

FRANKELY SPEAKING

January 2011

Jean & Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies

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Alfred Stieglitz. "The Steerage" © 2010 Georgia O'Keeffe Museum/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

From the Director: The Strange Career of Stieglitz's *The Steerage*

Deborah Dash Moore, Director, The Frankel Center
Frederick G.L. Huetwell Professor of History

In 1907 Alfred Stieglitz boarded a steamship heading to Europe. He had already made a name for himself as a talented photographer and outspoken proponent of photography as an art form. His gallery on Fifth Avenue in New York City and his magazine *Camera Work* promoted pictorialist photographs, noted for their soft focus and dreamy qualities. Mist, snow, smoke, and their effects appealed to pictorialists, even when they pictured New York's dynamic cityscape. Stieglitz had yet to proclaim his credo: "I was born in Hoboken. I am an American. Photography is my passion. The search for truth my obsession." But at 43, with a wife and daughter accompanying him, his trip back to Europe, where he had first studied photography, provided the setting for perhaps his most famous photograph. "If all my photographs were lost, and I would be remembered only for 'The Steerage,'" he once said, "I would be satisfied."¹

Stieglitz traveled first class, appropriate for his station as the son of wealthy German Jewish immigrants who supported his photographic ambitions. But after a couple of days at sea, he grew bored with the amusements available and wandered away to peer at how less prosperous passengers traveled. Looking down at the steerage and across at other travelers on the 'tween deck, Stieglitz had an epiphany. His epiphany had nothing to do with social class differences or even immigration. As he later recounted his experience, he saw "a new picture of shapes, and underlying it, the new vision that held me." Rushing back to his stateroom for his camera, Stieglitz used the one unexposed negative he had to capture a picture that, were anyone to move, "would no longer exist."²

1 Quoted in Hans-Michael Koetzle, "The Steerage," in *Photo Icons: The Story Behind the Pictures, 1827-1926* (Köln: Taschen, 2002): 138.

2 Quoted in Joel Smith, "How Stieglitz Came to Photograph Cityscapes," *History of Photography* 20:4 (Winter 1996): 322.

The photograph (printed on the cover of *Frankely Speaking*) justly deserves its reputation as an iconic image. It is visually complex, requiring no manipulation to achieve its power. Stieglitz often pointed to the man's round straw "boater" hat as what caught his eye. The tilt of the man's body contrasted to the slant of the stairs and the thrust of the triangle-shaped mast, while echoes of his hat's circle reappeared on the links of the gangplank. The photo captures a moment—what Stieglitz would call "the living moment" and the goal of all of his subsequent photography—as well as a historically freighted situation. During the preceding year, 1906, record numbers of immigrants had entered the United States; Jewish immigration was at its peak, with over 150,000 arriving.

Despite Stieglitz's later accounts of the taking the photograph and its importance, he did not print *The Steerage* until 1911. Yet once it entered into visual commerce with his other photographs, *The Steerage* occupied a critical place, pointing to a shift in photography away from pictorialism toward vernacular modernism, marking perhaps a new vision appropriate for the 20th century.

Stieglitz lived a long life, dying in 1946 at the age of 82. His most extensive comments on *The Steerage* came four years before his death. With the rise of New York City as the center of the western art world after the end of World War II, Stieglitz attained posthumous prominence as one of the most influential American photographers. But at some point after his death, interest in *The Steerage* shifted focus from the white straw boater on the young man on the 'tween deck to the white shawl with a black stripe worn by a woman in steerage. That shift accompanied a new interpretation of the photograph,

one that emphasized its title and its connection to the photographer's Jewish identity.

American Jews laid claim to *The Steerage*. Not looking too closely at the photograph, people have routinely misrecognized the shawl as a *tallit*, even failing to notice that it covered the head of a woman, not a man. Noting the date of the photograph and its correlation with peak years of Jewish immigration to America, viewers have disregarded the purpose of the voyage. Jews have imagined that the ship was bringing immigrants to the United States, instead of taking them back home. In short, Stieglitz's iconic photograph did not only capture "the living moment" as Stieglitz termed it (or "the decisive moment" as the famous French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson called it), in spite of itself, the photo also came to represent an historical moment, encapsulating decades of mass immigration that reshaped Jewish history in the 20th century.³

The Steerage now occupies such a powerful place in Jewish narratives about America that it is unlikely to be dislodged. The photograph graces the cover of the *Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America* (2008) and it introduces the exhibit devoted to immigration from 1880-1945 in the National Museum of American Jewish History that just opened in Philadelphia. In these contexts, *The Steerage* now epitomizes arrival: of pious Jewish immigrants who suffered to reach the golden shores of the new world and of talented Jewish artists like Stieglitz who innovated and transformed photography into a powerful means of creative expression.

It's not a bad career for a 103-year-old photograph, but it sure is a strange one.

3 Conversation with Jonathan Boyarin.

The Languages We Cannot Understand: Henry Roth and My Summers in Israel

by Julian Levinson,

Samuel Shetzer Associate Professor of American Jewish Studies,
English Language & Literatures, University of Michigan

“These things are not secrets but mysteries.”

– Seamus Heaney

What is it like to listen to a language you can't understand? The experience is similar in some respects to listening to music, but then again with language we know that something specific is being conveyed, though we cannot understand what it is. Whether due to our belatedness in history, lack of training, geographical displacement, or mere ignorance, we find ourselves stranded on the far side of meaning, deaf to some message, suggestion, question, demand, warning—some *content* that others appear effortlessly able to grasp.

For modern Jews, this experience is hardly unfamiliar. From the synagogue-goer who can't understand the prayers to the American-born Jew of previous generations whose parents turned to Yiddish just when things got juicy, countless Jews have stood in the presence of impenetrable words that seem to contain important, even decisive matter.

When I was a kid, the most dramatic experiences of not-understanding came on a regular basis when I would travel to Israel with my brother and visit the beaches of Tel Aviv. To be sure, these were wonderful beaches: soothing water, perfect waves, and popsicles brought right to our chairs. But what was that piercing, metallic, urgent voice calling through the loudspeaker? Breaking through the tranquil air, it could be traced back to a lifeguard; it issued from high white chairs. But what could it possibly be saying in tones veering from concern to downright rage? Presumably the lifeguard was addressing some stubborn bather. But where was the culprit? Sometimes I could glean two words: *“geveret”* (“Lady”), uttered with mock politesse, and *“yeled”* (“Kid”), said with scorn. Otherwise I was at a loss. The situation hardly seemed to require this level of engagement, this intensity. Evidently, these were warnings that knew more than I could ever fathom.

Years later, when I read Henry Roth's 1934 novel *Call It Sleep*, I understood the special role played by indecipherable languages, how they can sharpen our awareness even while leaving us frustrated. The novel is in many ways a study in cacophony: Roth tracks the effects of confusing sounds on a growing immigrant Jewish boy. The protagonist, David Shearl, understands the Yiddish spoken in his home as well as the broken English of the street. But two languages in his midst remain impenetrable: Polish and Hebrew. The former is spoken between his aunt and his mother when they discuss touchy aspects of the past. Like



Lifeguard house, Tel Aviv, Israel

the young David, the reader is left in the dark about these details, at least initially, and we join David on the far side of meaning: “[His mother’s] eagerness tantalized him, goaded him into sharper listening. It was no use. He scrutinized his mother. The color had risen in her throat. Now her eyes stared and were dark and she spoke rapidly.... What hurt her?” David becomes an expert at reading facial cues and responding to tones of voice. Rather than retrieving some set of facts, he begins to feel something of the sheer depth of his mother experiences, her fears, frustrations, and longings. To miss the straightforward content of the message is to gain access to the texture of emotion.

Later in the text, David goes to cheder and begins to read Hebrew. Once again the sounds take on an independent life, as instruments of evocation rather than as means of communication. Since he knows Hebrew is the medium of “God’s syllables,” he tries to enter the very heart of the language. David senses that some ultimate truth about him lies within the Hebrew words. And paradoxically, this profound yearning for knowledge coupled with his *failure* to understand makes David the most pious character in the entire novel.

Today on the beaches in Tel Aviv, lifeguards still yell. Hearing them on a recent trip, I recalled the sudden intimacy these sounds created between myself and the country that, as a Jew, I was supposed to call my own. I thought then of Roth’s David Shearl, who began to imagine the world on his own terms when it refused to speak to him clearly.

UPCOMING FRANKEL CENTER EVENTS

January 18, 2011, 4 pm

202 South Thayer Street, Room 2022, Ann Arbor

Henry Greenspan, University of Michigan

“Beyond Testimony: New Ways of Listening to Survivors of the Holocaust and Other Genocides”

In his groundbreaking book *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Beyond Testimony*, Henry Greenspan presents an alternative approach to the gathering of survival testimonies by emphasizing ongoing conversation—what Greenspan calls “knowing *with*” survivors. According to former presidential Holocaust Memorial Council appointee John Roth, the book is “stunningly brilliant, standard-setting for scholarship in the field . . . [that] transcends the path-breaking first edition by putting into bold relief the insights that emerge from his more than 30 years of intensive collaboration with Holocaust survivors. . . . Greenspan challenges conventional wisdom and wisely transforms the process of discerning and responding to what survivors of the Holocaust and other genocides have to say.”

Greenspan will discuss the process of researching his book as well as his five years as an advisor to the Montreal project *Life Stories of Montrealers Displaced by War, Genocide, and Other Human Rights Violations*. *Life Stories* is gathering the accounts of survivors of the Holocaust, the Rwandan and Cambodian genocides, and political violence in Haiti. Like Greenspan’s own work, the Montreal project has engaged survivors as co-equal partners in every aspect of its work, from interviewer training and interpretation, to media and curricula production, to budget and overall governance.

February 3, 2011, 4 pm

435 South State Street, 1014 Tisch Hall

Leora Auslander, University of Chicago

“Which ‘Jews’ Were Still Jewish in Interwar Germany?”

Leora Auslander asks the questions that have been raised by countless Jewish studies scholars—“What makes a Jew Jewish? Religious observance? If so, of what intensity and form? Self-identification? Classification by others (both Jewish and not)? Social, political, intellectual or aesthetic practices?”—and proposes an altogether new approach. “Finding satisfying answers has proved elusive,” says Auslander. “I would like to argue that rather than abandon these fundamental queries, we should look at them *differently*. *Which ‘Jews’ were still Jewish in Interwar Germany?* will use the evidence of material culture, social networks, and everyday practices to propose answers to the question. While the specific case addressed will be that of Jews in the Weimar Republic, I hope that the approach will be useful to those struggling with the conceptual and empirical problems raised by all efforts to classify (or resist classification).”

February 9, 2011, 4 pm
202 South Thayer Street, Room 2022

Richard Kalmin, Jewish Theological Seminary

“Manasseh Sawed Isaiah With a Saw of Wood: An Ancient Legend in Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Persian Sources”

By examining ancient and medieval accounts of the martyrdom of the biblical prophet Isaiah, Kalmin proposes that during the mid-4th century CE, a period of intense eastern provincial Romanization of Jewish Babylonia began. At that time, Kalmin argues, Babylonia became part of the emerging cultural unity that was gradually forming in pre-Islamic Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, and western Persia. In addition, he argues that Christian sources attest to the same developments, indicating a significant linkage between the Jewish and Christian communities in late-antiquity Mesopotamia.

February 22, 2011, 4 pm

202 South Thayer Street, Room 2022

“On the Hard Evidence of Exile: Secrecy, Authenticity, and Race in Representations of New Mexico’s Crypto-Jews”

Ruby Tapia, The Ohio State University

In her 2008 book of black-and-white photographs on converso *Image and Memory*, Cary Herz documented tallit-clad and candle-lit New Mexicans testifying to their Crypto-Jewish identity. In 2006, folklorist Judith Neulander collaborated with geneticists to “resolve” that, in scientific fact, Crypto-Jews by and large do not exist in New Mexico. Impressive illustrations flesh out the texts of both positions: Herz’s body-subjects pose with Jewish objects as irrefutable identifying evidence, while Neulander’s article stakes a place in the *Annals of Human Biology* with a historical sketch of Sephardic migration embellished with definitive chromosomal charts. The contradictions and tensions between these two documents constitute a fascinating debate on Crypto-Jewish authenticity, but the contradictions and tensions *within* each of them point to other, perhaps even more confounding levels of political, cultural and methodological dissonance. This lecture explores these dissonances and establishes New Mexico’s Crypto-Jews as an important site for understanding the intricate relationship between blood, image, and identity within Jewish bodies of exilic and diasporic knowledge.

April 1, 2011, 12:30 pm
202 South Thayer Street, Room 2022

**“Photographing the Jewish Nation: Pictures from S. An-sky’s Ethnographic Expedition”
Eugene Avrutin & Julie Subrin, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign**

“Photographing the Jewish Nation” discusses a series of remarkable photographs of Jewish life and culture taken during S. An-sky’s ethnographic expeditions on the eve of WWI. Among the first representations of Jewish culture and society in pre-revolutionary Russia, the photographs taken by the Jewish ethnographic expedition provide visual texture of a world that has largely been erased from contemporary Ukrainian memory, offering snapshots that rarely appear in written sources. In remarkable detail, Solomon Iudovin, the young photographer who accompanied An-sky on his expeditions, captured the diversity of the customs and rituals of Jewish life in a rapidly changing milieu: the marketplaces where families bought and sold goods, the homes in which Jews lived, the prayer houses in which Jews prayed, and the shops, work benches, and factories in which men and women plied their trade.



Kalman Weiser, Silber Family Professor of Modern Jewish Studies York University, Toronto

Michigan’s Yiddish Library Offers Rich Primary Sources for Scholar Kalman Weiser

In September 2008, the University of Michigan received the library and personal papers of Beatrice (Bina) Silverman Weinreich, a scholar whose life’s work was to preserve the Yiddish language and culture. Her son, Don Weinreich and daughter, Stephanie, donated the deep collection that includes books inscribed to Bina, Uriel and Max Weinreich from such classic 20th-century Yiddish writers as Avrom Sutskever, Chaim Grade, Itsik Manger, and H. Leyvik. There is an extensive collection of Jewish and general folklore, including hard-to-find Yiddish publications, a variety of Yiddish children’s books, Yiddish cookbooks, and Passover Haggadahs. Of most interest, perhaps, is the extensive personal correspondence among members of the entire Weinreich family, which open a window into an intimate world of Yiddish in Europe and America.

In Fall 2010, Kalman Weiser, the Silber Family Professor of Modern Jewish Studies at Toronto’s York University, came to Ann Arbor as a Frankel Institute fellow to explore the primary sources housed in the Weinreich collection. Specifically, he was interested in the personal papers of the Weinreich family. He had heard about the library from Don Weinreich, Bea and Uriel’s son, who following a talk at YIVO given by Weiser had invited him to Bea Weinreich’s home, where Don was packing his mother’s collection for Michigan.

What is housed here in the Beatrice Weinreich collection that you see being of particular interest and why?

Weiser: Beatrice Silverman Weinreich, the only American-born member of the extended Weinreich family, made important contributions as a Yiddish folklore scholar as well as helped her husband Uriel with his various research projects. Her archive is significant not only because it contains her personal and professional papers but because it also holds many of the papers of her husband and father-in-law, two titans of 20th-century scholarship. While YIVO possesses perhaps the lion’s share of Max and Uriel Weinreich’s professional papers, the Beatrice Weinreich Collection at the University of Michigan contains a treasure trove of personal correspondence among members of the Weinreich family and their friends from the 1930s on. The letters bring to life the intellectual and emotional lives of these people as well as help us to reconstruct aspects of pre-war Vilna Jewish intellectual society and its post-war diaspora. The archive also holds a significant amount of material related to projects in the field of Yiddish such as the Language and Cultural Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry and Modern Yiddish-English/English-Yiddish Dictionary and material related to Uriel Weinreich’s groundbreaking work as a general linguist. Beyond offering a window into the lives of members of a rather remarkable family of refugee intellectuals, the archive vividly documents the

post-WWII development of the field of Yiddish Studies as well as developments in the history of American Jewry.

Who was Max Weinreich?

Weiser: In his own lifetime, Max Weinreich (1894-1969) was already recognized as the leading scholar of Yiddish language and culture. Today, he is recalled chiefly for two monumental achievements: firstly, he was a co-founder of YIVO (the *Yidisher visnshaftlekher institut*, or the Yiddish Scientific Institute as it was long known in English; it exists today as the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City) and served as its research director for decades. Secondly, his magnum opus, *Di geshikhte fun der yidisher shprakh* (History of the Yiddish Language, recently published in full translation by Yale University Press and YIVO) offers brilliant insights not only into the linguistic development of Yiddish but also into the cultural history of Ashkenazic Jewry and the field of Jewish languages.

But Weinreich’s legacy is far more profound. At a time when Yiddish was widely dismissed as low-brow and parochial, especially among Jews, he helped to achieve recognition for Yiddish and its culture as worthy subjects of scholarly inquiry. He also encouraged the application of the latest methodological developments in the social sciences to the study of Eastern European Jewry decades prior to the widespread acceptance of

Jewish Studies in universities. All of this was done by Weinreich and his YIVO colleagues in Yiddish, the mother tongue of the majority of Eastern European Jews prior to WWII, thus helping to show that the language itself could be used as a vehicle for serious intellectual expression. Beyond this, Weinreich was instrumental in training a generation of scholars in the USA after the Holocaust to carry on the academic traditions of YIVO and to develop the field of Jewish Studies in American academia.

Weinreich and his wife Regina, a distinguished pedagogue in Vilna prior to the outbreak of World War II, had two remarkable sons: Uriel, the pioneering linguist and Yiddish scholar and Gabriel, an expert in musical acoustics who is now an emeritus professor of Physics at the University of Michigan.

How was the study of Yiddish approached in Vilna vs. USA and pre- vs. post-WWII?

Weiser: Yiddish was studied as part of a living, unfolding civilization prior to WWII. Indeed, YIVO served in many regards as a national university, library, and language academy for the Jews of non-Soviet Eastern Europe until the Holocaust. The goal of YIVO, which embodied Weinreich's personal philosophy, was to bring the methodology of the contemporary social sciences to study Jewish life, especially in Eastern Europe and wherever its Jews had settled as immigrants. Simultaneously, the findings of YIVO scholars were intended to enrich Jewish life and help Jews to face the difficult problems of the day such as poverty, discrimination, and the decline of traditional patterns of life that had sustained them for generations. In contrast with the Soviet Union, where Yiddish cultural institutions, including schools and research institutions, received significant support from the state for part of the period between the two world wars, YIVO functioned on a shoe-string budget. Most of YIVO's budget prior to WWII, in fact, came from American Jews, collected by YIVO's rather small New York branch.

Weinreich arrived in New York City in March 1940 and, together with other refugee scholars as well as some American-educated ones, set out to continue YIVO's mission and to develop its American branch into an autonomous research and education institute. With the decline of Yiddish as a spoken language among American Jewry, however, and the growing possibilities for both Jews and Jewish studies in

American universities, Yiddish research in America lost many of its prior ideological assumptions and commitments. Over time, it integrated into general academia and switched from Yiddish to English as its primary language of expression. Today's Yiddish research concentrates on documenting, preserving, and understanding the past of Ashkenazic Jewry, although some is devoted to contemporary developments among Yiddish speakers.

Today's Yiddish researchers more often learn the language and study its culture in summer programs in universities in New York, Tel Aviv, or Vilnius than absorb it in Yiddish-speaking communities in Brooklyn, Antwerp, Jerusalem or elsewhere. Most do not achieve fluency in the language, which some view more as a "classical" than a "living" language. Further, while non-Jews always figured among Yiddish-researchers, their numbers have significantly increased in recent decades. Centers for Yiddish research are to be found particularly in North America, Israel, Germany, France and Poland. Scholars in a wide variety of disciplines – among them, history, literature, anthropology, and ethnomusicology – work on aspects of Yiddish culture and use Yiddish as a tool in their work even if it is not the primary or exclusive focus of their work.

No longer viewed as marginal, Yiddish has achieved an unprecedented measure of respect even if some still dismiss it. American universities boast an increasing number of courses, especially at the undergraduate level, in English about Yiddish literature and culture as Jewish Studies in general has expanded as a field. An—albeit shrinking—number of universities also offer a year or two of Yiddish language instruction. At the same time, since there exist at best a handful of Chairs in Yiddish and even fewer ones supporting well-developed graduate programs, students seeking to specialize in Yiddish language and culture must study at multiple universities and language programs around the world in order to develop real expertise in the field. This globalization of Yiddish Studies is, of course, in many ways a positive phenomenon, as it promotes intellectual exchange. On the other hand, departments find it difficult to hire qualified instructors in the absence of teacher training programs and adequate funding for language instruction. Yiddish language and culture courses struggle to survive as universities cut budgetary allotments for "less popular languages."

On Thursday and Friday, March 31 – April 1, invited scholars, Frankel Institute fellows, and University of Michigan faculty will gather for a two-day symposium highlighting recent work on Jewish cultures in hybrid languages, idioms less frequently recognized as “Jewish,” and multilingual expression. Organized by Frankel Institute co-head fellows Joshua L. Miller (English and Judaic Studies) and Anita Norich (English and Judaic Studies), the event is part of the Institute’s 2010-2011 theme devoted to Jewish Languages.

Polyglotism and linguistic mixture are, many believe, inherent to the history of Jewish communities. The symposium will address questions raised by this observation. How do Jewish languages and cultures inform and are informed by recent scholarly attention to multilingualism, interlinguistic communities, vernaculars, non-dominant languages, translation, language revival/extinction? What new conceptions of linguistic practices, literary idioms, musical expression, performance, and other expressive cultures emerge from Jewish multilingualism? What are the relationships between these speech forms and conceptions of nationalisms, diasporisms, interethnic contacts and competition? To what extent can we understand them as languages of belief, everyday communal life, secularism, transnational identifications? What is the status of Hebrew in the 21st century? Of Yiddish? Of the many languages of the Jewish diaspora?

This event will bring noted scholars together for a series of presentations and conversations on Jewish history and culture in various idioms and contexts. Each invited scholar will present a talk based on original research that responds to questions and concepts raised by Jewish language practices, their cultural contexts, and political implications. We will consider languages traditionally identified as “Jewish,” such as Ladino, Yiddish, Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Persian, and many others, as well as those traditionally viewed as “non-Jewish,” including Spanish, Turkish, Greek, Arabic, and Russian.

What & Where Are Jewish Languages?

Voices of the Italian Holocaust: A Recital of Vocal Music by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Vittorio Rieti, Guido Alberto Fano and Leone Sinigaglia

Sunday, January 30th, 2011, 5 pm

Soprano Caroline Helton and pianist Kathryn Goodson, who recently released their first CD of solo vocal music by Jewish composers, *Voices of the Holocaust*, will be performing a new program of music exclusively by Italian Jewish composers. With the help of Italian musicologist Aloma Bardi, Helton and Goodson have prepared a program that displays these composers' astonishing stylistic variety in the period before and during World War II.

(*Chant Hébraïque*), which until recently was believed to be lost. The texts are variously drawn from the great Italian poets Dante, Giosuè Carducci, and Giacomo Leopardi, as well as the French Jewish poet Max Jacob.



Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco

"It is an extreme privilege to have my very own personal musicologist, Aloma Bardi, finding these gems for Kathryn and me to perform," explains Helton. "Given the state of publishing and archives in Italy after World War II, music by obscure composers (made all the more obscure by the fact they were Jewish) is terribly difficult to find. Aloma actually found a piece that was thought to be lost *Vocalise (Chant Hébraïque)* in our own Library of Congress. Not only has Aloma done years of research, but she has also matched the repertoire to my voice, so that Kathryn and I were able to compile a musically diverse program very easily out of the pieces she provided us."



Irving Penn, "Ballet Society," New York, 1948. Left to right: Corrado Cagli, Vittorio Rieti, Tanaquil Le Clercq and George Balanchine, National Gallery of Art

"Each composer represented on this program has a completely unique voice in his harmonic vocabulary, piano writing and text setting," Helton continues. "The subject matter ranges from the most lighthearted settings of folk tunes in the Piedmontese dialect (spoken by Primo Levi) to the most profound poetry by beloved Italian masters. Each composer captures the heart and soul of the text in his settings and enlarges that text through the magic of melody and harmony to create song, the most literary of musical art forms.

Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco is profound (think Debussy); Vittorio Rieti is playful and ironic, like Poulenc and Kurt Weill; Luigi Sinigaglia is sweet; and Guido Alberto Fano has a lush Puccini style."

The pieces on the program have very rarely been performed in Italy. The recital will mark the American premiere of many of them, including Mario Castelnuovo's *Vocalise*

21st Annual Belin Lecture in American Jewish Public Affairs

Playing the Blame Game: American Jews Look Back at the Holocaust

by Deborah Lipstadt

Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish History and Holocaust Studies
Emory University

Over the years since World War II, scholars and popular writers have closely analyzed Franklin D. Roosevelt's policies regarding the rescue of European Jewry during the Holocaust. Most have severely criticized FDR while others have defended him and his policies. This lecture will explore to what degree these analyses have become intertwined with contemporary issues facing the Jewish community. After tracing both the scholarly and popular historiography of America and the Holocaust, we will ask: when are we reading history and when is history being used as a metonym for what is really a conversation about contemporary political issues facing the Jewish community? When is this conversation about the 1930s and 1940s and when is it really about what is happening in the 21st century?

With the publication of Arthur Morse's *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* in 1967, American Jews began to recognize that there were grounds to criticize the policies of the Roosevelt administration for "failing" to rescue European Jews during the 1930s and 1940s. (There had been, of course, criticism during the war by such groups as the Bergson Boys but in the postwar period this critical approach had been muted.) Morse's popular account was followed by serious historical studies by Henry Feingold (*The Politics of Rescue*), David Wyman (*Paper Walls, The Abandonment of the Jews*) and Richard Breitman and Alan M. Kraut (*American Immigration Policy and European Jewry, 1933-45*). Most of these authors criticized to varying degrees American immigration policy and the behavior of the American Jewish community.

Beginning in the 1990s, a "pushback" of sorts evolved with strong briefs penned in defense of the Roosevelt administration. Authors such as W.D. Rubenstein (*The Myth of Rescue*) and Robert Rosen (*Saving Jews: Roosevelt and the Holocaust*) argued the White House did absolutely everything that could have been done and that its policies resulted in saving countless lives.

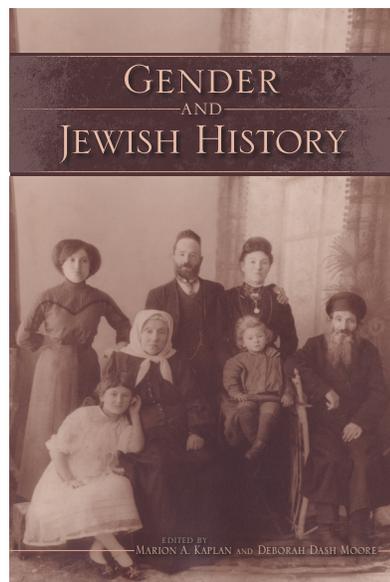
Finally, most recently, a third "school of thought" has made its voice heard. It emanates, not just from scholars, but from the ranks of the American Jewish community. It is harshly critical of Roosevelt and those Jews who supported him (the vast majority of American Jews voted for FDR in all four presidential elections) and argues that they could have saved multitudes of Jews but did not because they were uncomfortable with the "type" of Jew who would be saved. This school of thought claims that these American Jewish supporters of Roosevelt did not want "those kinds of Jews" here in America.

Rather than analyze who is "right" and who is "wrong" about the Roosevelt administration, this lecture asks to what degree are these debates a metonym for more contemporary issues. In other words, when American Jews severely criticize or defend FDR and his policies are they talking about FDR or, in reality, are they talking about contemporary issues?

"Playing the Blame Game"
Deborah Lipstadt
March 16, 2011, 7pm
Palmer Commons,
Forum Hall
100 Washtenaw Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI

Faculty:

Ruth Behar (Anthropology) has just been named the Victor Haim Perera Collegiate Professor of Anthropology, effective September 1, 2010.



Gender and Jewish History, edited by **Deborah Dash Moore** (History) and Marion Kaplan, was just published by Indiana University Press. Paula Hyman, to whom the book is dedicated, sits on the Academic Advisory Board for the Frankel Institute. The book includes an essay from **Todd Endelman**. Moore also participated in a day-long conference at Temple University titled “Jews & the American City: Planning, Developing, and Imagining Urban Space and Jewish Space.”

Yaron Eliav (Near Eastern Studies) published two entries in Oxford’s *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek and Rome* (a seven-volume project, which is the most comprehensive resource about the ancient world)—“Jerusalem” and the other on “Jews and Judaism.” In addition, Eliav published “Bathhouses as Places of Social and Cultural Interactions” in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine* (edited by Chatherine Hezser).

Henry Greenspan (Residential College) taught a seminar at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum titled *Teaching about the Holocaust Through*

Eyewitness Testimony: The Use of Interviews and Memoirs in the Classroom.

Mikhail Krutikov (Slavic) published *From Kabbalah to Class Struggle: Expressionism, Marxism, and Yiddish Literature in the Life of Meir Wiener* (Stanford UP, 2010).

Mazel Tov!

Anita Norich (English) published “Under Whose Sign? Hebraism and Yiddishism as Paradigms of Modern Jewish Literary History” in *PMLA* (May 2010). She also presented a talk about American Yiddish culture during the Holocaust at MSU’s annual Yiddishkeit lecture. Her article on the sister of Isaac Bashevis and Israel Joshua Singer—“Singers of Different Tunes”—was published in *Text/Context*.

Shachar Pinsker’s (Near Eastern Studies) book—*Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe*—has just been published by Stanford UP.

David Schoem (Sociology) spoke at the Jewish Community Centers of New Haven, CT, and Ann Arbor about his new book, *College Knowledge for the Jewish Student: 101 Tips*. He has also just published “Shalom School 30 Years After: Reflections on the Jewish Afternoon School” in the January 2011 *Journal of Jewish Education*.

Mark Tessler (Political Science) has been awarded the American Political Science Association 2010 prize for the best publicly available data set in comparative politics, based on the Arab Barometer Cross-National Survey Project, which he co-directs. He also received a \$120,000 grant from the United States Institute of Peace for support of that project. Tessler’s book, *Public Opinion in the Middle East: Survey Research and the Political Orientations of Ordinary Citizens*, is being published this year by Indiana University Press. Tessler was invited as a visiting scholar at Institut

d’Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences-Po), where he conducted and presented research on “Islam and the Search for a Political Formula: The Views of Ordinary Citizens in the Muslim Middle East.”

Visiting Faculty/Scholars:

Michael Miller (Central European University), the Padnos Distinguished Visiting Professor for 2010, just published *Rabbis and Revolution: the Jews of Moravia in the Age of Emancipation* (Stanford University Press).

Kalman Weiser’s (Frankel Institute and York University, Toronto) book, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation*, was published by the University of Toronto Press.

Students:

Nick Block (German) is spending this academic year doing dissertation research at Berlin’s Freie Universität. In October, he represented at the German Studies Association conference in Oakland. His paper was entitled “Representation and Counter-Representation of Jewish Difference across German-Jewish and Yiddish Literatures.”

Peter Gluck (American Culture) has been awarded his PhD for the successful defense of his dissertation entitled “*The Narratives of Interfaith Parents Raising Their Children With Jewish Identities: An Emerging Discourse.*”

Moshe Kornfeld (Anthropology) passed his prelims and received his MA. He’s begun doctoral fieldwork in New Orleans.

Helen Marie Dixon (Near Eastern Studies) chaired a session at the ASOR (American Schools of Oriental Research) Annual Meeting in Atlanta called “Death and Burial in the Ancient Near East.” In March, she’ll be giving a paper at the SAA (Society for American Archaeology) Annual Meeting in Sacramento titled “Commemoration at Khaldeh: Reconstructing Burial Practices in the Phoenician Homeland.”

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**21st Annual Belin Lecture in American Jewish Public
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***Playing the Blame Game:
American Jews Look Back at the Holocaust***

Deborah Lipstadt, Emory University

March 16, 2011, 7pm
Palmer Commons, Forum Hall
100 Washtenaw Avenue
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For more details on Frankel Center events visit:
www.lsa.umich.edu/judaic/

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