special courses by Vanderbilt and visiting faculty

Program Development

- Continued to stimulate PJS awareness via faculty lunch- and supper-seminars
- Graduated its second Major: Ayelet Neeley, and its first MA: Joanna Bricchetto
- Increased student interest in the PJS via the Web, brochures, and advertising
- Supported the funding of lectures in concert with other Vanderbilt units
- Actively pursued funding for visiting faculty
- Moved into new quarters in Buttrick Hall

FIFTH YEAR PLANS

Faculty Development

- To fill the Modern Jewish History position
- To continue the Visiting Professor program
- To work for the establishment of a position in Jewish law/Rabbinics

Curriculum Development

- To continue negotiations for a Study Abroad program in Spain
- To continue to work towards the renewal of the Study Abroad program in Israel
- To stimulate the production of more JS courses taught by faculty from within and without Vanderbilt
- To concretize Service Learning opportunities
- With Peabody College, to create a Master of Education in Jewish Studies program, with multiple foci

Program Development

- To continue seminars for faculty and launch equivalent forums for undergraduates
- To broaden public interest in JS through lectures and conferences
- To seek new funding support for the Program's expanding teaching and research activities

JEWISH STUDIES IN ITS FOURTH YEAR

FULL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Program in Jewish Studies (PJS) was formally launched in August 2002, when Provost Nicholas Zeppos appointed Jack M. Sasson to a three-year term as its director and commissioned a committee to shape the Program. Unlike most humanities programs, the PJS reports directly to the Provost; but it gains its undergraduate focus through harmonious cooperation with the College of Arts and Science and fulfills its commitment to graduate education through the Graduate Department of Religion, an organ of the Graduate and the Divinity schools.

During the first year of work, signal progress was made in creating a curriculum, filling the first of three faculty appointments, establishing a community of interest in Jewish Studies and forging communication within Vanderbilt and without. The second year of work carried this program further, with the institution of a Master of Arts in Jewish Studies in the Graduate Department of Religion; the appointment of a senior colleague, Professor David Wasserstein; and the planning of initiatives with Peabody College. The third year saw further advances in setting the PJS firmly within Vanderbilt's academic and intellectual community, with a junior tenure-track co-appointment with Sociology (Assistant Professor Shaul Kelner), diversification in undergraduate course offerings, creation of a Graduate Certificate in Jewish Studies, and a fine new crop of MA candidates. In its fourth year, the PJS continued to advance, with the appointment of a new Director, David J. Wasserstein, to succeed the founding Director Jack Sasson; a junior, tenure-track appointment in the *Literatures of the Jewish People* (Assistant Professor Allison Schachter); approval of a further appointment in the coming year, in Modern Jewish History; successful negotiations for visiting professors from Israel, in medieval and modern Arabic writing by Jews and in the history of modern Israel; further expansion of course offerings; and the graduation of our second Major and our first MA student. We also moved into splendid new quarters in Buttrick Hall.

ADMINISTRATION

2005-06 Committee

In its fourth year, the PJS was directed by a faculty committee made up of the following (in **bold** are appointees in the PJS):

Robert Barsky, Professor of Comparative Literature and of French and Italian

Gregory Barz, Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology, Blair School of Music

Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, Associate Professor of Philosophy

Cathy Jade, Professor and Chair of Spanish and Portuguese

Shaul Kelner, Assistant Professor of Sociology and of Jewish Studies

Amy-Jill Levine, Carpenter Professor of New Testament Studies, Divinity School

Jeffrey Schoenblum, Centennial Professor of Law, School of Law

Marcy Singer-Gabella, Research Assistant Professor, Department of Teaching and Learning, Peabody College

Martina Urban, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and of Jewish Studies

David Wasserstein, Professor of History and of Jewish Studies (Director of the Program)

The committee worked well together. The Director takes this occasion to thank Professors Robert Barsky, Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, Amy-Jill Levine, and Marcy Singer-Gabella as they "graduate" from the committee in Spring 2006 for a job well done.

2006-2007 Committee

In its fifth year, the PJS will be served by a Steering Committee made up of the following (in **bold** are appointees in the PJS):

Gregory Barz, Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology, Blair School of Music (on leave)
Dan Cornfield, Professor of Sociology
Sara L. Eigen, Assistant Professor of German
Ellen Goldring, Professor of Education Policy and Leadership, Peabody College
Cathy Jrade, Professor and Chair of Spanish and Portuguese
Shaul Kelner, Assistant Professor of Sociology and of Jewish Studies
Richard King, Associate Professor of Religious Studies
Allison Schachter, Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies
Jeffrey Schoenblum, Centennial Professor of Law, School of Law (on leave)
Martina Urban, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and of Jewish Studies (on sabbatical)
David Wasserstein, Professor of History and of Jewish Studies (Director of the Program)

Professors Barz and Schoenblum will be on leave from Vanderbilt, and from our Committee, during the first semester of 2006-07; and Professor Urban will be on leave for the entire year.

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

The status of appointments in the PJS developed in consultation among the Provost, the Dean of Arts and Science, and the PJS Director during the Program's formative period:

1. An appointee generally holds two titles, one connected with the PJS, the other with the host department.
2. While all personnel actions (tenure and promotion) are vetted within the host department, the PJS has a voting presence through its Director or appointee.
3. Search committees are co-chaired by a delegate from the PJS and from the host department, with equal representation from both bodies.
4. An appointee offers courses equally divided between the PJS and the host department, all courses being dually listed.

THE FOURTH FACULTY APPOINTMENT



Dr. Martina Urban

The first faculty search concluded in Spring '03 with the appointment of Dr. Martina Urban as Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and of Jewish Studies.

The second search was pursued jointly with the History Department, and concluded in Spring '04 with the appointment of Dr. David Wasserstein as Professor of History and of Jewish Studies.



Dr. David Wasserstein



Dr. Shaul Kelner

In discussions during Spring '04, Provost Zeppos and Dean McCarty supported splitting the single mid-level position available to the PJS into two tenure-track posts, the first to be filled together with Sociology. This post was filled during the year and Shaul Kelner was appointed as Assistant Professor of Sociology and of Jewish Studies.

The Fourth Search

After much discussion with the PJS and with colleagues in the College, it was decided that the second of two junior appointments created from splitting the mid-level position would be in Literatures of the Jewish People, a phrase conceived broadly with the aim of attracting interest from a wide pool of applicants. The Dean committed to a Fall 2005 search for a junior, tenure-track position to be hosted by an established Arts and Science department, the exact assignment to depend on the specialty of the selected candidate. In consultation with the heads of the departments of Germanic and Slavic Languages, French and Italian, and Spanish and Portuguese, the Director of the PJS shaped an advertisement with the following core:

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY. The College of Arts and Science and the Program in Jewish Studies invite nominations and applications for a tenure-track Assistant Professor position, beginning Fall 2006, in the Literatures of the Jewish people. Ph.D. is required and applicants should demonstrate promise of outstanding research and teaching. The successful candidate will hold jointly the title of Assistant Professor in Jewish Studies and, depending on expertise, Assistant Professor in a resident department such as French and Italian, Germanic and Slavic languages, or Spanish and Portuguese as well as participation in the program in Comparative Literature and the Center for the Study of Religion and Culture.

Area of specialization is open, but candidates must be fluent in the languages and cultures of their relevant expertise.

The search committee consisted of David Wasserstein (chair, from Jewish Studies), Robert Barsky (Jewish Studies Committee), Barbara Hahn (Germanic and Slavic Languages), Cathy Jade (Spanish and Portuguese), Anthère Nzabatsinda (French and Italian), and Martina Urban (Jewish Studies). The advertisement attracted some twenty six applicants, of whom three were brought to campus for on-site interviews and lectures. At the end of the process, the search committee unanimously recommended to the Dean the appointment of Allison Schachter. She accepted our offer and has taken up her position as an Assistant Professor of the Literatures of the Jewish People.

Allison Schachter has just completed a doctorate at the University of California, Berkeley, on "Illusions of Home: the Shifting Landscape of Eastern Europe in Jewish Literature." While at Berkeley, she worked especially with Robert Alter and Chana Kronfeld. Her dissertation examined how modernist writers in Yiddish and Hebrew between the 1890s and the 1940s navigated the changing geography of Eastern European Jewish culture from its near-mythic origins in the shtetl to the centers of international modernism in Europe and in pre-state Palestine. She is at home in both Hebrew and Yiddish, and has also worked on modern French Literature. Her B.A., in Comparative



Dr. Allison Schachter

Literature, comes from Stanford University, and, among the many fellowships and awards that she has received, was one to spend a year as a Fulbright Fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1997-98.

Allison Schachter's research interests cover comparative Jewish Literature, Hebrew and Yiddish Literature, Literary and Cultural Geography, French Jewish Culture and Literature, and Gender and Literary History. At Vanderbilt, she will be teaching courses in 2006-07 on Gender, Sexuality and Desire in Jewish Literature, Introduction to Hebrew Literature, and Jewish Literary Centers.

For 2006-07 The Fifth Search

The Provost and the Dean have recently given their approval to the filling of a new, junior, tenure-track position. This is to be in Modern Jewish History, and will be filled in association with the Department of History. The process of filling this post will be carried out during the Fall Semester of 2006.

VISITING FACULTY APPOINTMENT

During the Spring semester of 2006, Adam Meyer, Associate Professor of English and Chair of the English Department at Fisk University, taught a First Year Seminar entitled *Civil Rights and Civil Wrongs: Black-Jewish Relations in the 1950s and 1960s*:

Blacks and Jews have shared a long and varied history together, particularly in the American context, as there have been strong forces pulling the two groups simultaneously together and apart. Through an examination of historical and literary texts, as well as visual images, this course explored that shared history, focusing on the period of its greatest intensity, the 1950s and 1960s. In exploring this history, the course showed examples of Black-Jewish relations ranging from the heights of utopian co-operation to the depths of dystopian conflict, with many points in between.

Fall 2006

The PJS brings expertise that is not at hand, locally or regionally, to broaden the range of courses available to students as well as to enrich faculty discourse. Dean Richard McCarty continues to champion the cause of this particular enterprise and the PJS is pleased to acknowledge his contribution to it.

During Fall 2006, we shall be hosting Professor Sasson Somekh, emeritus Halmos Professor of Arabic Literature at Tel Aviv University, as a visiting professor in the PJS. Professor Somekh's visit was originally planned for 2005, but had to be postponed. Born in Iraq and a recipient of the prestigious Israel Prize in 2005, Professor Somekh received his doctorate from the University of Oxford. He has recently published his memoirs in Hebrew, (Baghdad, Yesterday), an English version of which will shortly appear. At Vanderbilt, he will teach a course on the Literature of Jewish Writers in Muslim Lands.

There is much hope that this joint sponsorship of visiting scholars will continue in the future. Alliances with diverse A&S departments will be pursued and opportunities to attract a senior scholar for briefer visits will not be neglected.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

Since its formation, among the PJS's greatest challenges has been to attract undergraduates to its classes. We have appointed extraordinary scholars and fine teachers; we have multiplied and enriched the assortment of courses; we have forged a fine Major and Minor. Yet the PJS is still not fully within the beam of most Vanderbilt students. The lack of a long tradition of communicating the promise and goals of Jewish Studies on this campus has meant that students discover its range of courses accidentally and individually. The relatively low numbers of students in second-level classes on Judaism has also compromised wider subscription to the PJS roster of classes.

- New courses (2005-06):
 - Urban:
 1. **Jewish Studies 250.** *The Problem of Evil in Judaism.* Description may be found in “**PJS COURSES TAUGHT IN 2005-06**”
 2. **Jewish Studies 255.** *Zionism and Its Critics.* Description may be found in “**PJS COURSES TAUGHT IN 2005-06**”
 - Kelner:
 1. **Jewish Studies 155.** *American Jewish Life.* Description may be found in “**PJS COURSES TAUGHT IN 2005-06**”
 2. **Jewish Studies 252.** *Jewish Social Movements.* Description may be found in “**PJS COURSES TAUGHT IN 2005-06**”
 - *Jewish Studies in Prague, Czech Republic.* Description may be found in “**PJS COURSES TAUGHT IN 2005-06**”
- Developed and taught for Jewish Studies as overloads (2005-06):
 - **Jewish Studies 115F.03.** *FYS: Radical Jews from Karl Marx to Noam Chomsky.* Robert Barsky. Description may be found in “**PJS COURSES TAUGHT IN 2005-06**”
 - **Jewish Studies 115F.02.** *FYS: Music and Identity in Jewish Traditions.* Gregory Barz. Description may be found in “**PJS COURSES TAUGHT IN 2005-06**”
- Developed but not offered due to low enrollment:
 - **Jewish Studies 115F.05.** *FYS: Arab and Israeli Poetry and Fiction: Mirrors and Contrasts Across Frontiers.* This seminar focuses on ways contemporary literature and other arts in Israel and surrounding Arab countries have been informed and influenced by religious traditions (primarily Jewish and Islamic) as well as diverse aspects of culture. At the core is the complex relationship between cultures and artistic productions. Issues regarding language, identity, gender, geography, borders, exile and migration, history, homeland, and memory will figure prominently. Allen Hibbard, Middle Tennessee State University.

“AXLE” and First Year Seminars

As it enters its fifth year of operation, the PJS is getting better at reaching undergraduate students. It has helped, of course, that there is a gradual thickening in the number of students from Jewish backgrounds. Aside from multiplying the number of available classes with Judaic studies contents – through the increase of JS faculty, invitation of visiting faculty, and the commissioning of special courses from Vanderbilt and area faculty – we have taken advantage of AXLE, the recently implemented Arts and Science undergraduate curriculum, with its requirement for students to fulfill their Liberal Arts commitments by taking 13 courses across a broad range of areas. Because of its intrinsically interdisciplinary nature, the PJS offers courses that fit well within a number of categories: “International Cultures,” “History and Culture of the United States,” “Social and Behavioral Sciences,” and “Perspectives.”

The PJS has also sought to create interest in Jewish Studies by aiming a number of its courses at first year students. As a result, enrollment in JS has increased gratifyingly, with a number of the First Year Seminars (FYS) at capacity.

- *For the coming academic year, the PJS continues to solicit for and develop First Year Seminars on its roster of courses.*

Graduate Courses for Qualified Seniors

The PJS has not neglected students beyond their First Year. With the support of Arts and Science officials, the PJS has worked with the Graduate Department of Religion and with the Divinity School to permit a select number of qualified seniors to access a number of courses which, until now, were beyond the reach of undergraduates. To qualify, seniors must have a “B” average and not take more than 15 hours in the relevant semester. A full roster of such courses is available at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/jewishstudies/Grad-Undergrad%20Courses.html>.

- *During the coming year, PJS hopes to work with the appropriate Deans of professional schools to release, for one course, faculty with special expertise in Jewish studies in order to expand the offerings available across the University for students with interests in Jewish studies.*

Broadcasting the Virtues and Promise of Jewish Studies

Because undergraduates at Vanderbilt are not yet as aware of Jewish Studies as of longer established programs, the PJS has mounted an aggressive effort to promote its Major and to advertise its courses. It has advertised its courses in *The Hustler* (the student paper) before and during registrations and it has delivered flyers in mailboxes; it has participated in information sessions targeting undergraduates and transfer students, including such forums as the *Majors Fair*, *Freshman Parents Weekend*, and opening days at the Schulman Center.

- *The PJS will continue assiduously to pursue all avenues to improve promotion of its program and courses. There is discussion within the committee to arrive at a format for information sessions to attract broader attention from undergraduates.*

PJS COURSES TAUGHT IN 2005-06

A complete program of courses that fulfill the JS Major and Minor is available on the PJS website (<<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/jewishstudies/curriculum.html#All>>). Below is a listing of 2005-06 courses that were specific to Jewish Studies:

FALL 2005 JEWISH STUDIES CURRICULA

ANTIQUITY AND THE MEDIEVAL WORLD

Jewish Studies 120. *The Jews of Islam: From Muhammad through the Crusades*. Jewish experience under medieval Muslim rule. Analysis of primary sources, legal status of Jews, economic activities, religious developments, cultural contributions, reaction to the Crusades. Wasserstein.

Jewish Studies 121. *Introduction to Jewish History*. A survey of major moments in Jewish history from the Hellenistic period to the foundation of Israel, exploring themes of exclusion and participation, identity and emancipation. Wasserstein.

MODERN & CONTEMPORARY EXPERIENCE

FALL 2005

Jewish Studies 115F.03. *FYS: Radical Jews from Karl Marx to Noam Chomsky*. Study of the leading “radical” Jewish intellectuals and writers of the 19th and the 20th century by examining the basic ideas they promoted, and by assessing the approach they take to social issues with regard to their Judaism or the Jewish community from which they emerged. Includes Erich Fromm, Lowenthal, Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Zellig Harris and Noam Chomsky – to name a few. Barsky.

Jewish Studies 155. *American Jewish Life*. How Jews, Jewish communities, and Judaism in the US and abroad adapt to a changing world, in light of classic sociological themes such as: the relation of the individual to the group; the nature of authority; religion and ethnicity in modern society. Kelner.

Foreign Program Work (FNTM) 251. *Jewish Studies in Prague, Czech Republic*. The CET program in Jewish Studies offers students the opportunity to explore the enormous contribution of Jewish life to the culture, literature, arts and history of East Central Europe. For students who want to take an in-depth look at the rich Jewish history and culture in East Central Europe before the war, its destruction during the Nazi years, and its gradual rebirth after the fall of communism. The city of Prague, where the program is located, is host to perhaps the oldest continuous Jewish community in Europe and one of the richest collections of Judaica in the world. Living in Prague, students will encounter the challenges that the Czech Republic faces in the period of transition between Soviet Communism and the privatization of many political, social and cultural institutions.

CULTURE, PHILOSOPHY, AND LITERATURE

Jewish Studies 115F.02. *FYS: Music and Identity in Jewish Traditions*. This course focuses on music and identity in global Jewish cultures. Provides an introduction to the cultures, contexts, and historical development and structure of Jewish communities throughout the world and considers the ways that music is adopted, adapted, and transformed when performed by individual Jewish communities. Barz.

Jewish Studies 250. *The Problem of Evil in Judaism*. Evil and suffering pose a particular challenge to Jewish monotheism and its belief in the just and providential God. Beginning with a discussion of the Book of Job, we will examine how Jews in various historical periods reflected on the origin and nature of evil. While mythic approaches to evil powerfully emerged in medieval Jewish mysticism, Jewish philosophers sought to demythologize it. The Enlightenment demanded a social and political analysis of the sources of suffering which generated new philosophical and religious conceptions of the problem by Jewish thinkers. We will conclude with reflections on theodicy after the Shoah (Holocaust). Urban.

SPRING 2006 JEWISH STUDIES CURRICULA

MODERN & CONTEMPORARY EXPERIENCE

Jewish Studies 252. *Jewish Social Movements.* How social movements shape contemporary American Jewish culture and politics. Explores movements internal to Judaism and those bringing religion into the public sphere. Kelner.

Jewish Studies 255. *Zionism and Its Critics.* History of the Zionist idea from the 19th century, focusing on ideological, cultural and religious issues and examining criticism from within and without the movement. Urban.

Foreign Program Work (FNTM) 251. *Jewish Studies in Prague, Czech Republic.* See description above

CULTURE, PHILOSOPHY, AND LITERATURE

SPRING 2006 ONLY!

Jewish Studies 115F.04. *FYS: Civil Rights and Civil Wrongs: Black-Jewish Relations in the 1950s and 1960s.* Through an examination of historical and literary texts, as well as visual images, this course will explore the shared history of Blacks and Jews, focusing on the period of its greatest intensity, the 1950's and 1960's. The course will show examples of Black-Jewish relations ranging from the heights of utopian co-operation to the depths of dystopian conflict, with many halfway points in between. Meyer.

Jewish Studies Course Enrichment

Via the office of the Dean of Arts and Science, a broadcast is sent out in the Fall of each year to Vanderbilt tenured or tenure-track colleagues soliciting proposals for courses with Jewish Studies content. A stipend (with benefits) was offered to successful applicants that alternatively could be applied to research. The PJS continues actively to seek additions to its roster of courses in this and other ways.

The PJS will join with the Director of Vanderbilt's Study Abroad program, Gary Johnston, to revive Study Abroad programming in Israel and, together with CET, will begin discussion on developing a JS program in Spain and Israel.

GRADUATE EDUCATION

Via the Graduate Department of Religion, the PJS initiated a two-tiered Master of Arts in Jewish Studies, a program that is fully described in the Annual Report for 2003-2004 but its features may be easily accessed via the internet at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/jewishstudies/MA-Info.html>. Because it is a component of a larger unit, the MA in JS cannot accept more than a handful of students per academic year. The MA in JS welcomed its first students in the Fall of 2004.

In May 2006 our first MA student, Joanna Brichetto, graduated from the Program.

Three students matriculated in the Fall of 2005, one of whom writes of selecting our program over a number of others because at Vanderbilt she will work within a rich array of schools, among them Arts and Science and Divinity.

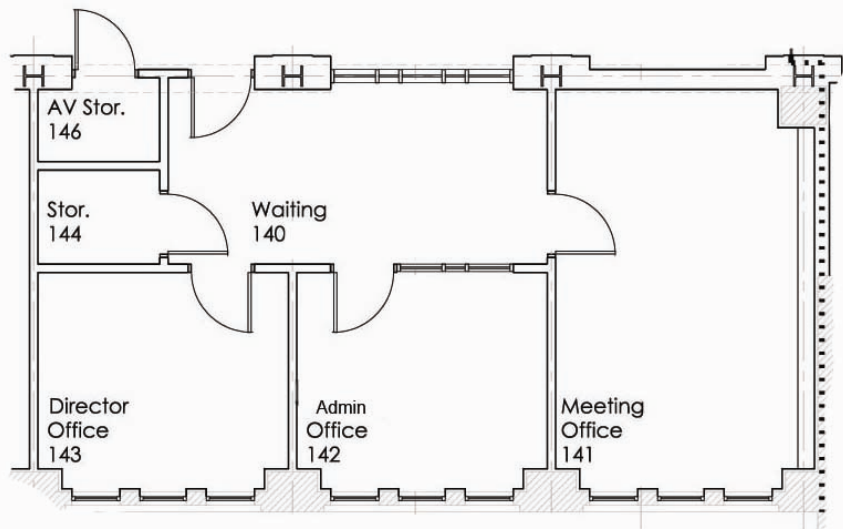
CERTIFICATE IN JEWISH STUDIES

Also via the Graduate Department of Religion the PJS has created a **Certificate in Jewish Studies**. This Certificate gives graduate and professional students already matriculating in diverse programs at Vanderbilt access to interdisciplinary scholarship in the field of Jewish Studies. The goal is to afford such students valuable professional credentials, strengthening their ability to compete for jobs as well as for national fellowship and postdoctoral awards. Requirements (18 hours minimum) include Jewish Studies 245 (“Major Themes in Jewish Studies”), 15 hours of graduate-level courses selected from a number of subfields, and a non-credit final project/paper. More detail is accessible via <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/jewishstudies/Cert%20in%20JS.htm>. The offering has attracted considerable interest, with a dozen enquiries so far.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

➤ THE MOVE TO BUTTRICK HALL

Amid great excitement, the PJS moved into its new quarters in Buttrick Hall in August 2005. The new quarters include a meeting space and offices for the Director and for the Administrator. A waiting area provides space to display general publications and the seminar room hosts a small library of works of interest to Jewish Studies.



The home of the Program in Jewish Studies in Buttrick Hall

We wish to thank the office of Associate Provost Lou Outlaw and all those involved in the transfer, including Hans Mooy (Campus Planning), Jane Kaufman (Procurement), and Ginger Leger (office of Dean Sweeney), for their help and their many courtesies as we decided on the layout and furnishing of our new space.

➤ FACULTY SUPPER- AND LUNCH-SEMINARS

The PJS continued to offer Faculty Supper- and Lunch-Seminars, aiming to foster a community of interest in Jewish Studies and its work. The supper-seminars draw on Vanderbilt or regional faculty for their presentations while the lunch-seminars take advantage of visits by colleagues from other universities. For an hour (lunch seminars) or an hour and a half (supper seminars), colleagues from across the campus listen to a presentation, lunch or sup, and then discuss issues of common interest. The following programs took place this year, all well attended.



Dr. Jeffrey Summit

November 9, 2005 – Jeffrey Summit, Director, Hillel Foundation at Tufts University, *Abayudaya: The Music and Culture of the Jews of Uganda*

April 6, 2006 – Robert Chazan, S.H. and Helen R. Scheuer Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University, *Christendom and its Discontents: The Medieval Roots of Modern Jewish Life*



Dr. Robert Chazan

April 26, 2006 – Shaul Kelner, Assistant Professor of Sociology and of Jewish Studies
Mobilizing Passover: Ritual, Strategy and Identity in the Movement to Free Soviet Jews



Faculty Supper Seminar

- *These programs will continue next academic year with the scheduling of at least two supper seminars per semester plus as many lunch seminars as opportunities arise.*

➤ **LECTURES**

The PJS continued to sponsor lectures, on its own or in conjunction with other departments. It advertised them widely, using channels within the campus and beyond. The program has committed to contribute yearly to the Chancellor's Holocaust Series. During 2005-06, the PJS sponsored or co-sponsored the following lectures, all open to the public:

- *The Holocaust Lecture Series*
- *November 9-10, 2005* - Professor Phil Kasinitz, Professor of Sociology at Hunter College and the CUNY Graduate Center, *The Next Generation: Russian Jewish Young Adults in Contemporary New York*
- *January 12-13, 2006* - Professor Sam Cohn, Professor of History, University of Glasgow, Scotland, *The Black Death and the Burning of the Jews*
- *February 10, 2006* - Professor Shaye Cohen, Littauer Professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, *Are Women in the Covenant? Circumcision and Brit in Judaism*

- *March 16, 2006* – Dr. Scott Lasensky, Senior Research Associate, U.S. Institute of Peace, Washington D.C., *Ethno-Nationalist Foreign Policy: The Jewish Diaspora in World Politics*
- *April 12, 2006* – Dr. Susan Neiman, Director of the Einstein Forum, Berlin, *Natural Evils? From Lisbon to New Orleans*

Future lectures are in the planning. The PJS always welcomes co-sponsoring visits by scholars with other departments and schools. We also look forward to increased cooperation with the Schulman Center under the leadership of its Director, Ari Dubin.

➤ **CONFERENCES**

- *Co-sponsorship of a panel discussion dealing with the topic of contemporary artists, especially those in academia, whose creative work reflects their religious beliefs and part of the joint meeting of the Southeastern College Art Conference and the Mid-America College Art Association in October 2006.*
- *For Spring 2007 and in conjunction with the first Nashville Jewish Music Festival and the thirtieth annual Vanderbilt Holocaust Lecture Series (“Against Cultural Genocide”), the PJS will be co-sponsoring a three-day conference, “On the Lip(s) of Miriam’s Well: Jews/Women/Cultures.” This first major university conference to explore Jewish women and the arts is co-chaired by Joy Calico (Blair School of Music), Jay Geller (Divinity School) and Bill Smith (Psychology). It will have a global perspective: North African as well as North American, Eastern as well as Central European, Israeli as well as Diasporic. It will also cover a broad range of cultural practices (Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, and Sephardi), languages (Hebrew, Yiddish, and Ladino), and convictions (from traditional to secular).*

➤ **OTHER**

- Increased student awareness of the PJS via the Web, brochures, and advertising
- Experimented with a new form of informal meeting, the *Mifgash*, for JS students and faculty
- Held a *Shulchan* for students, November 7, 2005
- Subsidized a student in the program in Jewish Studies in Prague
- Subsidized four M.A. students, along with the Graduate Department of Religions, for a total of 85% of tuition
- Updated Undergraduate, Masters and Certificate brochures

ADMINISTRATION

Through its Administrator, Lynne Perler, the program

- Maintained the office of the PJS
- Successfully transferred the PJS's activities and work into the new offices in Buttrick Hall
- Maintained the PJS website
- Promoted the PJS through student-targeted print advertising (*InnerVU*, *Hustler*, etc.):
 - August 2005 – advertised Fall 2005 JS courses in *Hustler*
 - August 2005 – delivered 4500 flyers to student mailboxes for Fall 2005 courses
 - November 2005 – delivered 4500 flyers to student mailboxes for Spring 2006 courses
 - November 2005 – advertised Spring 2006 courses in *Hustler*
 - April 2006 – delivered 4500 flyers to student mailboxes for Fall 2006 courses
 - April 2006 – advertised Fall 2006 courses in *Hustler*
- Promoted PJS through community-targeted print articles of interest (Nashville Business Register, etc.)
- Participated in student-targeted events – Majors Fair, Freshman Parents Weekend, A&S Open House, Graduate Orientation

LOOKING AHEAD

As it begins its fifth year of operation, the PJS hopes to forge ahead on all fronts, securing it as a premier program among peer institutions. What are our ambitions for the future?

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

The PJS begins the new academic year 2006-07 with a new colleague in literature of the Jewish people, thus filling the fourth position originally pledged by the Provost. Because these appointments are generally set in established departments, they enrich the mission of Jewish Studies no less than that of the host departments. For this reason, we are delighted that the Provost and the Dean have committed to further appointments designed to help both the Program in Jewish Studies and departments and schools with which new appointees are associated. This academic year (2006-07), we shall be filling a post in Modern Jewish History in collaboration with the History Department in the College of Arts and Science, and further development is promised us. A desideratum is a specialist in Jewish law, rabbinic or otherwise, and such an appointment intrinsically links us with one of our professional schools.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

GRADUATE PROGRAMMING

Strong ties between Jewish Studies and Peabody College are of great significance to the PJS. Many hours have been spent in brainstorming potential programs of mutual interest largely because marrying Jewish Studies to the premier school of Education in North America can result in programs that are scarcely paralleled elsewhere. We sketched one such avenue in last year's *Annual Report*; while insufficient progress has been made as yet this goal remains among the most important that we face.

- ***Master of Education in Jewish Education.*** *This potentially vital program develops from three conditions: the incomparable prestige of Peabody as a premier institution in the study and implementation of education, the steadily maturing Program in Jewish Studies, and the acknowledged shortage of qualified*

teachers in Jewish education, at all levels. The field of Jewish education has long suffered from a shortage of professional Jewish educators, many of whom have no formal training and even fewer have strong backgrounds in Jewish studies. In fact, the Commission on Jewish Education in North America has declared the building of the profession of Jewish education a most essential condition for improving Jewish education in North America. In Boston and Los Angeles, a program was recently launched to attract, train, inspire, and retain top-quality educators in Jewish Day Schools. This initiative does not include the South where in our cities and smaller towns the need increases but cannot yet be met.

Higher education institutions that serve the Jewish community (among them Spertus College in Chicago and Baltimore Hebrew College), do train Jewish educators; however, such institutions lack the capacity to meet the demand and, more importantly, they lack the research mission of premier universities. Recently, some of our peer institutions have inaugurated Jewish Education programs, most notably at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and at New York University. These programs are attracting quality candidates wishing to earn a prestigious degree in Jewish Education. At Vanderbilt, we can offer as much or better, while at the same time serving the needs of Jewish education in the South.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The PJS has taken advantage of resources available to the university to shape and promote its goals. A number of very favorable stories have been published about its effort in local media and there is no reason why our success (and the reasons for it) should not play on boarder horizons too. The office of Michael Schoenfeld, Vice Chancellor for Public Affairs, has been particularly helpful in spreading our message, via good stories filed by Jim Patterson of the News Services. Nonetheless, more can be done to bring focus to the positive developments that the PJS has fostered and possibly also to stimulate financial investment from Vanderbilt alumni no less than from philanthropists. It might help for the PJS to launch an electronic *Newsletter*, filling its pages not just with news of local developments but also with statements by PJS faculty members on issues that arise from their research and teaching as well as with profiles of students currently taking advantage of the many programs the PJS has launched.

LOOKING BACK

At the end of the fourth year of the program's existence we look back to a period of full participation in Vanderbilt's life, and forward to increased sharing in the interdisciplinary mission of our University. The Program in Jewish Studies has developed a curriculum worthy of a great university, and also secured for itself a niche in Vanderbilt's culture. This it could not have done without the active and ready support of the administration, in particular the Chancellor, the Provost, and the Deans of Arts and Science and Divinity. The Program has also profited over the years from the contributions of its dedicated committee members, the support of colleagues from all across the campus, and the devotion of Lynne Perler, the Program's Administrator and a trusted partner in streamlining its future.

As we look back, it is also fitting to note the passing on June 6, 2006, of Lou H. Silberman. Although he retired from Vanderbilt long before the PJS came into existence, he was a vital element in the prehistory of what led to its creation. Silberman taught at Vanderbilt from 1952 to 1980 and was named Hillel Professor of Jewish Literature in 1955. He played a key role in the launching of the Graduate Department of Religion and the undergraduate Department of Religious Studies, which he chaired from 1970 to 1976. He helped to build up the Judaica collections in the University's library, fostered dialogue between the Jewish and Christian communities, and encouraged dialogue on the implications of the Holocaust after World War II. He was also deeply involved in the protests that helped reverse the expulsion of the civil rights leader James Lawson from Vanderbilt Divinity School in 1960. Lawson will return to Vanderbilt as a Distinguished University Professor in 2006-07.

Comments and reactions welcome.



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