Fall 1999 Newsletter

CENTER FOR JUDAIC & MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES

University of Connecticut, Stamford
One University Place, Stamford, CT 06901-2315
203-251-9525 / 8435

Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy, Director

From the Director’s Desk

The outstanding attendance in our 1998/9 outreach offerings once again demonstrated the community’s enthusiastic appreciation of our creative programming. It further defined our Center’s mission as a unique academic resource in Fairfield County for high-level programs in all aspects of the Jewish experience as well as in those areas of intellectual pursuit where the Jewish genius and historical heritage meet and converge with other cultural experiences. Thus our Lunch & Learn series which drew to every single lecture over 120 students (many from the downtown Stamford corporate & professional community) and Interfaith Conference on the Book of Job, which attracted a record crowd of over 300, represented the rich and broad diversity of the Fairfield County community.

I hope you will take the time to read this Newsletter to learn more of the scope of our outreach activities, our innovative interdisciplinary credit courses, and the Certificate in Judaic & Middle Eastern Studies that we are now offering.

The 1999 Interfaith Conference on the Biblical Book of Job

Panelists listen as Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy discusses the “Jobian Voice in Judaic Literary Tradition.” L. to r.: Prof. Aschkenasy, Prof. Larry Lyke of Yale U., Rabbi Mark Dratch, Rev. Robert Uzzilio & Rev. Dr. Robert Perry.

R.: An enthusiastic crowd of over 300 filled to capacity the UConn auditorium and balcony.
A Message from Our Chairman, Edward Backer

In the academic year 1998/99 the Center for Judaic & Middle Eastern Studies presented the community with a dazzling array of world-renowned speakers and creative topics. In addition to our ongoing Tuesday morning seminars and the full-day Annual Conference, we inaugurated two immensely successful new programs, the Lunch & Learn series and the Interfaith Conference. I can safely say that our outreach accomplishments, together with the Center’s innovative credit-bearing courses, match and even surpass, in volume and in quality, other established Judaic Studies programs around the country which enjoy the benefits of a large endowment. It is always amazing to me that we have been able to offer the community and our undergraduate students such intellectual variety and high academic quality while at the same time having to conduct an intensive annual fundraising drive. I wish to thank our many faithful contributors as well as the Jewish Federations of Stamford, Greenwich, and Westport/Wilton/Norwalk for their continued, unwavering support. I know that community financial support will grow and expand in the coming years.

Highlights of Recent Events

Norma Mann presents Ed and Sary Backer with the 1998 “Community Leadership Award.” L. to R.: Norma Mann, N. Aschkenasy, Ed and Sary Backer, Candace Caplin. Featured speaker was Professor Steven Katz.

Roz and Les Goldstein with Historian Deborah Lipstadt, whose lecture was made possible by a grant from the Roz and Leslie Goldstein Foundation.

Ed Backer presents the “Community Leadership Award” to 1999 recipients Eileen and Bob Breakstone. L. to r.: Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy, Claude Bernstein, Bob Breakstone, Eileen Breakstone, and Stamford Mayor Dannel Malloy. Featured speaker was Prof. Alan Nadler.

L.: Celebrating a successful joint program with the Council of Churches & Synagogues, l. to r.: Sary Backer, Ed Backer, Ishier Jacobson, Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy, Rev. Robert Uzillio, Deborah Goldberg, Director of programming for the Council, Rabbi Mark Dratch, Professor Larry Lyke of Yale U., and Rev. Dr. Robert Perry.
BOOKS AND ESSAYS:


R.: Nechama Tec’s *Defiance: The Bielski Parisans*, recently optioned for a movie, won a number of international awards and was translated into German and Hebrew. Professor of Sociology and participant in the Judaic Studies offerings, Tec is author of six books, among them the award-winning *Dry Tears* and *In the Lion’s Den*, now being translated into Hebrew; the former was recently published in German. Tec was Senior Research Fellow at the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington and scholar-in-residence at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. She is currently working on a book on gender and the Holocaust for Yale U.P.

*Susan Anderson* (Philosophy), who was a respondent and discussant in the Center’s 1998 Annual Conference, recently completed two books, on Søren Kierkegaard and on John Stuart Mill, for a new series in Philosophy.

*Nehama Aschkenasy’s* essay on biblical influences on James Joyce, titled “Davin’s ‘Strange Woman’ and Her Biblical Prototypes,” appeared in *JAMES JOYCE: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Macmillan, 1998). *Aschkenasy* continued to serve as Associate Editor of the *AJJS Review: Journal of the Association for Jewish Studies* where she also published several review essays.

*Joel Blatt* (History) contributed three entries to the recently published *Encyclopedia of the Vatican and Papacy*. He is completing two books, *French Foreign Policy, 1918-1940*, and *The Assassination of Carlo and Nello Rosselli*.

*Arnold Dashefsky*, Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for Judaic Studies and Contemporary Jewish Life at UConn, has completed a book titled *A Time to Give: Charitable Giving in the Jewish Community* (Praeger).


*Lefebvre* also reviewed sixteen articles for a book sponsored by the National Geographic Society.

*Sondra Melzer* (English) published *The Rhetoric of Rage: Women in Dorothy Parker* (Lang 1998).


ACADEMIC LECTURES AND PAPERS

*Nehama Aschkenasy* presented a paper at the 1998 Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies titled “Biblical Patterns in the Works of Amos Oz.” *Aschkenasy* also gave a session for the UConn Starnford Honors Seminar on “The Immigrant Experience in the Works of Abraham Cahan.”

*Arnold Dashefsky* presented several papers including “Continuity and Change in American Jewish Denominational Choices” in San Antonio, Tx, and “Jewish Education and Denomination in American Judaism,” in Los Angeles, CA.

*Jeff Lefebvre* gave a paper on U.S. security policy in the Gulf at the Middle East Studies annual meeting in Dec. 1998.

*Sondra Melzer* gave a session for the Honors Seminar on Philip Roth’s novel *American Pastoral*. *Melzer* also presented a paper at the Conference of the American Literature Association on women in Dorothy Parker’s works.

*Stuart Miller* chaired a session and presented a paper at the Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies. (FACULTY ACTIVITIES continues on p. 4)
The Tuesday Morning Experience

The programs offered by the Center for Judaic & Middle Eastern Studies have all been unique. The Tuesday morning classes, in particular, have introduced me to literary works from the entire spectrum of Judaic literary heritage that I never encountered before. They have also given me insight into the Bible that I never was taught before.

The Tuesday morning classes have also exposed me to a superb professor, Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy, who for twenty years has been able to sustain her students' interest with creative and provocative topics and concepts.

Through these courses I have also met a group of students of unusual intelligence and knowledge, all accomplished professionals in their fields, who together make every class a joy!

Scholarship students and Certificate recipients:
Right: Alexis Richland completed the requirements for the Certificate in Judaic Studies and will be presented with the award during the 1999 Annual Conference.
Far R.: Jessica Rae will complete the Certificate requirements this year. Academic concentration in Judaic Studies has brought about a shift in Ms. Rae’s career interests: a longtime editor and writer, she is considering a move into teaching Judaic Studies. Both Ms. Richland and Ms. Rae are scholarship recipients from the Center for Judaic & Middle Eastern Studies. These scholarships have been made possible through the generosity of our loyal annual contributors.

FACULTY ACTIVITIES (Continued from p. 3)

Media Appearances & Public lectures:
*Nehama Aschkenasy appeared several times as guest commentator on Middle Eastern politics and society on "The Exchange," Cable TV’s program on Channel 12. *Aschkenasy also served as “Scholar-in-Residence” at Temple Sinai in Stamford on May 16 giving a luncheon lecture on the biblical Book of Ruth and an evening public lecture titled “Society and Culture in a State of Siege: Modern Israeli Writings.”
*Jeff Lefebvre gave several interviews to CT Public Radio and WTIC Radio on Middle Eastern issues.

The Certificate in Judaic & Middle Eastern Studies

The Center for Judaic & Middle Eastern Studies at UConn, Stamford, offers a Certificate in Judaic & Middle Eastern Studies to students who have completed the Certificate requirements (in designated courses given through English, Hebrew, Sociology, Political Science and other departments). The Certificate track is open to all undergraduate students as well as to qualified non-degree students.

The Certificate will qualify students to teach in religious schools and prepare them for advanced training in Religious Studies, Judaic scholarship, Jewish communal work, Middle Eastern and Israel studies, as well as for professional careers in government and foreign service which require knowledge of Israel and the Middle East.

Ten students are currently completing the Certificate requirements.

Several scholarships to cover course fees are available to qualified students.

For further information on the Certificate requirements, please call us at 203-251-9525.
Our students reflect on what the courses in Judaic Studies have meant to them:

**Jessica Rae**
Dr. Aschkenasy's classes, credit and outreach alike, have provided me with the vehicle for a meaningful re-connection with my heritage. Also, as important, through her teaching and class content, I gain the essential intellectual stimulation and perspectives that break through the blinders imposed upon our vision by the routine and stresses of everyday life. Dr. Aschkenasy's courses have opened my mind, refreshed my thinking, and given balance to my life.

**Alexis Richland**
The courses in Judaic Studies have trained me to study more intensely, read texts more closely, and understand the connection between literature, history, and religion. They have also opened my mind to the different levels of meanings in literary texts. The classes in Judaic Studies were not only fascinating by themselves, they also enabled me to apply the research and analysis skills I developed in them to the other courses I took at UConn.

**Noelle Angers**
I am a History and English major and a Women's Studies minor with no background in Judaic Studies. I find that the courses in Judaic Studies I have taken here (in Holocaust Diaries and Fiction, Israeli and Palestinian Literature, Bible and other Judaic texts) have enabled me to integrate my scholastic interests. The works I read for these courses, and the new ideas and concepts I encountered in them, broadened my perspectives on the modern world and the human experience.

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**Graduate-Level Credit Approved for Dr. Aschkenasy's Course in Bible**

Dr. Aschkenasy's course "INTD 294: The Bible," offered this Fall, has been approved for graduate-level credit as Heb. 397. Several students have qualified to take this course for 3 graduate credits. The sessions in New Testament will be taught by Jennifer Knust, a scholar from Columbia University. For more information on graduate-level courses and our Certificate, call us at 251-9525.

**FALL 1999 OFFERINGS**

*THE LOUIS J. KURLANSKY ANNUAL CONFERENCE:* Sunday, November 7, 9:45-3:00

**Outreach Seminar Series:** CONTEMPORARY HEBREW AND JEWISH LITERATURE
Tue. 10 a.m. -12 noon, Sep. 28 - Dec. 7 / Professor Nehama Aschkenasy

*INTD 294: THE BIBLE / 3 credits, Wed. 6-8:40 p.m. / Professor Nehama Aschkenasy

*HEB 397: THE BIBLE / 3 graduate-level credits to qualified students / as above

*HEB 203: THE HOLOCAUST / 3 credits, Tue., 5:45-8:25 p.m. / Professor Joel Blatt & Professor Nehama Tec

*HEB 279: LITERATURE OF MODERN ISRAEL / 3 credits, Tue. 9:35 - 12:15 p.m. / Professor Nehama Aschkenasy

*POLS 224: AMERICAN DIPLOMACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST / 3 credits, Wed. 2:40-5:20 P.M. / Professor Jeffrey Lefebvre

*A "Town & Gown" Breakfast with Scholar-in-Residence Dr. Rodger Kamenetz,* Sunday, Dec. 12, 9:15-11:30 a.m., at the UConn Conference Center, cosponsored by the Stamford UJF and JCC.

**Recent Courses for Credit**
We take special pride in our faculty's ingenuity in designing innovative courses for credit and integrating them into the existing curriculum, often creating new interdisciplinary links. Most of these courses are a first among Judaic Studies curricula presently offered in schools around the country. Every new course needs prior approval of the appropriate departments. Here are a few examples of courses offered recently:

*Eng 218: Politics and Society in Contemporary Israeli and Arab Writings / Aschkenasy
*Soc 243 & Eng 268: Prejudice and Discrimination: Holocaust Diaries and Fiction / Tec & Aschkenasy
*Eng 267 & Soc 298: Gender, War, and Resistance (on gender issues during the Holocaust) / Tec & Cramer
*Eng 217 / Heb 201: Family, Society, and Sexual Politics in Biblical Civilization / Aschkenasy
A Message from Ishier Jacobson

We are indeed grateful for the new downtown Stamford UConn campus, the extraordinary collective achievement of UConn's administration at Storrs and in Stamford, of a community committee and our City's government that long pursued such a campus, and of our State government that funded it. The Center for Judaic & Middle Eastern Studies now has its own appropriate space and a suitable office for its Director, plus access to the excellent conference facilities and other resources of its own campus.

In turn, the Center provides high academic value to UConn in courses given and high outreach value in Center-funded programs that attract the community to the campus. Needless to say, the Center's high academic and outreach value to UConn and the community I attribute to the skills and status, energy and dedication of its Director, my very good and admired friend, Professor Nehama Aschkenasy!

Coming Attractions

The 1999 Louis J. Kuriansky Annual Conference
Nov. 7, 1999 (9:45-3:00 p.m.)

Revisiting the New Middle East
With renowned guest scholars
Amos Perlmutter, Shibley Telhami, and Bernard Reich.
and UConn faculty Joel Blatt, Jeff LeFebvre, and Nehama Aschkenasy

The Spring 2000 Interfaith Conference
Thursday, March 30, 2000
7-9:30 p.m.
With the Council of Churches & Synagogues
At the UConn Conference Center
Sacrifice of the Son: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives

Town and Gown
Breakfast-and-Lecture
Sunday, Dec. 12, 1999, 10:00-12:00p.m.

With Scholar-in-Residence
Dr. Rodger Kamenetz
How Judaism Addresses Our Spiritual & Mystical Longings
At the UConn Conference Center
Cosponsored by the UJF & JCC of Stamford and supported by the JCEF

Back by Popular Demand!

The Spring 2000 Lunch & Learn Series
Four Thursdays 12:15 - 1:30 p.m., March 2, 9, 30, & April 6, 2000
at the UConn Stamford Conference Center

The Bible 2000:
Modern Perspectives on Ancient Texts
DR. NEHAMA ASCHKENASY

March 2: Joseph: Magician or Modern Analyst of the Human Psyche?
March 9: Samson: A Freudian Reading
March 30: Generational Conflict in Modern Israel: The Tragedy of David and Absalom
April 6: Palace Intrigue in Biblical Times: The Case of Bath-Sheba and Her Son

Fee for the series: $35 (including lunches!) Please make your check of $35 payable to Judaic Studies, UConn, Stamford, and mail to:
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To find more about the naming opportunities for specific programs and for the Center’s new Seminar and
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The Board of the Center for Judaic & Middle Eastern Studies at UConn, Stamford is happy to welcome Dr. Jacquelyn Joseph-Silverstein as the new Director of UConn, Stamford and Associate Vice Chancellor of the University of Connecticut. We wish you many years of successful leadership for the university and happy partnership with our Center.

The Center for Judaic and Middle Eastern Studies at UConn, Stamford, now entering its twentieth year, is a learning and study resource offering credit courses and outreach programs, supported by contributions from individuals, the Jewish Federations of Stamford, Greenwich, and Westport/ Wilton/ Norwalk, foundations, corporate gifts and matching grants.

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Please open this Newsletter to learn more of our upcoming events

Inside you will find the
Registration Form for Spring 2000 Lunch & Learn Series
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