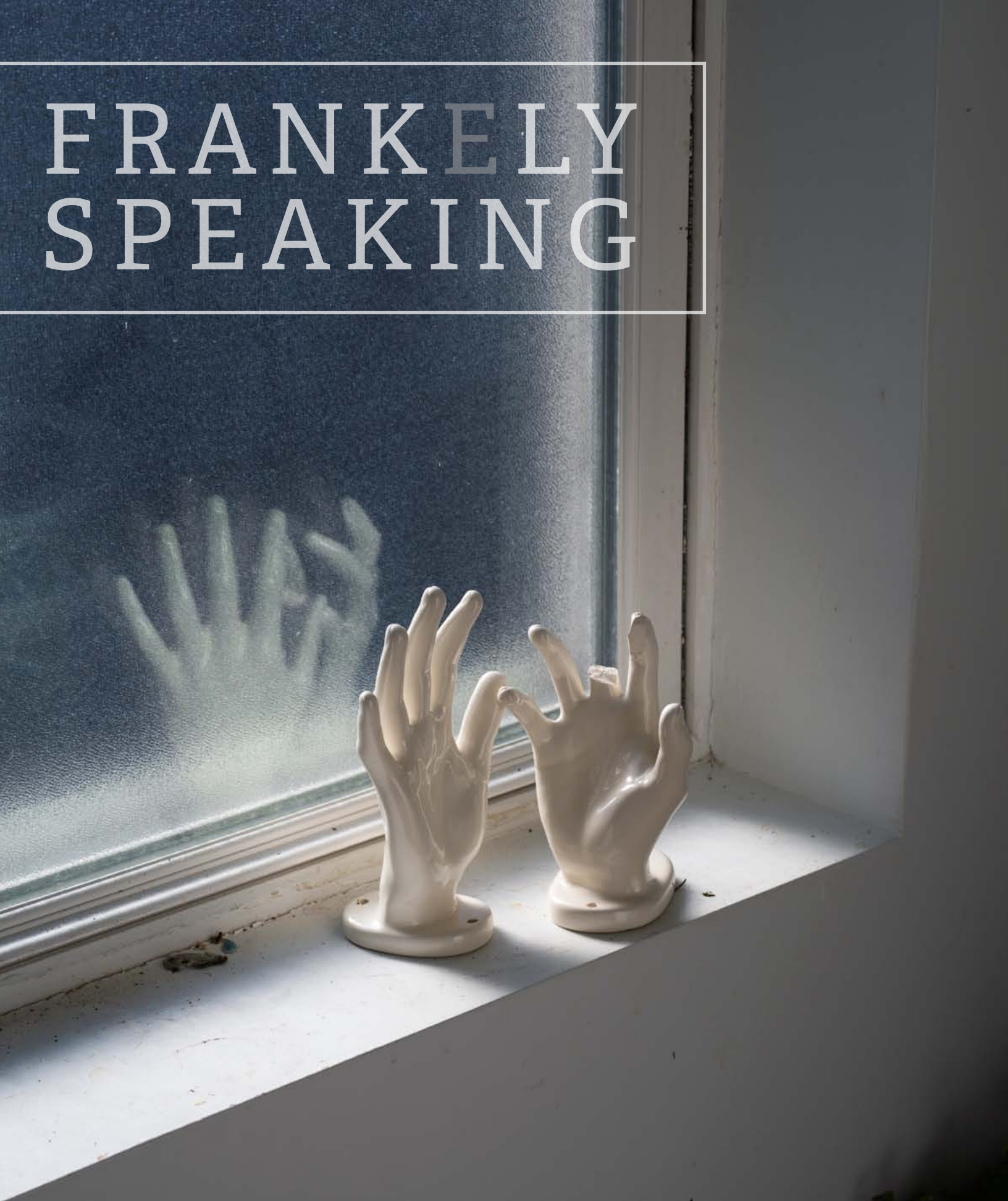


FRANKELY SPEAKING



LSA

JEAN & SAMUEL FRANKEL
CENTER FOR JUDAIC STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

WINTER 2025

What is the role of a Jewish studies program at a public university, especially in these turbulent times?

This question confronts Jewish studies programs across North America, and the responses are as varied as these programs. Here at the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, we have committed to work in four main areas: combating divisiveness on our own campus; enriching students' understanding of Jewish societies; offering relevant public programming and outreach across communities; and conducting cutting-edge research that brings Jewish studies into dialogue with other disciplines. I'm pleased to share with you examples of these different efforts.



Maya Barzilai
Director of the Frankel
Center for Judaic Studies

Faculty at the Frankel Center have provided expert knowledge and experience as part of university-wide task forces and initiatives to combat hatred and divisiveness and increase awareness of the diversity of Jewish life. Constituted before October of 2023, the "Jewish Life and Antisemitism Initiative," promoted by Frankel Center faculty with the support of the U-M Provost's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, has connected faculty and staff across LSA and other U-M schools and colleges. This initiative supports programs that combat religious and ethnic intolerance and increase intergroup understanding and dialogue. Another major initiative promoted by faculty at the Frankel Center is the recently inaugurated Michigan Wallenberg Institute. Housed in U-M's College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, the Wallenberg Institute is dedicated to research, teaching, and public engagement around issues of antisemitism, divisiveness, and discrimination. In the current winter term, the institute has initiated a series of moderated conversations that promote dialogue across differences and instill the values of empathy, tolerance, and courage.

We have also prioritized our mission to instruct students about the complex histories and cultures of Jews across the globe. Specifically, our faculty use comparative frameworks to enrich students' understanding of Jewish societies. In recent years, the Frankel Center has developed research and teaching strengths in comparative religion and culture. We offer courses such as "Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths," "Women, Gender, and Religion," "Jews of the Middle East," "Modern Questions, Biblical Answers," "Global History of Hip Hop," and "Jews as a Minority Group in Medieval Times."

Using diverse sources and pedagogical approaches, our faculty help students better understand the interactions among Jews and other ethnoreligious groups, both past and present. Students can explore, for instance, how historical exchanges between Muslim and Jewish communities, and between Islamic and Jewish thought, have enriched and shaped both traditions. We hope that this deep dive into political, social, and cultural contexts will provide students at Michigan with the knowledge and skills needed to productively discuss current events in Israel and the Middle East.

In 2024–2025, The Frankel Center’s public programming focused on “Il/legalities: Law and Legal Thinking in Jewish Histories and Cultures.” This series of events and lectures examines the role of legal matters in the religious, social, and political life of Jews in different places and eras. In fall 2024, we hosted Paula Fredriksen, Aurelio Professor of Scripture emerita at Boston University, and current faculty at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Fredriksen explored the apostle Paul’s understanding of Jewish law, given his messianic commitments. Our next event was a live concert and lecture at the Ann Arbor Ark venue entitled “Wild Burning Rage & Song: Replies to Scottsboro,” featuring guest performers Heather Klein and Anthony Russell Amelia Glaser, Heather Klein, Anthony Russell, and Uri Schreter (see page 14). Further programs included a discussion with Marc Dollinger (Professor of Jewish Studies and Social Responsibility at San Francisco State University) on his book *Black Power, Jewish Politics: Reinventing the Alliance in the 1960s*, and an exploration by Tamar Menashe (assistant professor of History and Jewish Studies at Emory University) of how German Jewish women navigated Jewish, imperial, and local laws in the early modern German Imperial Supreme Court.

The Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies embarked on its yearlong exploration of Jewish/Queer/Trans Studies. Our head fellow, associate professor Bryan K. Roby (U–M), convened an international group of scholars and activists working on projects in the fields of queer and trans histories, cultures, and literatures. This institute fosters dialogue among the fields of Jewish studies, queer, and trans studies, emphasizing the relevance of non–Ashkenazi perspectives and queer of color critiques for this kind of intellectual exchange. The fellows had a productive fall semester as they workshopped wide-ranging projects and participated in artist encounters with comics artist Leela Corman, performance artist 2Fik, and photographer Elisheva Gavra. Another highlight of the fall term was an art exhibition by Rafael Neis (Professor of History and Jewish Studies, U–M) at the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, entitled “KIN: Us and Our Kinds.”

My gratitude goes out to the amazing faculty, students, and staff at the Frankel Center who have made these events, programs, and rich discussions possible. A big shout-out to our welcoming, thoughtful, and hard-working staff: Michele Fleming, Caitlyn Gordon, Kristina Riemer, and Cheri Thompson. They support the mission of the Frankel Center and Institute with cheer and resourcefulness. I am also grateful to my colleague Julian Levinson for his ongoing engagement with students and faculty as Associate Director.

I’ll end by wishing you all a productive semester and summer ahead! I hope you stay in touch with the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies and I always welcome your inquiries and feedback.

Maya Barzilai

*Director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies
Professor of Hebrew Literature and Jewish Culture*

Raoul Wallenberg Institute at the University of Michigan Launches with an Inaugural Public Event

By **Miriam Mora**, Managing Director,
Raoul Wallenberg Institute

The Raoul Wallenberg Institute at the University of Michigan celebrated its inauguration at a roundtable discussion held in Rackham Amphitheatre on January 21, 2025, on the question of “Can one person make a difference, and if so, how?”

Taking place during the week of MLK Day, an intergenerational group of distinguished panelists considered the historical impact of individuals like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Raoul Wallenberg, as well as the movements they joined, created, or motivated through their actions. Panelists included local Holocaust survivor and educator Irene Butter; Matthew Countryman, Associate Professor of History and Associate Professor of Afroamerican and African Studies; Elliot Ratzman, research fellow at the Raoul Wallenberg Institute; and University of Michigan undergraduate student Sooyun Christina Kim.

The event was the first in a series of institute-sponsored roundtable discussions on contentious questions of religious, ethnic, national, and moral significance. Announced in late 2023, the Raoul Wallenberg Institute opened its doors in the fall of 2024, under the leadership of Jeffrey Veidlinger, the Joseph Brodsky Collegiate Professorship of History and Judaic Studies at U-M. The former Director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, Veidlinger has taught courses on the Holocaust, antisemitism, and Jewish history since his arrival at the university in 2013. A specialist on Jewish history in Russia and Ukraine, his latest work, *In the Midst of Civilized Europe: The Pogroms of 1918–1921 and the Onset of the Holocaust*, won a Canadian Jewish Literary Award, a Vine Book Award, and was a finalist for the Lionel Gelber Prize, the National Jewish Book Award, and the Wingate Literary Prize. The leadership of the institute also includes an executive committee composed of faculty experts from around the university.

Inspired by the example of Raoul Wallenberg, a 1935 University of Michigan graduate who went on to save tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust, the mission of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute is to study hatred directed against religious and ethnic communities, foster



cross-cultural understanding, and elevate civic discourse. Through teaching, research, and public engagement, the institute seeks to develop strategies to combat antisemitism, divisiveness, and discrimination. “Together we can honor the legacy of Raoul Wallenberg by fostering the values he embodied—empathy, tolerance, courage, and leadership,” says Veidlinger.

Already in its first year of operation, the institute has begun to make an impact. It has initiated three research projects: a study of religious holiday celebrations in public schools in the United States and their effects on religiously diverse children and families; a history of hatred in the Great Lakes region; and a longitudinal

“Together we can honor the legacy of Raoul Wallenberg by fostering the values he embodied—empathy, tolerance, courage, and leadership.”

study of the views of university students regarding religious and ethnic minorities, which is being conducted in partnership with the Institute for Social Research. Three research fellows are also in residence: Elliot Ratzman works on antiracism in the late 20th century; Yuri Kaparulin researches genocide in Ukraine; and Aaron Rock-Singer studies Islamic movements and law in Mandatory Palestine. The institute has also initiated several courses, including a dialogue course on Israel and Palestine and a flagship course on religious and ethnic tolerance.

For future events, visit the Wallenberg Institute website at <https://lsa.umich.edu/wallenberg>.

Roundtable Panelists
(above, left to right):

Elliot Ratzman, Research Fellow,
Raoul Wallenberg Institute

Matthew J. Countryman, Associate
Professor of Afroamerican &
African Studies, and History

Irene Butter, Professor Emerita of
Public Health, Holocaust survivor,
and peace activist

Jeffrey Veidlinger, Moderator:
Director, Raoul Wallenberg Institute

Sooyun Christina Kim,
Undergraduate LSA – Student

Padnos Public Engagement on Jewish Learning Event

“How Women Changed American Religion: A Jewish Perspective”



Karla Goldman, Sol Drachler Professor of Social Work, Professor of Social Work, School of Social Work and Professor of Judaic Studies

On February 27, an audience of faculty, students, and the public community members assembled in Grand Rapids for the 5th annual Padnos Public Engagement on Jewish Learning Event. Sol Drachler Professor of Social Work and Professor of Judaic Studies Dr. Karla Goldman, presented a lecture called “How Women Changed American Religion: A Jewish Perspective” in the Regency Room on Grand Valley State’s Pew Campus. This event was also livestreamed for the benefit of the Frankel Center’s audience in Ann Arbor.

“Women’s history is American religious history,” as historian Ann Braude has famously claimed. The 2025 Padnos Lecture explored how American Judaism has been shaped by general societal expectations for women’s religious behavior and by new active roles Jewish women took on within their religious institutions. Major changes that took place included the restructuring of synagogue architecture with the removal of the women’s gallery, the redefinition of community through women’s volunteerism, and the introduction of women’s religious leadership, which also challenged conventional theology. Historically and today, American Judaism—in dialogue with American society and other models of religious practice—has constantly evolved and transformed in an effort to match the ever-moving target of gendered expectations for religious behavior and practice.

Goldman directs the University of Michigan Jewish Communal Leadership Program, a collaborative effort between the School of Social Work and the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies. Her research focuses on the history of the American Jewish experience, with special attention to the history of American Jewish communities and the evolving roles and contributions of American Jewish women.

Goldman's lecture was an exciting addition to the Annual Padnos Engagement on Jewish Learning Lecture Series. It was made possible by a gift from the Stuart and Barbara Padnos Foundation to the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies. This gift facilitates annual public educational activities in Jewish studies throughout the state, with a focus on West Michigan.



Dr. Karla Goldman poses with former students Joanna Bush and Rabbi John Bush at the 5th annual Padnos Lecture.

Student Feature

Ari Leflein

Judaic Studies Student Ambassador

This past summer, I had the unique opportunity to attend and speak at a commemorative event located at the Peace Palace in The Hague, the Netherlands. This event honored the lives and legacies of Benjamin Ferencz, who served as the Chief Prosecutor at the Nuremberg Einsatzgruppen Trial before leading the charge for Jewish restitution in Germany and eventually lobbying for the International Criminal Court



Ari Leflein

(ICC), and Judge Thomas Buergenthal, who was one of the youngest concentration camp survivors, as well as a renowned human rights advocate and judge at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the International Court of Justice (ICJ). At this commemorative event, I spoke about my personal meeting and correspondences with Mr. Ferencz and the

tremendous impact he has had on my life. I also relayed the inspirational message that Mr. Ferencz imparted to me and so many others about pursuing and achieving a more peaceful and humane world guided by the rule of law. Attending this event in the Netherlands provided a wonderful opportunity to embrace the legacies of two icons and to continue learning from leaders in the fields of Holocaust studies, international law, and human rights. This event also allowed me to continue broadening my understandings as I progress on my educational path and develop my honors thesis on the topic of the Nuremberg Trials and the pursuit for justice after World War II and the Holocaust.

Cara Rock-Singer

How did you first become interested in this area of research?

I am a scholar of Judaism, science, and technology, with particular focus on gender and American Judaism. I certainly didn't take the most conventional path to the humanities, though. I was a molecular biology major and took a religion class to fulfill a humanities requirement, and I fell in love. I took more and more religion classes in parallel to my science classes until a mentor suggested I study the intersections of religion and science. My increasing interest in gender and reproduction, on the other hand, reflected both encountering scholarship that I found compelling as well as my own experience of becoming a mother.

What's your favorite thing about it?

The thing I love most about my area of research is that it is exploratory and creative. As an ethnographer, I am able to immerse in new communities and places, but also inhabit my own worlds in new ways. My research and writing are a creative outlets for understanding American Jewish life and I get to draw on the tools of multiple intellectual traditions—including rabbinics, feminist thought, and modern science—to do so.

Why did you choose to come to the University of Michigan?

I was excited to come to a place with such a vibrant intellectual community, including faculty whose work I've long admired, and incredible support for scholarship and teaching. I was also excited to be able to live and raise a family in a lively small city like Ann Arbor.

Why do you think it is important to study this area of research?

At a pivotal moment for the future of reproductive freedom in the United States, public discussion over how religion, science, and technology shape American law and politics are acutely visible yet narrowly focused on religious freedom and abortion access. My research offers a broad understanding of the role of reproductive bodies in religious and political communities and helps us understand the broader stakes of these debates.

Why do you think it's important to study Judaic Studies/Humanities in general?

I often think of James Baldwin's oft-quoted line, "We made the world we're living in, and we have to make it over." I think the humanities offer us tools for analyzing the world, so as we navigate, reimagine, and remake it, we can do so knowl-

Below, left: "Littoral" (foreground) and "Salted Lake" (background) from Israeli artist Sigalit Landau's exhibit "The Burning Sea," at the Israel Museum (2003). Rock-Singer features Landau's exhibit in her book manuscript, *Gestating Judaism*.

Below, right: A still of the video installation "DeadSee" (background) and the sculpture "Baptistry" (foreground) from Israeli artist Sigalit Landau's exhibit "The Burning Sea," at the Israel Museum (2003), which Rock-Singer features in *Gestating Judaism*.





Cara Rock-Singer, Lama Shetzer Professor of Contemporary Jewish Life and Assistant Professor of Judaic Studies

edgeably and intentionally. My ethnographic research has afforded me deep immersive experiences in feminist communities that are wrestling with pressing contemporary social problems. I have watched these groups use Jewish texts and rituals to address gender, racial, and economic power imbalances in Jewish and American society. These are tools we desperately need, especially in times like these.

How has your work evolved since you first started your career?

Since I started my career, my engagement with Jewish texts has significantly expanded. Much of my work now takes the form of what I call “ethnodrashy,” my mix of ethnography—a qualitative study of human life and behavior—with midrash, a rabbinic interpretative technique. I rely on midrash as a textual technology whose rhythm, cycles, and telescoping of time create a disruptive effect on common Euro-American narratives about gender, politics, and religion.

What courses do you teach and what do you want students to take away from them?

I have been indelibly shaped by my undergraduate experience studying STEM in an experimental integrated sciences program, which challenged me to learn through problem solving and collaboration. I strive as a teacher is to “make the familiar strange,” which I do by exposing students to a wide range of genres, perspectives, and sensorial experiences. I also work with students to develop critical skills for reading and writing, and in particular, want students to learn how to ask open, generative questions.

This year I am teaching three courses that are new to the University of Michigan. In the fall, I am teaching a lecture, cross-listed with Gender and Women’s Studies and American Culture, called “Women, Gender, and Religion.” I am also teaching a first-year seminar in Judaic Studies, “Jewish Women and the Body of Tradition.” In the winter term, I will be teaching “The American Jewish Life of DNA,” which examines the intersections of genetics with Jewish religion and culture.

What is going to be your next project?

I have begun work on my second book project, *Inherited Futures: The American Jewish Life of Genetics and Epigenetics*, which incorporates my undergraduate research on genetics and epigenetics into my research on contemporary Judaism. Specifically, *Inherited Futures* investigates how modern science and technology have created novel forms of Jewish religion: new kinship practices that aimed to eliminate Tay Sachs, ritual communities that lend spiritual support to BRCA carriers, and popular media that has inculcated belief in epigenetic inheritance of Holocaust trauma. This book will shed new light on the role of biological science in imagining Jewish collective identity in 20th-century America.

Pavel Brunssen



Pavel Brunssen

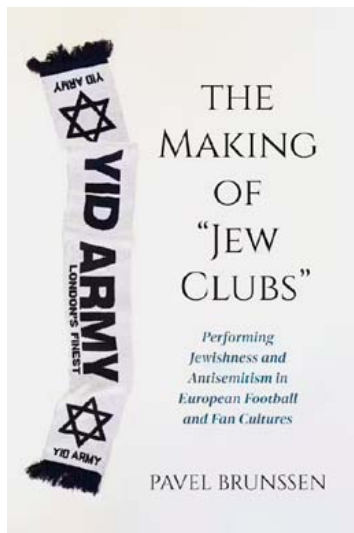
Describe your job responsibilities:

As a research associate at the Research Center on Antigypsyism at Heidelberg University, my primary responsibility is conducting a research project funded by the Alfred Landecker Foundation. This five-year project focuses on examining antigypsyism and minority subjectivity in German popular culture, particularly in soccer,

hip-hop, and carnival. My work involves analyzing the (dis)continuities in the portrayal of Sinti and Roma people, exploring how they gain agency and representation, and investigating how postmemory influences the experiences of Sinti and Roma today. I utilize qualitative methods, including analysis of performances, testimonials, internet posts, song lyrics, images, and participant observation. Additionally, during the 2024–25 academic year, I am a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute of Contemporary History at Södertörn University in Stockholm, Sweden, where I also serve as a guest Lecturer in Critical Romani Studies, teaching a seminar on “Antigypsyism in comparison with Afrophobia, Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and anti-Sami racism.”

What is the most rewarding part of your work?

The opportunity to engage with students and colleagues, discussing and developing ideas that address pressing issues such as antigypsyism. Teaching and mentoring allow me to inspire students and foster a deeper understanding of discrimination and minority issues. Additionally, raising awareness about antigypsyism—a form of racism that is often overlooked—feels deeply impactful. I also value the interdisciplinary and international collaboration aspects of my role. Currently, I co-organize a monthly colloquium on antigypsyism research and a conference at Södertörn University in Sweden on “Antigypsyism: History and Memory,” which brings together scholars from Europe, the US, and beyond. Finally, I am thrilled that the fellowship has provided me the time to finalize my dissertation as a revised book manuscript, titled *The Making of ‘Jew Clubs’: Performing Jewishness and Antisemitism in European Football and Fan Cultures*, which will be published by Indiana University Press in September 2025.



“Teaching and mentoring allow me to inspire students and foster a deeper understanding of discrimination and minority issues. Additionally, raising awareness about antigypsyism—a form of racism that is often overlooked—feels deeply impactful.”

Tell us about studying at the Frankel Center.

It was a transformative experience. The center’s rigorous academic environment pushed me to deepen my knowledge and hone my research skills in Judaic studies and beyond. Its interdisciplinary approach was crucial to expanding my perspectives, enabling me to examine Jewish studies through multiple lenses and integrate these diverse insights into my work. The faculty, such as Prof. Scott Spector, had a significant impact on my academic development.

His class on minority subjectivity was a pivotal moment, shaping my current research project on antigypsyism and minority subjectivity in German popular culture. Additionally, the generous funding I received allowed me to conduct crucial onsite research in Europe for my dissertation and thus the forthcoming book.

How did your education prepare you for your current job?

It was instrumental. The capstone course was a key component in developing my writing and publication skills, which are essential to my research and professional work. At the University of Michigan, I gained a comprehensive skill set, including advanced teaching techniques through the graduate teacher certificate program. Additionally, the mentorship of Prof.

Andrei S. Markovits was invaluable; our continued collaboration on several articles examining Jewish experiences and antisemitism in European soccer, among other topics, are a significant aspect of my academic work. Overall, the combination of rigorous coursework, practical teaching experience, and collaborative research opportunities at U-M provided a solid foundation for my current responsibilities.

What advice would you give to students who are considering studying Judaic Studies?

My advice is to fully engage with the interdisciplinary nature of the field. Embrace opportunities to explore different aspects of Jewish history, culture, and religion to gain a comprehensive understanding. Building strong relationships with faculty is also crucial; their mentorship can provide invaluable guidance and open doors to research opportunities. Actively participating in academic communities and attending conferences and seminars will help you build a professional network and stay connected with the latest developments in the field. Additionally, take advantage of programs like the graduate teacher certificate, which offers a wide range of opportunities to develop practical skills in teaching.

Art Exhibition

KIN: Us and Our Kinds



Artists Rafael Neis and Anne Vetter

by **Rafael Rachel Neis**,
Jean and Samuel
Frankel Professor of
Rabbinic Literature,
Professor of Judaic
Studies and Professor
of History

In fall 2024, the Lane Hall exhibit space featured works by two exciting visual artists: Rafael Neis and Anne Vetter. Rafe Neis's exhibition, "KIN: Us and Our Kinds," assembles a menagerie of queer beings who dwell outside normative gender and species categories. Across painting, drawing, and printmaking, images of rogue zoology and extravagant gender congregate and commune. KIN engages ancient texts and comics, as well as a love for process and mark-making, and a disregard for the putative boundaries between abstraction and figuration.

KIN closed with a festive and vibrant—and well attended—final event: KINdrag, organized by Neis and Frankel Center Events & Communications Coordinator, Caitlyn Gordon. There was a conversation with the artist: NPR's Neda Ulaby interviewed Neis with searching questions about their process, the relationship between their art and scholarship, and the religious and mythological resonances within the artwork.

This was followed by a drag/musical performance by *Animal Acts*, an ad hoc performance/music ensemble comprising of guest performers London Beck, Orly Rubinfeld, Morgan Meis, and Stefany Anne Golberg, and U-M Faculty Aileen Das, Jessie DeGrado, Rafe Neis. The event then morphed into a community dance party DJ'ed by Graduate Student Kelsie Ehalt.

Neis reflects on the event, "This art show comprised work I've produced in the past decade and longer that has circled around and even instigated my scholarship on animality, humanness, the divine, the demonic, and the visual, material, and embodied crossings among these qualities and categories. It felt especially important to create, gather, and show work that celebrates communities that fall in between the categories that are taken to be natural and obvious. My comics, paintings, and drawings engage vibrant color, joyful mark-making, narrative and abstraction, that comprise an archive of ancient/future worlds in which queer beings commune."

Artist Lecture

Love is Not the Last Room



Vetter's photography exhibition, "Love is Not the Last Room," is made in collaboration with the artist's family—their parents, their brothers, and their partner. It is an examination of play and leisure, tension and freedom. Through photographs, Vetter processes how they learned to relate in their most intimate connections, and how they relate now. This project explores queer familial relationships, and uses Vetter's own gender fluidity as a lens to examine the gendered experiences of their family members.

"Still now, but especially in 2019, there was a lot of pressure on any photographer with a marginalized identity to make their work about that identity in a way that was easily readable to people who are not of that group. I realized that this was something that not only was I not interested in, but I was also not good at. The photos where I picked up my camera to make a photo about my gender queerness ended up being some of my weakest work, so I ended up just using the camera as a way to watch myself,

This project explores queer familial relationships, and uses Vetter's own gender fluidity as a lens to examine the gendered experiences of their family members.

to explore my body, to explore how it felt, and to use the camera as a way to engage with my own dysphoria," said Vetter during their lecture on September 17.

Neis and Vetter's exhibits were on display on view from September 17 through December 6, 2024.

The fall exhibits are presented with support from the Department of Women's & Gender Studies, the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies, and the CEW+ Frances and Sydney Lewis Visiting Leaders Fund.



Wild Burning Rage and Song: Replies to Scottsboro

by **Shachar Pinsker**,
Professor of Middle
East Studies and
Judaic Studies

On Wednesday, November 6, the Frankel Center brought to The Ark in Ann Arbor a lecture/concert entitled “Wild Burning Rage and Song: Replies to Scottsboro.”

The Scottsboro Trials stand as one of the most notorious miscarriages of justice in the history of America. Beginning in 1931 with a false accusation of rape against nine Black teenagers, the case went on to invigorate a nascent civil rights movement, earned the support of the Communist Party, and establish itself as a watchword among various strands of the American Left. These events inspired reaction from the contemporary world of arts and letters, most famously by the African American poets Langston Hughes and Richard Wright, as well as by the novelist Harper Lee. The Yiddish American intelligentsia of the

1930s also produced a body of creative response, including many poems that passionately took up the themes of the trial, juxtaposing its American injustices with a diversity of images, tropes, and language imbued with their own distinct histories of oppression.

The concert/lecture is a collaboration between Professor Amelia Glaser (UC San Diego), the author of the award-winning book *Songs in Dark Times: Yiddish Poetry of Struggle from Scottsboro to Palestine* (Harvard University Press, 2020) and three accomplished musicians with extensive knowledge of Jewish and African American music. In her research, Glaser discovered Yiddish poems about the Scottsboro Trials, which she translated into English. She then collaborated with composer, pianist, and scholar Uri Schreter, and composers/vocalists Heather Klein and Anthony Russell to



Left: Pictured from right to left: Uri Schreter, Heather Klein, Anthony Russell, and Amelia Glaser

Right top: Pianist Uri Schreter's (Harvard) original compositions brings the historical Yiddish poems to new life on stage.

Center: Vocalists Heather Klein and Anthony Russell perform Yiddish poems in front of a screen displaying the English translation

Bottom: Schreter, Klein, and Russell, answer audience questions following the performance.



bring both Yiddish and African American poems about Scottsboro to new life on the stage.

While Glaser explained the historical and literary context of the poems, the musicians performed them in a combination of Yiddish and English, with transliterations and translations displayed on a screen. Some of the poems featured were "The Negro Dies" by Berish Vaynshteyn and "God's Black Lamb" by Malka Lee, along with "I Have Seen Black Hands" by Wright.

It was a fascinating and deeply moving event that delved into the mixed Christian and Jewish images prominent in many of the poems, as well as the Jewish and African American musical styles of the period. The event highlighted the role of poetry and music in exploring complex historical events in powerful and moving ways that also resonated strongly with many questions we are facing today.



The 2024–25 Frankel Institute Fellows

In this academic year, the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies has focused on the theme of “Jewish/Queer/Trans,” under the leadership of head fellow UM associate professor Bryan Roby.

Throughout this theme year, we have explored in the broadest possible ways how queer/trans studies intersect with studies of Jews, Jewishness, Judaism, and indeed Jewish studies itself, from the full range of humanistic, artistic, activist, and social science perspectives. The Frankel Institute has assembled a group of scholars, writers, and artists that have allowed us to explore this set of fundamental issues across the temporal gamut of ancient to the present and in Middle Eastern, African, Asian, European, and American societal contexts.

The Fellows have considered the ways in which Jewish studies might strengthen queer and trans studies. At the same time, they have inquired into how queer and trans studies might aid the interrogation of foundational categories deployed in Jewish studies. In doing so, the Institute fellows seek to challenge social hierarchies, notions of sacred/profane, religious conceptions, political movements and structures, knowledge paradigms, and communal boundaries: all key elements in the history of studies of Jews and Judaism. That is, how can insights from queer and trans studies enrich and complicate our understanding of the dispersed, diverse, and shifting histories of Jewish sexual cultures and gender systems, as well as social, cultural, and racialized formations of Jewishness more broadly? This fellowship year has promoted dialogue among the sub-fields of Jewish studies and queer and trans studies that go beyond merely applying theoretical models to Jewish studies.



The 2024–2025 Frankel Fellows and their fields of research are:



Rafael Balling, University of Washington, “A Story of Their Own: 20th–Century Jewish Trans Narratives in German and Yiddish”



Anna Hajkova, University of Warwick, “Quartet: Story of Survival”



Bryan Roby, Head Fellow—University of Michigan, “Queer Jewish Futurities in Afro–Asian Israeli Poetry”



Marce Butierrez, National Archive of Remembrance, Argentina, “The Lost Faygele Files: Repairing Queer and Trans Jewish Legajos”



Laurie Marhoefer, University of Washington, “Transgender People and the Nazi State”



Adi Saleem, University of Michigan, “Jews, Muslims, and the Coloniality of Gender and Sexuality”



Jessie DeGrado, University of Michigan, “‘Their Way is Queer’: Religion as Gender Transgression in Ancient West Asia”



Golan Moskowitz, Tulane University, “Jews and Drag: An American Cultural History, 1900–2020”



Simone Stirner, Vanderbilt University, “Give Us Our Roses: Queer Memory after National Socialism”



Gil Engelstein, Northwestern University, “Split at the Root: The Jewish Question of Gay Liberation, 1970–1990.”



Rafael Rachel Neis, University of Michigan, “Multiplicity: Jewishness and Gender in Late Ancient West Asia”



Max Strassfeld, University of Arizona, “Disciplining Life: The Life Cycle in Rabbinic Literature”



Sheer Ganor, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, “A Place to Misfit Into: Valeska Gert’s Beggar Bar”



Iris Rachamimov, Tel Aviv University, “Coccinellim: The Trans Community and the Transformations of the Israeli Gender Order in the 1970s and 1980s”



Oren Yirmiya, University of California, Berkeley, “Beyond the ‘Hoo/Hee’ Binary: Studies in Third–Sex, Nonbinary, and Gender–Fluid Hebrew Literature.”



Sivan Rajuan Shtang, Brandeis University, US; Sapir Academic College and Shenkar Academic College, Israel, “Queer Feminist Mizrahi Art”

Mazel Tov!



Deborah Dash Moore

Faculty

Deborah Dash Moore was named an Appointed Jonathan Freedman Distinguished University Professor of History and Professor of Judaic Studies

Jeffrey Veidlinger was named Director of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute

Mostafa Hussein published “Jewish Spaces in Egypt as Sites of Memory” in the *Duke University Press*



Jeff Veidlinger



Mostafa Hussein

Students

Sophie Reed received the Steven P. and Margaret E. Forster Scholarship for the 2024–2025 academic year.

Alumni

Greg Epstein published *Tech Agnostic: How Technology Became the World's Most Powerful Religion and Why it Desperately Needs a Reformation* with MIT Press

Beth Dwoskin presented a talk on “Rivka Boyarska, Composer of Yiddish Melodies with Communist Lyrics” at the Midwest Jewish Studies Association Conference, Ann Arbor, September 16, 2024



Sophie Reed



Beth Dwoskin

2026–2027 Fellowship Opportunity

Rethinking Antisemitism

The Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies invites applications from scholars, artists, and other professionals investigating historical and contemporary antisemitism around the globe to participate in an academic-year residential fellowship at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. We welcome those exploring how anti-Jewish policies and attitudes manifest themselves in varied regions and eras; how they shape the realities and social position of Jews and Jewish communities; and how Jewish communities are responding today and have responded historically.

The urgency of convening scholars to consider these issues and questions emerges from the heightened political and social stakes of current global affairs. Many Jews around the world are considering whether the social contracts that seemed to secure their safety and place in civic, campus, and general societal spaces are illusory. In the face of these changing public realities and shifting discourses, scholars have also been

reexamining prevailing views on antisemitism; testing methods to better measure its impact and prevalence; and searching for effective means to identify, combat, and limit its influence.

Approaches might include scholarship that deepens historical, cultural, and/or literary understandings of antisemitism; investigates how classic antisemitic tropes emerge in contemporary discourses; examines the effectiveness of anti-bias trainings and DEI efforts in relationship to antisemitism; collects and analyzes data on antisemitic incidents and sentiments around the globe; or places antisemitism within the context of other forms of bigotry, bias, and hatred.

We invite scholars, experts, and practitioners from an array of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences to join us in this multidisciplinary exploration. We encourage applicants to consider questions of diversity, inclusion, and the voices that are amplified or marginalized in different media contexts.

Applications due **November 2, 2025.**

For more information, and complete application materials go to

www.lsa.umich.edu/judaic/institute

judaicstudies@umich.edu • 734.763.9047



The “Frankely Judaic”
podcast explores new
research in the field of
Jewish studies conducted
by fellows at the Frankel
Institute for Advanced
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