From Our Chairman
Edward Backer

The Center for Judaic & Middle Eastern Studies, now in its twenty-first year, has established a name recognition and prestige with which we are greatly pleased. Our programs have been well received and attended by the community: over 160 in both last year’s Annual Louis J. Kuriansky Annual Conference and the Spring Interfaith Conference; 175 in every single session of the Lunch & Learn series. Our semester-long courses, outreach and credit alike, were filled to capacity.

We are very proud of the broad spectrum of topics that we have offered and the caliber of guest scholars we have attracted to our programs, many of them world-renowned scholars and specialists.

I wish to thank the communities of the Greater Stamford, Westport and Greenwich for their support of our programs both in individual contributions and in allocations from the United Federations’ annual drives.

Leadership and guest speakers of the 2001 Interfaith Conference: L to R.: Debbie Goldberg, Director of Education for the Council of Churches and Synagogues, Dr. Carolyn J. Sharp, Assistant Professor of Old Testament at Yale University, Rabbi William Marder of Congregation Beth El in Norwalk, CT, Dr. Alan F. Segal (seated), Professor of Religion at Barnard College, the Rev. Dr. Blair Moffett of the First Presbyterian Church in Stamford, CT, Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy, Edward Backer, chairman of the Center’s Board of Directors, and Eugene Wagaman, President of the Council.

From Our Director
Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy

It is extremely gratifying to report that both our credit and outreach programs have witnessed significant expansion in recent years in number of courses and lectures offered as well as in student and community attendance. By virtue of the goodwill and cooperation of colleagues from the departments of English, History, Sociology, and Political Science, we have been able to offer our students a variety of courses in Jewish history, literature, the Holocaust, Bible, and the Middle East.

I wish to thank my colleagues on the Center’s Academic Advisory Committee for their support and helpful suggestions. I also wish to express my gratitude to the chairman of our community Board, Ed Backer, for his leadership and enthusiastic support. Our Center thrives because of the tenacity and encouragement of our Board of Directors and our many friends in the communities of Fairfield County.

Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy moderates a panel discussion of distinguished Middle East experts during the 1999 Louis J. Kuriansky Conference: L to R.: Professor Aschkenasy, Professor Bernard Reich of George Washington University, the late Professor Amos Perlmutter of American University, Professor Shibley Telhami, who holds the Anwar Sadat Chair at the University of Maryland.
The Center for Judaic & Middle Eastern Studies enjoys the cooperation of several departments which house some of the courses in Judaic Studies or co-sponsor and cross-list courses with Judaic Studies. This is possible due to the support of the Stamford Campus Director and Associate Vice Chancellor Dr. Jacki Joseph-Silverstein as well as the Academic Advisory Committee, a group of faculty members who advise the Center's Director, Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy, and help in co-sponsoring courses with Judaic Studies in their respective departments.

Dr. Jackelyn Joseph-Silverstein, Associate Vice Chancellor of the University of Connecticut, Director of the Stamford Campus and Associate Professor in the Department of Molecular and Cell Biology.
Dr. Joseph-Silverstein's specialty is in Development Biology and her past research focused on the role of the growth factor in the development of the heart and circulatory system. Dr. Joseph-Silverstein is a graduate of the University of Connecticut and holds an MS in Biology from Emory University and a Ph.D. in Biological Sciences from the City University of New York. She also served as Associate Provost for Academic Affairs at St. John's University in New York.

Dr. Arnold Dashefsky, Professor of Sociology at UConn, Storrs, and Founding Director of the Center for Judaic Studies and Contemporary Jewish Life.
Author and editor of numerous books, among them *Ethnic Identification Among American Jews, Americans Abroad, Jewish Choices: American Jewish Denominationalism,* and *Ethnic Identity in Society,* he is the immediate past president of the Association for the Social and Scientific Study of Jewry, an international organization, for which he also edited volumes 7 and 8 of its journal, *Contemporary Jewry.* Dr. Dashefsky is also a senior scholar at the Wilstein Institute in Boston and Los Angeles.

Dr. Richard Watnick, Associate Professor of Mathematics. Dr. Watnick was twice the recipient of the UConn Stamford "Teacher of the Year" Award. He has written and presented papers at prestigious academic conferences in the areas of the incursion theory of linear orderings as well as pedagogical strategies. Currently, Dr. Watnick is Director of the Stamford Campus interdisciplinary Honors Program. It is due to his efforts and support that the semester-long seminars run by the Honors Program regularly include several sessions related to Judaic Studies.

Dr. Joel Blatt, Associate Professor of European History, teaches courses in Western Civilization from the Renaissance to the present, Nineteenth Century and Twentieth Century Europe. Together with Professor Nechama Tec, he pioneered and designed a course in Holocaust, one of the first in the country, which he still team-teaches with her. He has published numerous articles and edited, with an introduction, *The French Defeat of 1940: Reassessments.* He is currently working on two books, *The Assassination of Carlo and Nello Rosselli* and another on French Foreign Policy from 1918-1940.

Dr. Sondra Melzer, Professor in the Graduate School at Sacred Heart University and Visiting Professor of English and Judaic Studies at UConn, Stamford. A published poet and author of *The Rhetoric of Rage: Women in Dorothy Parker* as well as of numerous articles and papers presented in academic conferences. Dr. Melzer was Chairman of the English department at Westhill High School in Stamford for twenty-five years. She teaches the outreach seminars in Jewish American writers for the Center for Judaic & Middle Eastern Studies at UConn, Stamford.

Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy, Professor of Comparative Literature and Director of the Center for Judaic & Middle Eastern Studies.
Author of three books, including the award-winning *Eve’s Journey: Feminine Images in Hebraic Literary Tradition*, as well as numerous book chapters and articles in the areas of Comparative Literature, Hebrew Literature, Bible, the biblical presence in Western literature, and Women in Hebraic Literary Tradition. Dr. Aschkenasy served as an Advisory Editor for *Modern Language Studies* and, for the past thirteen years, as Associate Editor of the *AJJ Review*, the journal of the national and international Association of Jewish Studies. Her essay, titled “Deconstructing the Metanarrative: Amos Oz’s Evolving Discourse with the Bible,” is due to appear in *Symposium* this Fall. Active on the lecture circuit and TV commentator, she founded the Center in 1981 with the support of a community Board, with which she still works very closely.

Dr. Gary Storhoff, Associate Professor of English, teaches courses in American literature, African-American Literature, and Ethnic Literature. He is a recipient of an NEH fellowship as well as several Mellon fellowships and other grants. His research interests involve the portrayal of ethnicities and families in literature and film. He has published widely on William Faulkner, Toni Morrison, and Richard Wright. In his courses in Ethnic Literature he includes works depicting Jewish-American life, especially the immigrant experience, in the works of writers such as Abraham Cahan and others.

Dr. Jeffrey Lefebvre, Associate Professor of Political Science.
Among the courses he teaches are “Politics in the Middle East,” and “American Diplomacy in the Middle East.” Author of *Arms for the Horn: U.S. Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia, 1953-1991*, and numerous book chapters and journal articles, Dr. Lefebvre has presented papers and gave invited lectures for international conferences and community groups, and is the recipient of several research grants and twice of the Malone Fellowship in Islamic and Arab Studies. He also serves as Director of the Middle Eastern Languages & Area Studies Program at UConn.

Dr. Nechama Tec, Professor of Sociology.
Author of six books and numerous book chapters and articles, Dr. Tec recently completed her new book on Gender and the Holocaust, to be published by Yale University Press. Her book, *In the Lion’s Den: The Life of Oswald Ruffenstein*, won the prestigious Christopher Award. Her book, *Defiance: The Bielski Partisans* (Oxford U.P., 1993), won numerous international awards, including the International Anne Frank Special Recognition Prize; it was translated into Hebrew and German, and optioned for a movie. She is Senior Fellow at the U.S. Holocaust Museum and a recipient of grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Littauer Foundation, and the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. Professor Tec was recently honored by the American Society for Yad Vashem in a luncheon held at the Jewish Museum in New York, where she gave the keynote address.

Dr. Susan Anderson, Professor of Philosophy.
Author of three volumes in the Wadsworth Philosophers Series (on Kierkegaard, Mill, and Dostoevsky), and numerous book chapters, articles, and papers, she is currently completing a new book, *Equal Opportunity Individualism: An Interpretation of the American Dream*. Dr. Anderson is one of the creators and past Director of the Honors Scholar Program at UConn, Stamford. She developed and led five Honors Seminars which included sessions on themes in Judaic Studies. She is the co-leader of the Fall 2001 Honors Seminar on “Human Nature” which will include sessions in the Bible, Jewish philosophy, and the Holocaust.

Dr. Stuart Miller, Associate Professor of Hebrew/Judaic Studies and Associate Director, Center for Judaic and Contemporary Jewish Life at the Storrs campus, has been a regular participant in the excavations at Sepphoris in Israel and last year brought eight UConn students to take part in the excavations. He has published a book and numerous essays on the history of Sepphoris and on other aspects of Jewish history in late antiquity. His article “Josephus on the Cities of Galilee: Factions, Rivalries and Alliances in the first Jewish Revolt” is due to appear in *Historia*. 
Sample of the Topics Recently Covered in Our Outreach Conferences and Series

- Golems, Dybbuks and Magicians: Myths and Mysticism in Jewish History and Culture
- Crossing the Millennium: Political, Cultural and Moral Challenges for the Jewish Community in the United States and Worldwide
- Israel at Fifty: The Defining Moment for War or Peace
- The Hebrew Prophets: Their Message for Then and Now
- Sacrifice of the Son: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Perspectives
- The Book of Job: Jewish and Christian Responses
- Good and Evil: Biblical Villains and Their Later Incarnations
- Modern Perspectives on Ancient Texts
- Major Theological and Philosophical Themes in Judaic Texts
- A Tapestry of the Jewish Experience: From Czarist Russia to Contemporary America

Dr. Jacquelyn Joseph-Silverstein, Director of the UConn Stamford Campus and Associate Vice Chancellor, is a friend and supporter of the Center and often attends our programs. Here she is with the leadership and guest speakers of the 1999 Annual Conference:

L. to R.: Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy, Dr. Jeff Lefebvre, Dr. Shibley Telhami, Dr. Amos Perlmutter, Mr. Ishier Jacobson, Dr. Jackie Joseph-Silverstein, and Dr. Bernard Reich.

Historian Howard Sachar, noted scholar and writer, has frequently addressed our audience.

Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy welcomed famous Israeli writer Amos Oz whose works are often read and discussed in her classes.


Renowned historian Dr. Steven Katz of Boston University was our guest speaker in a recent Annual Dinner.

L. to R.: Ed Backer, Bob Breakstone, Sary Backer, Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy, Ishier Jacobson, Dr. Frieda Reitman, Dr. Steven Katz, and Stamford mayor Dannel Malloy.
A Message from Ishier Jacobson

The Center flourishes because of Director Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy's twenty-one year commitment at UConn Stamford to Judaic and Middle-Eastern studies - inherently human rights studies - expressed in her University courses, her community outreach events and seminars, her books and other publications. She has established a quality liberal arts resource to complement UConn Stamford's leading regional position in business and technical education, thereby creating, I think, a competitive edge.

Dr. Aschkenasy's community outreach courses and events, attracting large audiences, remain literary and secular in style, appealing to many unaffiliated community members, assisting them in understanding and maintaining identity. The quality of speakers Dr. Aschkenasy is able to attract to the Center's outreach events reflects their high regard for her, for the audiences she attracts (probably the largest at UConn Stamford), and for the growing prominence of the University itself.

I think it is generally understood now that the Center's courses for academic credit are funded by the University, while community outreach remains funded by modest admission fees and by donors, principally the United Jewish Federation of Greater Stamford, New Canaan and Darien, for which we of the Center are indeed grateful.

It is indeed fair to say that everyone's pride in UConn has grown greatly over the past few years; progress has been impressive, stimulating, and reputation ascending. The University's leaders at Stamford and Storrs recognize the value of the Center to the University and are friends of the Center. I want to express my appreciation and warm regards to them, Dr. Jacquelyn A. Joseph-Silverstein, Associate Vice Chancellor and Director of UConn, Stamford, and Dr. Philip E. Austin, President of the University. They are outstanding educators and administrators.

My many thanks to President Austin, Director Joseph-Silverstein, Chairman Edward Backer, and all colleagues on the Center's Board. And, of course, my warmest congratulations to Dr. Aschkenasy on her twenty-first anniversary at UConn Stamford; it has been a great privilege to work with her over about half of those years.

Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy welcomes community members, students, UConn faculty, and the three renowned guest scholars who participated in the conference on "Golems, Dibbukus and Magicians: Myths and Mysticism in Jewish History and Culture":
L to R: Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy, Dr. Bernard Cooperman, Dr. Allan Nadler, and Dr. Naomi Seidman.

Featuring Two of Our Community Board Members

**Sary Backer.** Raised in Israel where she served in the army, Ms. Backer graduated from Hebrew University in Jerusalem with advanced degrees in Hebrew literature and Political Science, and was Assistant Principal of Ulpan Akiva. A resident of Stamford since 1973, she has maintained a strong interest in Israeli culture and society and a deep commitment to the peace process and to the improvement of relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel. In Stamford she taught at the Bi-Cultural day school, attended the Masters program of the UConn, Stamford School of Social Work, and studied sculpture. Working mainly in stone, she has become a renowned sculptress, exhibiting professionally in many galleries and winning several prizes in national juried art shows. An active member of the Center's Board, she advises on programs relating to Israeli politics and literature, and uses her many trips to Israel and her Israeli connections to enrich the Center's lectures and conferences.

**Dr. Frieda Reitman.** A Ph.D. in Economics from the New School for Social Research, Dr. Reitman was Associate Dean of the Lubin School of Business at Pace University. Currently Professor of Management, Emerita-in-Residence, at Pace University, Dr. Reitman serves as the Center's Vice Chair and its liaison with the Jewish Educators Council of UJF. Her research interests include Managerial Careers and the Impact of Gender. She is also a Delegate to the Council of Churches and Synagogues.
The Credit Program

The Center for Judaic & Middle Eastern Studies takes special pride in our faculty's ingenuity in designing innovative courses for credit and integrating them into the existing undergraduate curriculum. These courses, given out of different departments (Hebrew, English, Sociology, History, Women's Studies, and Political Science), create new interdisciplinary links and need special approval from the respective departments. Many of these courses are a first among Judaic Studies curricula presently offered in universities around the country. The following is a sample of some of our recent courses:

**POLITICS AND SOCIETY IN CONTEMPORARY ISRAELI AND ARAB WRITINGS** (ENG 218)
(Selected works of contemporary Israeli, Arab, and Palestinian writers reflecting the tragedy of a dual claim to the same land and the impact of the prolonged conflict on the fabric of society and lives of individuals)

**THE BIBLE AS LITERATURE** (Eng 217 / Heb 201)
(The main ideas, concepts and personalities in biblical literature and a comparison of the art of biblical narrative with ancient genres such as the epic and tragedy)

**FAMILY, SOCIETY AND SEXUAL POLITICS IN BIBLICAL CIVILIZATION** (Eng 217 / Heb 201)
(Readings of selections from the Bible with a focus on the socioeconomic and theological roots of patriarchy; biblical laws regarding the family; images of women in the Bible)

**THE HOLOCAUST** (Heb 203)
(Discussions of the Nazi totalitarian state and its systematic destruction of European Jewry; acts of heroism and resistance; the partisans, and Gentiles who rescued Jews)

**GENDER, WAR, AND RESISTANCE** (Eng 267 / Soc 298)
(Holocaust research and feminist theories combine in examining issues of gender differences in responses to social upheaval, war, and in life-threatening situations)

**PREJUDICE and DISCRIMINATION: HOLOCAUST DIARIES and FICTION** (Eng 268 / Soc 243)
(Readings in the literature of the Holocaust, both autobiographical and fictional, to explore how the unimaginable is translated into language and art)

**PALESTINE UNDER THE GREEKS AND ROMANS** (Hls 218 / Heb 218)
(The political, historical and religious currents in Greco-Roman Palestine. Includes the Jewish Revolts, the rise of Christianity and the Talmudic academies)

**THE STRANGER: THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE IN WESTERN LITERATURE** (Eng 217)
(The dual image of the Jew; representations of the Jewish predicament; prejudice, racism, and discrimination; the tendency to stereotype and mythify the Jew)

**GOOD AND EVIL IN LITERATURE** (Eng 217)
(How Western literature, from the Bible to modern times, represented the mystery of human nature, the good and evil inclinations, suffering, and cosmic justice)

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**Marti Davidson,** a candidate for the Certificate in Judaic & Middle Eastern Studies, is currently a senior majoring in English with a minor in Biology. She says: "I have found the classes in Judaic Studies some of the most fascinating and worthwhile here. They have enlivened the literary nuances of the biblical cast of characters, and unraveled the complexities and conspiracies of the ancient Middle East. Through the guidance, enthusiasm, and authority of Dr. Aschkenasy and my other professors, I have come to a new understanding and appreciation of the Judaic literary history. As an English major and a Jewish woman, I consider the lessons I have learned here to be some of the most valuable of my entire education."

Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy presents the Certificate in Judaic & Middle Eastern Studies to Alexis Richland.

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Dr. Jennifer Knust, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA, and a Ph.D. in Religion from Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary in New York, recently team-taught a course in Bible with Dr. Aschkenasy, charming our students with her lively lectures on the New Testament. Her Ph.D. thesis was titled: "Abandoned to Lust: The Politics of Sexual Slander in Early Christian Discourse."

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**Dr. Shoni Berrin,** a recent Ph.D. in Jewish History from New York University, and Instructor at Stein College in NYC, Dr. Berrin taught a three-credit course titled "Palestine Under the Greeks and Romans" for Judaic Studies and History. She was a student and research assistant of Professor Lawrence Schiffman.

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**Malgorzata Kiełkiewska (Gosia),** a recipient of a stipend from the Center, says: "I am an international student majoring in Business Administration. I consider myself fortunate that in my quest for a more rounded education I came across Dr. Nehama Aschkenasy. Whether she teaches Drama, the birth of Zionism, or the biblical stories, her lectures are exciting and show the depth of her knowledge. She has a wonderful ability to facilitate class discussions where controversial opinions can be voiced and debated."

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6 • FALL 2001
THE HONOR ROLL

$45,000 and over
United Jewish Federation of Greater Stamford, New Canaan and Darien

$12,000 and over
Louis J. Kuriansky Foundation

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Hyaicinthe Hoffman
Elizabeth Melamid

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Joan Kuriansky
Lilian Lotstein
Rosa Portell
Howard and Gayle Rothman
Dr. Louis Scheinberg
Dr. Robert and Naomi Schreiber
Arthur and Barbara Sheer
Dr. Barbara Sosnowitz
Jacob Steinberg
Mark and Harriet Sternlicht
Dr. Alfred and Royce Wolfsinn
Solomon and Betty Young

We wish to thank our many friends whose annual gift is under $100. Space will not allow listing them here, but we greatly appreciate their generosity and consistent support. We also wish to thank the following companies for their matching gifts: Pfizer Foundation, Unilever United States Foundation, Philip Morris Employee Giving Program, General Reinsurance Corporation, and Merrill Lynch.

Our thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Bohn of Northville, MI for establishing the Ishier Jacobson Lecture Fund in honor of our esteemed Board member and leader, Ishier Jacobson.

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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 qualifies students to teach in religious schools and prepares 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.

Scholarships are available for Certificate candidates!

For more information please contact Prof. Nehama Aschkenasy at 251-8435 / 9525
The Center for Judaic and Middle Eastern Studies at UConn, Stamford, now celebrating its twenty-first year, is a learning and study resource, offering credit courses within the academic curriculum in the Humanities as well as non-credit outreach programs for the community at large in all areas of Judaic culture, literature, and history, from antiquity to modern times.

The Center has been recognized for its innovative programs and activities in the areas of traditional academic education and particularly outreach projects. Since its inception, the Center has enjoyed broad community support and has been financially supported by individual community members, foundations, corporate gifts, and matching grants.

The Center is a recipient agency of the United Jewish Federation of Greater Stamford, New Canaan and Darien, and is also supported by the UJF of Greenwich and the UJF of Westport/Weston/Wilton/Norwalk.

For information on our current programs, please call 203-251-9525