

Samuel & Althea

# Stroum Center *for* Jewish Studies

Newsletter – Fall 2014

VOL. XXV

A photograph of two women in formal attire smiling and looking at a tablet device. The woman on the left has long blonde hair and is wearing a blue dress with a circular pattern. The woman on the right has dark hair and is wearing a black and white patterned dress. They are both holding glasses of wine. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an evening event.

Innovation that Makes an Impact



UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

HENRY M. JACKSON SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES



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## ON THE COVER



Deanne Etsekson and Gina Dichter enjoy the exhibit of Seattle Sephardic Treasures at the Stroum Center’s 40th Anniversary Gala, May 13th, 2014 at the Harley and Lela Franco Maritime Center. [See our special Gala Photo Gallery on p.10-11!](#)

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# Jewish Studies: Thinking Forward

Jewish Studies at UW has had quite a year of growth and celebration. Since our last fall newsletter, we have become a research center, created a Sephardic Studies Program under the leadership of Prof. Devin Naar, and hired a new full-time faculty member, Prof. Mika Ahuvia. In May, we celebrated our 40th anniversary at the Harley and Lela Franco Maritime Center with over 250 people in attendance. What a thrill to see so many of our longtime supporters and so many new enthusiastic faces. The evening captured our outstanding impact over four decades.

This year's newsletter highlights what you have made possible. We have trained hundreds of undergraduates like Shirin Lotfi (p.4) to apply the study of Judaism to global concerns. Our Graduate Fellowship has made it possible for Oscar Aguirre-Mandujano (p.12) to decipher the surprising past of one Sephardic Jewish immigrant to Seattle. Through our Faculty Digital Fellowship, Prof. Joel Migdal (p.8) built a question and answer website dedicated to understanding US foreign policy. Several undergraduates created

interactive digital displays to reveal Seattle's Jewish history (p.7). Our Sephardic Studies Program brought hundreds of people together to celebrate Ladino Day (p.20). These accomplishments are most impressive because they are all the result of community support.

So many of you raised your paddles to continue investing in Jewish Studies at the Gala, recognizing both what we have accomplished and our future goals. And that same night, more than fifty families became first-time donors to the Stroum Center. As a result of this incredible outpouring of support, the Jewish Studies Forward Fund will allow us to expand our impact on campus and in the community.

Over the next few months, you will see the Forward Fund's immediate impact in several ways. With special thanks to a grant from Michele and Stan Rosen and the Rita and Herbert Rosen Family Foundation, we plan to hire a part-time student engagement coordinator who will focus on deepening connections inside and outside of the classroom as well as mentoring student leaders. The Stroum

Center will launch a new website this fall to help make our resources even more accessible. The Sephardic Studies Program is building a new online Digital Library and Museum, in partnership with UW Libraries. More graduate students than ever (six) will benefit from the intellectual community provided by our Graduate Fellowship. Other plans for the next several years include a multicultural music festival, an international conference on perhaps the most important modern Jew (Baruch Spinoza), and a gathering dedicated to the future of Hebrew language instruction in the United States.

The Jewish Studies Forward Fund is more than the sum of the initiatives, public events, and academic conferences that we will be able to support. Our goal is to allow Jewish Studies to grow and thrive even against the headwinds brought about by changing realities of higher education at the University of Washington and beyond. Jewish Studies should not aim to weather these changes or to give in, but to serve as a model for responding to dramatic changes and modeling new directions for the study of the humanities.

Three key principles guide our efforts to build sustainable and impactful Jewish Studies programs:

**First**, this year our curriculum committee will explore ways to integrate the study of Jews and Judaism more broadly into undergraduate and graduate coursework. The study of Jews and Judaism, especially from a perspective that integrates Sephardic and Ashkenazic experiences, is important not only as a seminal historical tradition, but also for its role in creating the next generation of global citizens.

**Second**, Jewish Studies will consider opportunities for applied study. Our curriculum can shift toward thinking about building directly applicable skills in addition to the critical thinking skills that Jewish Studies and humanities programs offer. What directions can we shape? For example, digital technology courses in Jewish Studies can train students to effectively communicate in the fast-changing world of new media. Could we also have Jewish ethics courses that help train doctors, lawyers, and future business leaders?

*"These accomplishments are most impressive because they are all the result of community support."*

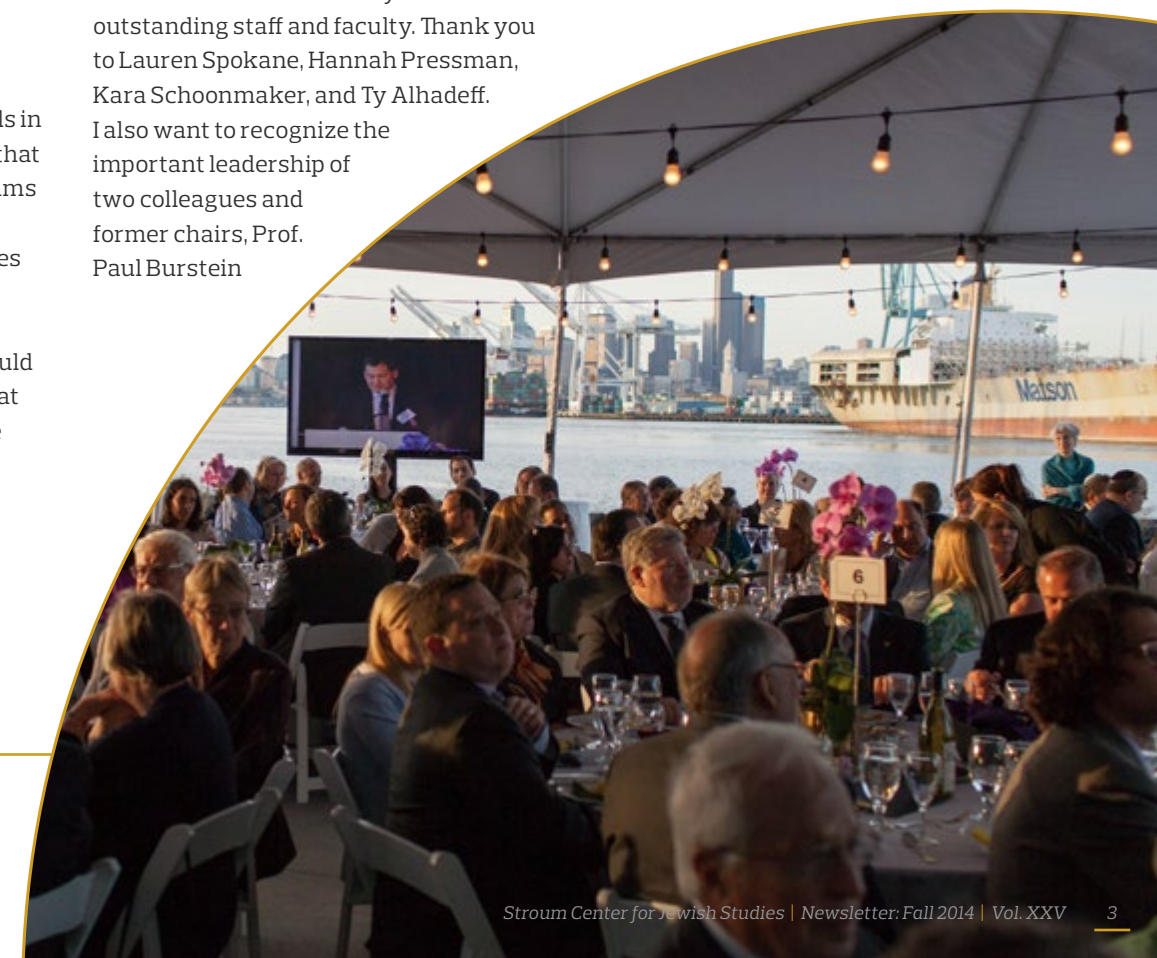
**Third**, Jewish Studies will expand our outreach to new audiences with whom we can share our unique knowledge. We plan to pilot programs that will bring our campus resources to enhance local Jewish learning and education. In addition, we are exploring the creation of an online hub for material developed by Jewish Studies faculty and students around the world that would potentially strengthen partnerships within and beyond the Jewish community.

All that we do at the Stroum Center owes a tremendous thank you to our outstanding staff and faculty. Thank you to Lauren Spokane, Hannah Pressman, Kara Schoonmaker, and Ty Alhadeff. I also want to recognize the important leadership of two colleagues and former chairs, Prof. Paul Burstein

and Prof. Gadi Barzilai, who will be retiring from the university this year.

We hope you will continue to think forward with us. Thank you for making possible this extremely meaningful work.

**Noam F. Pianko**  
Samuel N. Stroum Chair of Jewish Studies;  
Lucia S. and Herbert L. Pruzan Professor of  
Jewish Studies



» A capacity crowd gathered under the tent at the UW Jewish Studies 40th Anniversary Gala on May 13th, 2014.

*"So many of you raised your paddles to continue investing in Jewish Studies at the Gala, recognizing both what we have accomplished and our future goals."*



# A Global Citizen with a Bright Future

## Reflections from Our Travel Grant Winner



"Energy affects everything we do," declares UW senior Shirin Lotfi.

Lotfi, a leader on the Jewish Studies Student Committee (JSSC), certainly possesses an extra level of energy when it comes to her research on Middle Eastern security. Thanks to the training provided by her Jewish Studies and Jackson School coursework, she is preparing for a career as a global citizen. Lotfi believes that her research has a potential impact far beyond the classroom walls, and that current circumstances in the Middle East make energy an increasingly crucial issue.

Shirin Lotfi grew up with a personal awareness of geopolitics. Born in Tehran, Iran, she came to the United States as a child and lived in Los Angeles, returning to Iran at age 12. She studied there until age 19, including one year of college, and then transferred to the UW. Lotfi has an aunt in Seattle, and much of her close family lives in California.

Fluent in Farsi and English (and well-versed in Arabic and Urdu), Lotfi began studying Hebrew early in her academic career at the UW. She says, "I think Hebrew is a really important language. I wanted to learn Hebrew to be able to communicate and understand what's going on in the Jewish community and in Middle Eastern affairs." Her Hebrew classes led to other explorations in Jewish Studies with Naomi Sokoloff and Joel Migdal, who is now her advisor and mentor.

Drawn to the social and political complexities of the Middle East, Lotfi decided to major in Political Science and International Security with a minor in Middle East Studies. Her research focus became regional energy security, and within that field, Jordan's emerging nuclear development program—a topic of growing importance for the international community, as Lotfi hopes to show.

In the grips of an energy crisis, Jordan currently imports over 95% of the electricity it requires, according to the World Nuclear Association. In response, the Jordanian government has presented nuclear power as a positive path to reaching energy independence—Jordan is rich in uranium deposits—and lowering its soaring electricity prices.

Following these developments as well as the growing protest movement—critics cite the cost, environmental concerns, and impact on locals near the proposed reactor sites—Lotfi realized that spending time in the region would be essential to answering her growing list of questions about Jordan's energy crisis. She explains, "With this particular topic, I have to be there on the ground. I have to study the history and demographics; I have to interview academics and NGOs

(non-governmental organizations); I have to understand how energy policies actually affect Jordanian society."

Thus, in the fall of 2013, Lotfi went to Jordan on a trip supported in part by a Jewish Studies Travel Grant, a funding program provided by the Stroum Center's community supporters. This was one of eight grants she has already earned to support her work, recognition of her potential to contribute a game-changing analysis of energy policy in the Middle East.

### A Turning Point

Lotfi's quarter abroad proved pivotal to deepening her understanding of the complex issues involved with Jordan's nuclear development. While staying in Amman, she interned at the Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) and wrote a paper for Prof. Migdal, "The American Perspective on the Jordanian Nuclear Power Program," in which she analyzed the issue's

foreign policy angle. She also attended a gathering of Bedouin leaders at the Bani Sakher Tribe's Anti-Nuclear Conference, accompanying a group that included the head of the government opposition to nuclear power.

Lotfi is determined to understand all the possible sides of the issue, which has ramifications for stability in the entire region. "I'm trying to find out the motivations behind the Jordanian government, how the people feel and why they feel that way, what is Israel's take on it." The current influx of refugees caused by the Syrian conflict has created new demands on Jordan's resources; and Jordan's border with Israel gives it huge ongoing strategic importance for the United States, which has a vested interest in Jordanian stability.

*"I plan to pursue a career as a diplomat in the Middle Eastern region. This area has given me so much that I want to give back."*

Her goal is to bring the international community's attention to Jordan's nuclear program and the potential regional conflicts that could result. Ultimately, she says, "I plan to pursue a career as a diplomat in the Middle Eastern region. This area has given me so much that I want to give back."

Prof. Migdal, who supervised the academic component of Lotfi's internship in Jordan last fall, is impressed with Lotfi's drive and determination. He calls her "a real go-getter" and says, "Shirin Lotfi would be a delight for any professor to teach. She takes what we give her in the classroom and complements it with work in important international organizations." She presented her findings at the UW's Spring 2014 Undergraduate Research Symposium and also wrote a blog post, "Radioactive Politics in Jordan," for [jewishstudies.washington.edu](http://jewishstudies.washington.edu); eventually, she hopes to publish an academic article on this topic.



### Involvement on campus and future plans

Despite her passion for places further afield, Lotfi is also extremely involved in local initiatives on campus. The UW is one of fourteen academic institutions nationally to have a campus group affiliated with the Institute of Nuclear Material Management, and she is a participant. Through the Mortar Board Honor Society,

Lotfi is Student Chair of the Excellence in Teaching Award, and she also is part of the Jackson School Peer Review for its quarterly journal.

As the community relations chair for the JSSC, Lotfi helps to organize dinner gatherings for Jewish Studies professors and students, creates social media advertising, and assists with course recruitment. She exclaims, "We have such amazing faculty – I wish I could take even more Jewish Studies classes!" Lotfi is also involved with Hillel UW and went on a birthright Israel trip last year through JConnect. She returned to Israel this summer on a FLAS (Foreign Language and Area Studies) fellowship, with the goal of deepening her understanding of Israel's position on nuclear power.

What's next for this dedicated student of energy policy? Lotfi is set to graduate in

» Shirin Lotfi earned a FLAS scholarship to spend the summer of 2014 studying in Jerusalem.

March and plans to apply for a Fulbright Scholarship to continue her research on Middle Eastern energy security. On the horizon, she foresees graduate training that will help her learn how to implement political theories on the ground. One possibility would be a law degree focused on energy policy and security.

Lotfi's roots abroad have clearly influenced her diplomatic aspirations, as she notes: "My interest in energy security grew directly from growing up in Tehran, Iran. Many of the current conflicts in the Middle East are not just about religion or ideologies, but rather about scarcity of resources. My goal is to change the way U.S. policy makers view the Middle East, and to prepare myself to be in a position in the near future wherein I could help decrease regional tensions."

Lotfi takes added inspiration from a mentor who told her, early on in her research, "You're going to be the world expert on Jordan's nuclear program." Her UW training with world-class faculty, combined with the support she has received for her studies abroad, have helped her develop from a learner to an activist, someone who is committed to understanding both the top-down and grassroots sides of every issue. With her passion for service and making a difference, this global citizen faces a future that is bright with possibility.

—H.P.

Thanks to Jewish Studies supporters, the Stroum Center provides several Travel Grants every year to support international learning experiences.

**Read about our students' adventures at [jewishstudies.washington.edu](http://jewishstudies.washington.edu)!**





# Save *the* Dates

2014-15

Please check our events calendar at [jewishstudies.washington.edu](http://jewishstudies.washington.edu) for updates and more information. Dates, times, and locations are subject to change. If you have questions, call the office at 206-543-0138 or email [jewishst@uw.edu](mailto:jewishst@uw.edu)



## Thursday, Oct. 23

Lecture by Dr. Morton Weinfeld and Reception in Honor of Prof. Paul Burstein  
**Walker Ames Room, UW Kane Hall**  
4:30-6:30pm

## Monday, Nov. 10

"Kisses to the Children" Film Screening  
**Majestic Bay Theatre, Ballard**  
7:00pm

## Thursday, Dec. 4

International Ladino Day  
**Location TBD**  
7:00pm

## Saturday, Dec. 6

Flory Jagoda Legacy Film and Concert.  
(Tickets available through SJCC)  
**Stroum Jewish Community Center, Mercer Island**  
6:30pm



## Thursday, Jan. 27

JewDub Talks  
**UW Tower Auditorium**  
7:00pm

## Sunday, March 15

Sephardic Highlight at Seattle Jewish Film Festival  
**Time & Location TBD**

## Tuesday, March 31st

Welcome Reception and Lecture by Prof. Mika Ahuvia  
**UW Hillel**  
7:00pm

## Wednesday, April 15

Yom Hashoah/Holocaust Remembrance Day Commemoration with Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center  
**Kane Hall 220, UW Campus**  
7:00pm

## Friday, May 1

Graduate Fellows Spring Research Symposium  
**HUB 214, UW Campus**  
9:30am-1:30pm

## Monday, May 18 & Wednesday, May 20

Stroum Lectures by Dr. Ruth Behar.  
(Kosher reception to follow first lecture.)  
**Kane Hall 220, UW Campus**  
7:30pm



## Connect with us!

Visit [jewishstudies.washington.edu](http://jewishstudies.washington.edu) for thought-provoking articles, event info, videos, course listings, and more!



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# Learning that's Hands-on... & Online

For many students in the millennial generation, library card catalogues are foreign objects akin to rotary phones and VCRs. Today's college undergraduates have grown up in the internet age, with online search engines and e-journals making it possible to conduct nearly all their research entirely from the comfort of their dorm rooms.

This fact is not lost on Prof. Noam Pianko, who jokes, "My students this spring did two things they've never done before: look through an old-fashioned card catalogue, and build a blog site." For his Spring 2014 Digital American Jewish History course (JSIS C 336A), older and newer technologies mingled together in the syllabus. The result? A unique learning experience that was both hands-on—and online.

Partnering with the Washington State Jewish Historical Society (WSJHS), Prof. Pianko built his history course around the archives at UW Library Special Collections. His initiative was supported by a UW Technology Teaching Fellow Award, a New Media in Jewish Studies Fellowship, and a grant from the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle. Students

were able to access the archives in order to engage directly with local Jewish history, leaders, events, and institutions. Their new media assignments included creating interactive online maps of early 20th-century Seattle neighborhoods, assembling online galleries of archival photos, and producing videos based on primary sources and secondary research.

UW Senior John Larsen focused on the seminal Seattle religious leader, Rabbi Raphael H. Levine (1901-1985), who was the chief rabbi at Temple De Hirsch for four decades. Fascinated by Levine's multi-faceted career and interfaith activism, Larsen created an interactive website to showcase the rabbi's many achievements. A timeline shows when the television show "Challenge" premiered, featuring Rabbi Levine in



» A student's interactive timeline showcases the accomplishments of Seattle Reform Rabbi, Raphael Levine.

dialogue with a Catholic priest and a Protestant minister. After excavating Levine's writings and sermons, Larsen created a two-minute video, "What is a Jew?," to examine the questions Levine raised about Jewish identity in mid-century America.

"My goal is to empower students to become public historians who can help make the past come alive," says Prof. Pianko. "The Washington State Jewish Historical Society archives are an ideal resource to help train our students to become storytellers in any format." He hopes to eventually accumulate enough archive-based projects to form a digital

*"The Stroum Center, which studies one of the oldest civilizations in human history, has emerged in the Jackson School as the vanguard of the most advanced information technology."*

» Prof. Reşat Kasaba, Director of the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies

exhibit of Pacific Northwest Jewish history, accessible to all; for now, selected projects from his course will be viewable on the UW Jewish Studies website at [jewishstudies.washington.edu](http://jewishstudies.washington.edu).

History graduate student Sarah M. Zaides, a two-year veteran of the Jewish Studies Graduate Fellowship, expresses similar enthusiasm for the educational value of working with the archives. She explains, "I think a relationship between WSHJS and Jewish Studies is really natural and inevitable. Jewish Studies has the ability to train students and bring the resources that WSHJS provides to life. Historical documents are meant to be seen, to be read, to be worked with."

### Faculty Get in the Digital Groove

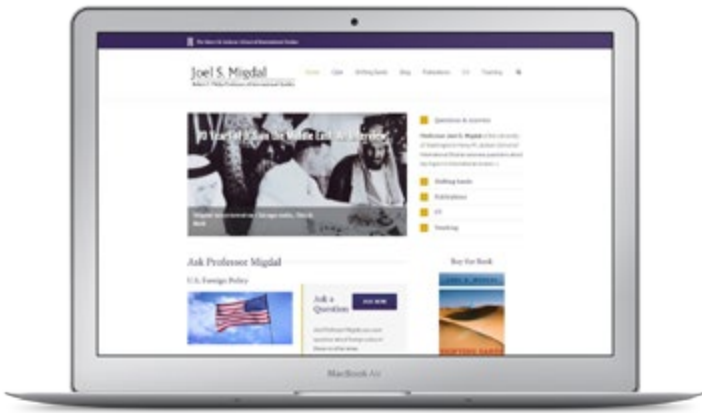
The impressive student projects for Pianko's Digital American Jewish History course represent a much broader set of digital initiatives for UW Jewish Studies. Over the past several years as head of the program, Prof. Pianko, who has a background in computer science, has advocated strengthening the role of technology in both classroom experiences and community engagement. His leadership in the growing field known as "digital Jewish Studies" has placed the Stroum Center at the forefront of national Jewish Studies programs, all of whom are

seeking effective ways of bringing the humanities into the 21st century.

Like most professors, Joel Migdal is used to fielding questions from his students. However, the foreign policy expert and longtime Jewish Studies faculty member found himself routinely receiving email inquiries not just from students, but from lay scholars interested in international affairs and conflict zones like the Middle East. He began offering optional Q&A gatherings with his undergraduates promising to answer any question they could generate about US foreign policy. Then, he decided he wanted to offer the same interactive option in a virtual space—but he had to figure out how.

Luckily, thanks to the Stroum Critical Needs Fund, the Stroum Center's resources were there. Prof. Migdal took the opportunity to join the Stroum Center's first-ever Faculty Digital Fellowship in 2013. This new media training program for Jewish Studies faculty is aimed at empowering professors to create a more robust online presence in order to boost their public scholarship. During the 2013-14 academic year, monthly trainings were run by Kara Schoonmaker, the Stroum Center's Digital Media Coordinator, with facilitation by Prof. Pianko and Dr. Hannah Pressman, the Stroum Center's Communications Director.

Schoonmaker, who received her Masters in Education from the UW in 2014, says that the workshops established a foundation upon which faculty can build:



"This year's Faculty Digital Fellowships gave participants the chance to design their own digital projects and to develop the skills they'll need to expand those projects in the future. Participating faculty gained hands-on experience working with the WordPress platform and were able to explore best practices in how other academics are using digital media. Going forward, participants will have a better understanding of how to build their online presences and how to share their work with the public through digital media."

Prof. Migdal described the process of learning to use WordPress as "very exciting and confidence-building." Consulting with the Stroum Center's digital teaching team, he decided to customize joelmigdal.com as an interactive, user-friendly site with short videos (some taped at his student Q&A sessions) and blog posts. "My hope was to build the website to bring a question-and-answer format to a much broader audience. I saw the website, too, as a platform for letting a wider audience know about my recent blog posts and publications, like my new book *Shifting Sands*. My hope is that students and those who read widely on the Middle East and international affairs will gravitate to it."

Likewise, the Fellowship's other participants all created unique projects to bring their scholarship to broader audiences. Prof. Ana Gomez-Bravo created "Converso Cookbook," a blog featuring the recipes and culture of Spanish Jews during the

Inquisition. Prof. Naomi Sokoloff put together Modern Hebrew at UW, a website showcasing the resources and courses of the Hebrew program, as well as her own blog posts and research. And Prof. Devin Naar worked with Prof. David Bunis, last year's Schusterman Visiting Professor of Israel Studies, to film a how-to video about soletreo (the written script of Ladino), which will certainly be a unique contribution to students of Judeo-Spanish around the world.

Notably, Jewish Studies faculty weren't the only professors to benefit from the first round of digital trainings. Through a Mellon Grant partnership, Prof. Pianko worked with Prof. Sara Curran, director of the Center for Global Studies, to develop a dynamic web portal (now viewable at [globalstudies.washington.edu](http://globalstudies.washington.edu)). As part of the partnership, the Stroum Center's digital teaching team opened up the monthly workshops to Jackson School faculty who wanted to hone their online skills.

### Next on the Horizon

Cutting-edge technology doesn't mean sacrificing the quality of academic instruction; on the contrary, students' learning experiences can be immeasurably enriched. And, as the innovative projects from Prof. Pianko's history class and the Faculty Digital Fellowship show, the community will benefit from students' and professors' empowerment as digital storytellers.

Prof. Reşat Kasaba, Director of the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, has high praise for the Stroum Center's digital endeavors and says that the other academic Centers in the Jackson School are learning from Pi-anko's example. "Prof. Pianko has paved the way for all of us to think about our digital strategies in new ways. Through the work he initiated in the Stroum Center, he showed us the value of approaching the web not as passive consumers of information, but as active participants and contributors to a collective enterprise. Thanks to Prof. Pianko, we now think of the web as a medium that allows multiple constituencies to interact with each other and constantly expand this valuable resource according to their specific needs."

This fall, the Stroum Center will roll out a new version of its website at [jewishstudies.washington.edu](http://jewishstudies.washington.edu). Designed as an interactive portal, the site aims to integrate faculty research and Digital Fellowship projects, student coursework, and community involvement. One new feature will be JewishStudiesHUB as the location of UW Jewish Studies' active blog. On one hand, HUB plays on the common nickname of the Husky Union Building (HUB), the beloved UW Student Center.



» Kara Schoonmaker, the Stroum Center's Digital Media Coordinator, trained faculty to build an effective web presence.

Yet HUB also indicates a place of convergence, where different ideas intersect and spark new conversations.

At JewishStudiesHUB a student's travelogue about synagogues in Prague may appear alongside a faculty member's video about Spinoza; a graduate student's excavation of an archival Ladino notebook might be in dialogue with a post about nouveau Jewish delis. These opportunities for connecting across disciplines and cultures are precisely the aim of JewishStudiesHUB—and the Stroum Center as a whole.

New technologies have already made an indelible mark on the way we teach our students and engage with our supporters, here in Seattle and around the world. With its commitment to innovation that makes an impact, UW Jewish Studies is serving as a national model for how to harness new media in the service of good, old-fashioned learning. So dust off those card catalogues and roll up your sleeves: we've got a website to build.

—H.P.



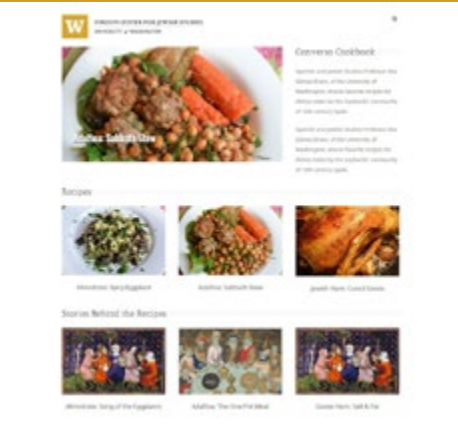
» Using the archives of the Washington State Jewish Historical Society, Joe Yu created a website that looked at the impact of the Great Depression on Seattle's Jewish community.

### FACULTY DIGITAL FELLOWSHIP

## Converso Cookbook

Visit Prof. Ana Gomez-Bravo's new blog about Sephardic food and culture during the Spanish Inquisition, online now at [jewishstudies.washington.edu/sephardic-cookbook](http://jewishstudies.washington.edu/sephardic-cookbook)! You'll find easy-to-follow recipes for dishes made by Spanish Jews hundreds of years ago, along with photographs of the cooking process and the history behind each dish.

Gomez-Bravo observes, "Food is a good way to present hard topics and periods that are generally perceived as difficult to understand. I also hope to help retrieve an important part of Jewish heritage and to help Jews know their own history." This webpage was made possible by the Stroum Center's Faculty Digital Fellowship, a program piloted during the 2013-14 academic year. Visit our website to view the other fantastic digital projects created by our faculty!





# 40<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary Gala

On May 13th, 2014, faculty, students, staff, and community supporters joined together to celebrate 40 years of Jewish Studies at the University of Washington. Inspired by the evening's theme of "Thinking Forward," Gala attendees raised \$200,000 for the Jewish Studies Forward Fund to build new initiatives in student engagement, digital media, and public scholarship. The event was hosted at the Harley and Lela Franco Maritime Center on Harbor Island. Special thanks to Jamie Merriman-Cohen and Lucy Pruzan, chairs of the 40th Anniversary Committee, and to Lela Franco, Barbara Buchman, and Terry Azose, who also served as co-chairs of the 40th Anniversary Gala. **Thanks to all who joined us for this memorable evening!**



» Gala Co-Chairs Terry Azose and Lela Franco



» Prof. Michael Rosenthal, Herb Simon, and Herb Pruzan



» Sonny Gorasht (center) with Miriam and Gil Roth



» Carole Goldberg and Gala Co-Chair Barbara Buchman



» Student leader Haley Gustafson and Brett Endres



» Prof. Naomi Sokoloff and Dr. Elie Levy



» View of the marina at the Harley and Lela Franco Maritime Center on Harbor Island



» Keith Judelman of Sasson performing



» Raymond and Jeanette Galante, Howard Behar, and Debra and Peter Rettman



» Tamar Benzikry-Stern



» Prof. Devin Naar and Jeff Merriman-Cohen



» Bob Center and Prof. Noam Pianko



» Standing: Lela Franco, Esther Maimon, Richard Galanti. Seated: Maureen and Joel Benoliel, Dean Bob Stacey



» Student leaders Rebecca Steelman, Natalie Cohenca, Shirin Lotfi, Haley Gustafson, Angela Ugalino, and Dawn Yang



» Adam Rosen with Graduate Fellows Sarah Zaides and Oscar Aguirre-Mandujano



» (Left to Right): Keynote Speaker Prof. Deborah Lipstadt, Prof. Resat Kasaba, Dean Bob Stacey, & Gala Co-Chair Lucy Pruzan

**SPECIAL THANKS** to the Samis Foundation as well as Dr. Joseph and Barbara Buchman and the Abe & Sidney Block Foundation for their leadership gifts to the Jewish Studies Forward Fund.



# Speaking Volumes

Graduate Fellow unearths voice of an Ottoman Jewish soldier-poet



If the pages of the Yehuda Leon Behar notebook could talk, they would have an amazing story to tell.

Behar was a Jewish soldier who fought for the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan Wars (1912–1913). He later immigrated from Istanbul to Seattle and directed the city's Ladino theater group. Prior to leaving Turkey, he penned a series of poems about war, Jewish identity, and national belonging.

Now, a hundred years after Behar's military stint, his Seattle descendants have generously made his notebook available for digitization and study through the UW Sephardic Studies Program's Digital Library and Museum. And, thanks to crucial support from the Mickey Sreebny Memorial Scholarship at the Stroum Center, Behar's poetic voice has found an ideal interpreter in PhD student Oscar Aguirre-Mandujano.

A native of Mexico City, Aguirre-Mandujano grew up speaking Spanish and Hebrew. For his masters and doctoral work in Ottoman Studies, he gained fluency in an astounding number of languages: classical Ottoman, Arabic, Persian, and Karamanlidika (Turkish written in Greek script), as well as modern English, Turkish, Persian, and Italian. He has been a standout student in the UW's Interdisciplinary Program in Near

and Middle Eastern Studies since his arrival in 2011; he has also been integrally involved with the Turkish and Ottoman Studies Program, which is based in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilization (NELC) and ranks among the top such programs in the country.

Aguirre-Mandujano's PhD research focuses on a far-off time and place: the Ottoman court culture of the 15th century. His dissertation, "Poetry and Politics in the Early Modern Ottoman World: The Court of Bayezid II (r.1481–1512)," probes how Ottoman poetry discussed and transformed political ideas. He looks particularly at literary texts produced by the palace elite, "trying to see how the production of poetry and literary prose was a political act in the Ottoman world." This project builds on his MA work, wherein Aguirre-Mandujano focused on border narratives and the intense interaction between various religious groups in the Ottoman Empire.

As soon as he met Aguirre-Mandujano in a graduate seminar in the spring of 2012, Prof. Devin Naar knew that this was the

perfect student to undertake a critical study of Behar's poetry. Prof. Naar quickly surmised that Aguirre-Mandujano had the language background to understand Ladino (the Judeo-Spanish dialect of Sephardic Jews), as well as the rigorous training necessary to analyze Ottoman Turkish (the official language of the Ottoman Empire between the 14th and early 20th centuries). Both languages appear alternately in Behar's notebook, providing linguistic evidence of the Ottoman-Jewish soldier's dual cultural allegiances.

Naar, the chair of the Stroum Center's Sephardic Studies Program, offered to supervise Aguirre-Mandujano's work on the Behar notebook. His initial research assistantship was funded by the Mitchell F. and Sophie Wise Ehrlich Student Support Fund in Jewish Studies, thanks to the generous support of Arlene B. Ehrlich. Soon after, Aguirre-Mandujano was awarded the Sreebny Scholarship for 2013–14. One of five competitive graduate student grants offered by the Jewish Studies Graduate Fellowship last year, the Sreebny Scholarship made an immediate

impact on Aguirre-Mandujano's academic plans. He says, "The fellowship gave me the possibility of opening a space in my year for a project I really wanted to do. It provided a clear structure to develop my research on Behar, as well as the space to get feedback and advice in addition to Devin's very helpful guidance."

The rest, as they say, is history—or history in the making.

## Autobiographical Poems of Citizenship and Community

The turn of the twentieth century was a time of formal transformation for poetry around the world. It was also a time of political transformation for the Ottoman Empire and its Jewish residents. Following a series of decrees in the 19th century that had gradually expanded their civil and political rights, Ottoman Jews hoped that they would finally be accepted as full citizens during the empire's Second Constitutional Period (1908–1920). Military service was the last legal duty required for full citizenship during this period.

Enter Yehuda Leon Behar, a Jewish soldier who wrote poems in Ottoman Turkish, the language of the majority culture, in order to convince fellow Jews to embrace their status as Ottoman citizens.

For Aguirre-Mandujano, Behar's linguistic choice is highly noteworthy. As he wrote in the paper he presented at the May 2014 Jewish Studies Spring Research Symposium, "Behar's poems are at all times Ottoman, and not only in language. They narrate the history of the war from an Ottoman perspective and celebrate the victories of the Ottoman army. These poems are the songs sung by an officer who takes personal pride for the victories of his nation, which is, clearly enough, the Ottoman nation."

Behar's signature, included after every Ottoman poem in the notebook, affirms the extent to which his national and military statuses are ingrained with his



» Graduate Fellow Oscar Aguirre-Mandujano with Dr. Leo Sreebny, creator of the Mickey Sreebny Memorial Scholarship.

love and pride. It is a hopeful call for peace and friendship among nations."

Prof. Naar, who is the Marsha and Jay Glazer Endowed Chair in Jewish Studies and Assistant Professor of History at the UW, has high praise for his protégé: "Oscar's groundbreaking work on Behar's notebook and poetry has the potential to completely transform how scholars understand the relationships between Jews and the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century; Jewish cultural productivity in the Ottoman Turkish language; and Jewish participation in the Ottoman military. Until now, scholars have assumed that Jews rarely became literate in Ottoman Turkish and went out of their way to avoid military service. But Oscar has revealed through Behar's poetry the voice of a self-affirming Jewish man who also saw himself as an Ottoman patriot and warrior and wrote poems in Ottoman Turkish to prove it."

## A Legacy of Learning

That such a richly-textured worldview can be contained within one small notebook is precisely the point of creating the Sephardic Studies Digital Library and Museum. This initiative, in collaboration with the UW Libraries Digital Collections, seeks to preserve and disseminate rare works in the Ladino language and others that focus on all aspects of the Sephardic experience. Behar's



» The Behar family in Seattle, 1954. Front row: Rebecca and Leon Behar. Back row: Daughters Matilda, Lena, Sara, and Josephine. Courtesy of Robin Agoado Roberts.



notebook and other Sephardic cultural items that have been painstakingly scanned by the project's research team will eventually be available for free to students and scholars around the world.

From the beginning, Naar's archival project has been supported and sustained by members of the Seattle Jewish community, many of whom have also provided family heirlooms to be included in the Digital Museum. The Sephardic Studies Founders' Circle has been especially instrumental in making the UW Sephardic Studies Program a reality. Says founding member Harley Franco, "For the university to be able to bring in a world-class professor like Professor Naar, and a program like the Jewish Studies Program—it's just phenomenal, and it's very easy to get behind it."

For the families who provide their archival materials for the Digital Library, the process can be just as revelatory. Robin Agoado Roberts, one of Leon Behar's granddaughters, says that her grandfather never discussed his army years with his family in Seattle. "I had no idea he was into politics.



**Original**  
**Ḳahramān zabitān ve**  
**askerlerimiz manzumesi**

Muḳades vaṭanda ḳahramān efrād  
Yāṣāsun fedakār ḳahramān asker  
Sevgili vaṭaniñ ḳahramān olān  
Cihāngir āl-i Osmān ḳahramān asker

*"Oscar's groundbreaking work on Behar's notebook and poetry has the potential to completely transform how scholars understand the relationships between Jews and the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century."*

» Prof. Devin Naar

Now, thanks to Oscar, I'm learning more and more about him." She remembers Leon Behar as a storyteller with a playful personality, a big heart, and a great imagination: "He always had a little piece of paper to jot down poems; he would sit at the counter of his store and write. He mostly wrote in English, but sometimes he wrote in Ladino too."

For Roberts, Oscar Aguirre-Mandujano's work is shedding new light on the poetry Leon Behar wrote before arriving in Seattle—verses that she saw in the notebook preserved by her mother Josephine, but that she could never understand until now. She adds, "All of us in the family are excited that people want to know his story."

As Aguirre-Mandujano has shown, compelling material will draw talented scholars into the Sephardic Studies field, and he is among a growing cadre of UW graduate students with significant

**Poetry Excerpt from the**  
**Leon Behar Notebook,**  
**early 20th century**

*Translated from the Ottoman original*  
*by Oscar Aguirre-Mandujano*

**Translated**  
**Verses for our heroic soldiers**  
**and officers**

Heroic warrior in the sacred Fatherland  
Long live! Sacrificing hero, the soldier  
The hero is the Fatherland's beloved  
World-conqueror, the House of Osman,  
hero, the soldier

research projects in the works supervised by Prof. Naar. For many of these students, the UW Stroum Center provides a crucial framework and support for interdisciplinary work.

Aguirre-Mandujano emphasizes, "It is thanks to the partnership among Jewish Studies, Near and Middle East Studies, and Turkish and Ottoman Studies that I have been able to acquire the interdisciplinary training I need to deeply understand Ottoman Jewish history. This training has complemented the guidance provided by Prof. Selim S. Kuru, director of NELC's Ottoman and Turkish Studies Program, in helping me acquire the skills required to read and interpret the poetry of the Ottoman Empire."

Reflecting on his year in the Jewish Studies Graduate Fellowship, Aguirre-Mandujano says that the Behar study has been among the most meaningful milestones of his academic career.

"I always had a divide between the languages I learned for Ottoman Studies, and those that are my personal languages, Hebrew and Spanish. But this project allowed me to engage my personal languages in my professional work." He describes reading Ladino as a "magical" experience.

It is quite fortunate for scholars and devotees of Sephardic culture that Aguirre-Mandujano is now using his most personal languages for public scholarship. Says Naar, "With the careful interpretation and translation skills of a literary scholar, and the contextualization of a historian, Oscar brings Behar's voice back to life, and along with it, the lost world of Ottoman Jewry that continues to echo right here in Seattle."

—H.P.

# Meet Mika Ahuvia

## Our Newest Faculty Member!

Last year the Stroum Center conducted a successful international search for a new Assistant Professor of Classical Judaism. The professorship, based in the Jackson School of International Studies, is made possible by funding from two endowments: the Marsha and Jay Glazer Endowed Chair in Jewish Studies and the Althea Stroum Endowed Chair in Jewish Studies.

This position reflects our continuing commitment to teaching the full spectrum of the Jewish experience, including the history and texts of rabbinic Judaism and the ancient world. As a leading center for Jewish Studies, we support scholarship on Jewish religion and culture from its origins through contemporary times.

The Stroum Center is deeply grateful for the community's crucial support in bringing an accomplished young scholar, Mika Ahuvia, to the UW starting in Autumn 2014. Below is an interview conducted with Prof. Ahuvia this summer. We hope you will be able to meet her in person soon!

**Hannah Pressman:** Welcome and congratulations on becoming our new Assistant Professor of Classical Judaism! What most excites you about joining the Jewish Studies faculty at the UW?

**Mika Ahuvia:** Thank you! I am delighted to join Jewish Studies, the Jackson School of International Studies, and UW as a whole. I'm excited to join a place that values my expertise in ancient Judaism as well as my more contemporary interests in culture and religion. I can bring many parts of myself (my experiences, my passions, and pedagogical interests) to UW, and it feels like a great fit.

**HP:** Where did you grow up, and where did you study?

**MA:** I was born in Kibbutz Beit Hashita, a small agricultural community in north Israel, but I grew up in the suburbs of Tel Aviv and the suburbs of Orlando. I stayed in Florida for my BA, studying Classics at Rollins College. Next I went to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor for a Master's in Judaic Studies. Finally, I went to Princeton, NJ to complete a PhD in Religion, in the religions of Late Antiquity subfield, where I specialized in ancient Judaism.

**HP:** Give us a sense of your general research interests. What are your hopes for how your scholarship can illuminate contemporary issues in the Jewish community and beyond?

**MA:** In a general way, I am interested in making the familiar seem strange and the unfamiliar seem accessible. I am interested in socio-historical questions that bring men, women, and neglected perspectives into view. And I am interested in more peripheral fields of study like ancient magic, Hebrew liturgical poetry, and early mysticism.

So for example, my dissertation was on angels in ancient Jewish texts. Scholars had said that the lives of ancient Jews were pervaded by angels, and I was curious as to what that could mean for ordinary Jews going about their day. This topic allowed me to look at the many ways that Jews acted out their identity in antiquity: the way Jews imagined themselves to pray with angels in the synagogue and the way Jews invoked angels for help with magical texts in their homes.

Judaism today might not foreground the angels, but my work shows how ancient Jews acted and imagined the world around them in very different terms than we do.

**HP:** Let's talk about teaching. How would you describe your teaching style?



*"I am interested in making the familiar seem strange and the unfamiliar seem accessible."*

» Mika Ahuvia

**MA:** I think the best teaching is adaptable, flexible, and sensitive to the frameworks that students bring and that students lack. I specialize in fascinating and foundational religious texts and my main challenge is to help students hear the passionate voices behind these texts. Accomplishing that task can take many forms. In general, I want to sit at the same table reading with my students, but I also want to show them beautiful far-off places, and help them dive into some discarded and intriguing ancient ideas. I have a lot to say on many topics, but my goal is to help students find their own voice.

**HP:** What is your favorite class that you've ever taught? What will you be teaching during the 2014-15 academic year?

**MA:** My favorite class I have ever taught was called Jewish History: The Jews and the Encounter with the Other. In a way,



I'm teaching related courses this year. In the fall, I'll be teaching a seminar on contemporary Global Revolutions and Social Movements. In the winter, I'll be teaching a class called Heroes, Heretics, and Radicals: The Rise of Judaism and Christianity, as well as an Introduction to Rabbinic Literature. The following year, I hope to teach a class called Jewess History.

**HP:** What might our readers be surprised to know about you?

**MA:** I worked at Whole Foods Market for four years during college and at Zingerman's Deli in Ann Arbor during my first year of graduate school. Thanks to that, I'm a food snob and I spend far too much time thinking about finding beers with interesting stories, cheese and wine pairings, and whether I should bake my own bread or give up gluten altogether. I also enjoy lindy-hop, swing, blues, and contra-dancing.

-H.P.

*"I want to sit at the same table reading with my students, but I also want to show them beautiful far-off places, and help them dive into some discarded and intriguing ancient ideas. I have a lot to say on many topics, but my goal is to help students find their own voice."*

» Mika Ahuvia

**Join us this spring to celebrate Prof. Mika Ahuvia's arrival at the Stroum Center!**

Her official Welcome Lecture will take place on March 31st, 2015 at Hillel UW!



» Prof. Ahuvia's research examines the role of angels in ancient Judaism. This medieval Hebrew illuminated manuscript page from The British Library depicts four angels guarding the Tree of Life.

# Sephardic Studies Program

► Stroum Center for Jewish Studies

**We are deeply grateful for the support of the Sephardic Studies Founders' Circle:**

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Assistant Professor, Near Eastern Languages and Civilization

**Lecturers:**

**Hadar Horovitz**

Lecturer in Elementary Hebrew Language, Near Eastern Languages and Civilization

**Hannah S. Pressman**

Affiliate Faculty, Graduate Fellowship Coordinator

**Tovi Romano**

Lecturer in Modern Intermediate Hebrew, Near Eastern Languages and Civilization

**Congratulations to our retiring faculty, Professors Paul Burstein and Gad Barzilai!**

Paul & Gad are both past chairs of Jewish Studies, and we're deeply grateful for their many contributions to the University of Washington.

## Announcing the Gorasht Family Endowed Fund for Jewish Studies Faculty Support!

"We wanted to make a special gift for the 40th Anniversary of Jewish Studies at the University of Washington. When we learned about the possibility of creating an endowment, we felt that this was a perfect way to "Think Forward" and make a long-term, meaningful contribution. We chose to establish the Gorasht Family Endowed Fund for Jewish Studies Faculty Support in honor of Jamie's parents, Sonny and Gena Gorasht, as a way of recognizing their deep commitment to the Stroum Center for Jewish Studies. Taking Access classes, serving on the Advisory Board, and sponsoring student scholarships are just a few of the ways that Sonny and Gena have modeled their passion for learning, leadership, and philanthropy. It's an honor for us to continue their legacy for another 40 years!"

- Jeff and Jamie Merriman-Cohen





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Welcome to incoming members **Paul Azous** and **Rena Behar**!

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## We’re proud to introduce the members of our first Honorary Board:

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# International Ladino Day

The Sephardic Studies Program and the UW Stroum Center for Jewish Studies hosted the local festivities for the first-ever International Ladino Day, celebrated around the world on Dec. 5, 2013. The evening program at Hillel UW, attended by over 300 people,

included official proclamations, stirring songs, zesty proverbs, and a collectively told history of how the Sephardic community in Seattle got its start. And, of course, a reception with baklava and other Sephardic treats!



» The packed audience of over 300 people at Hillel UW



» UW Provost Ana Mari Cauce read the Mayor's Official Proclamation of Ladino Day



» "Los Ladineros," a local group that meets weekly to reminisce in Ladino, performed a set of songs.



» Prof. Devin Naar, Andrea Soroko Naar, the Honorary Consul of Spain Luis Fernando Esteban, graduate student and event organizer Molly FitzMorris, and Albert S. Maimon, a member of the Sephardic Studies Committee and member of the Jewish Studies Honorary Board.



» Hannah Pressman, Stroum Center Communications Director, with undergraduate Ladino student Ashley Bobman, who read her original Ladino poetry at the event.



» Profs. Suzanne Petersen and Ana Gomez-Bravo, faculty members for the Division of Spanish & Portuguese Studies

# Student Leaders *in* Action

"Educating and empowering our young adults is critical to furthering our values, especially those pertaining to our collective responsibility. That is why we support this work."

» Michele Rosen, member of the Jewish Studies Honorary Board

The Stroum Center is very proud of our talented student leaders, who founded the Jewish Studies Student Committee in Spring of 2013 and spent the past academic year building a new, vibrant community of students around Jewish Studies. JSSC leaders reach out to their peers to share their academic experiences and invite others to get involved with Jewish Studies. They also provide an important student voice in program-level decisions about curriculum, events, and outreach strategies.

## 2013-14 Highlight

The JSSC organized a series of student outreach events this year, which they called "Feasting with Faculty" – intimate dinners with Jewish Studies professors like Joel Migdal and Hadar Khazzam-Horovitz. Students new to our program enjoyed dinner while learning about all that the Stroum Center has to offer; several attendees were inspired to sign up for their first Jewish Studies course!

## New Leadership

We are thrilled that Griffin Taylor '15 and Angela Ugalino '16 have stepped up to take on the reins of the JSSC in the coming year as co-coordinators. Both Griffin and Angela have been dedicated members of the JSSC for the past year (Griffin was a founding member), and they bring tremendous energy, passion, and talent to their new roles.



"I don't know of any other program on campus where such strong ties between students and faculty, through opportunities like having dinner with Jewish Studies professors, are possible. The vibrant interplay between students and faculty create an amazing sense of community—one that I can't wait to share with even more students in the coming year."

» Griffin Taylor, '15 (Majors: Speech & Hearing Sciences, Linguistics)



"By concentrating on its role as a bridge between the curriculum and student interests, the JSSC can assist faculty in keying in on what students are most interested in learning, simultaneously introducing more students to the knowledge, care, and enthusiasm the Jewish Studies Center has to offer."

» Angela Ugalino, '16 (Major: Speech & Hearing Sciences)



» JSSC leaders Katelyn Baughn and Aliza Minkina model their snazzy new UW Jewish Studies T-shirts.



» "Hanging with Hadar," featuring Hebrew lecturer Hadar Khazzam-Horovitz, drew a large crowd of students to Shalimar on Feb. 6th, 2014.





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