The Judaic Studies Graduate Certificate is a stand-alone Certificate Program within The Arizona Center for Judaic Studies. Graduate Certificate Program students may be enrolled concurrently in a graduate degree program in another department, but they are not required to do so.

Graduate certificates are designed to enhance the education of graduate or professional students or to provide continuing education to professionals. They are not the equivalent of masters degrees. However, it may be possible to transfer some graduate certificate credits to a masters program at The University of Arizona or elsewhere.

The Graduate Certificate program has three foci: History and Culture of Ancient Israel; Modern Jewish History and Culture; and, Gender and Jewish Studies. Students may elect to focus on one of these fields or they may create a combination of courses that will serve as the basis for a broad synthesis within the field of Judaic Studies.

The Student Learning Outcomes

- Knowledge beyond the baccalaureate level about Jewish Culture in its various dimensions
- An ability to understand sophisticated research approaches within Judaic Studies, to manage their complexity and to be aware of their epistemological evolution
- Preparation for more advanced graduate work, in which students will explore Judaic Studies issues in their masters theses and doctoral dissertations at The University of Arizona or elsewhere
- Contextualize the discipline of Judaic Studies, notably in conjunction with contemporary ethnic, religious and diversity issues

How To Apply

Interested students can apply on-line through the Graduate College website. Graduate Certificate students must possess a baccalaureate degree and meet all UA Graduate College requirements.

For more information visit our website: judaic.arizona.edu/jus_gcp

Graduate Studies Program

Core Courses

JUS 505 Classical Aramaic
GER 506 Representing the “Other”
JUS 509A & 509B Biblical Hebrew
GER 512 Minority Discourses
JUS 535 Jewish Mysticism
JUS 538 Book of Psalms
JUS 547 Women in Ancient Israel
JUS 552 Israeli Women
JUS 553A & 553B Advanced Biblical Hebrew
JUS 554 Spanish Inquisition
NES 556 Jews of the Islamic World in the Modern Period: 1840-Present
NES 563 Gender Issues in Modern Middle Eastern Studies
NES 584 History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: 1800-Present
NES 590 Women and the Literature of Identity in the Middle East/North Africa

On-Line Application:
global.arizona.edu/study-abroad
(click on “UAbroad | Log-in/Register” and follow the prompts)

Financial Aid is Available

Courses Offered:
(depending on demand)

Jewish Civilization, Prof. David Graizbord (JUS/HIST/RELI 301, Tier II)
Modern Jewish History Prof. David Graizbord (JUS/HIST/RELI/MENAS/370A, Tier II)
Medieval and Early Modern Jewish History Prof. David Graizbord (JUS/HIST/RELI 370B, Tier II)
Kabbalah and Jewish Mysticism: Its History and Principle Phenomena Prof. David Graizbord (JUS/HIST/RELI 435/535)
Modern Israel Dr. Leonard Hammer (JUS/POLI 377)
International Human Rights, Transitional Justice, and Israel Dr. Leonard Hammer (JUS 384)
Independent Study (JUS 399)
Internship (JUS 493)
From the Director

We are now over halfway through the 2014-15 academic year. I am pleased to report that our courses continue to attract students, which is a clear indication of our program’s health. In addition to excelling as scholars, our faculty thoroughly enjoy teaching and mentoring our students. Our community programs continue to provide outstanding educational and cultural opportunities to the people of Tucson and southern Arizona. I am certain that you would join me in praising our faculty and staff for all their diligent work that makes the Center a success by any measure.

This continuing success stems from the deep, personal commitment of our faculty, staff, students and community supporters to the Center’s academic and communal values. In this newsletter, you will read about the fascinating work of our faculty and students. Prof. Beth Alpert Nakhai is leading an international effort to increase safety on archaeological digs in Israel and elsewhere. Prof. Asher Susser, our new Professor of Modern Israel Studies, has offered in his most recent book a new perspective on the Israel-Palestine conflict. Prof. David Graizbord will be leading a new “Arizona in Israel” program that offers UofA students a new, university-approved opportunity for learning about and living in Israel. Our new Outreach Coordinator, John Winchester, is transforming how we engage with our campus and community. Finally, as you will read here, we have many alumni who are having a tremendous impact in their professions and communities.

As you can see, Judaic Studies at The University of Arizona enjoys the success it does thanks to the energetic and inspired work of many people. The Center has an international impact: its reach extends from Tucson, across the state and nation, to Israel and beyond. This success results from the generous support of our alumni and friends. I thank you for your support, and I trust that you will enjoy reading of the success you have made possible.

J. Edward Wright
Dr. Kerry Adams finds teaching classes on Ancient Israel through the Arizona School of Judaic Studies inspiring and important work. She has worked on excavations in Israel, Italy and throughout the U.S. Southwest, and spent a year in Damascus on a Fulbright Fellowship investigating “The Social History of Archaeology in Syria.” Since 2003, she has directed the American Institute for Maghrib Studies (AIMS), an international educational non-profit that supports research on North Africa.

Dr. Aomar Boum is an Assistant Professor in the School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies and an affiliated faculty member in The Center. His research explores how different generations of Moroccan Muslims remember, picture and construct Moroccan Jews, Jewishness and Judaism. He is the author of Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco and has published a number of articles on the history of the Jewish communities of Morocco. Dr. Boum recently published a book on Holocaust Politics in Morocco.

Bryan Davis teaches “Jewish Responses to the Holocaust.” He is Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council, and Director of the Holocaust Education & Commemoration Project. In addition to teaching for the Center, Bryan also teaches for the Honors College and the Language, Reading and Culture program. His article, “Holocaust Education: Global Forces Shaping Curricula Integration and Implementation” was published in the Journal Intercultural Education. A copy of this article can be found on our website. Bryan is a PhD candidate in the Language, Reading & Culture program in the College of Education.

Professor David L. Graizbord presented his research as part of a scholarly panel he co-organized on the subject of Young American Jews and Israel: Challenging the Conventional Wisdom at the annual conference of the Association for Israel Studies. Graizbord has also been active in the study of early modern (especially Sephardi and converso) Jewish identities. In March of 2014, he participated in a colloquium on Conversos and Modernity at the University of Virginia.

Dr. Leonard Hammer is the David and Andrea Stein Visiting Professor of Modern Israel Studies during the spring semesters at The University of Arizona. He is also an adjunct professor at The Hebrew University’s Rothberg School, serves as the Academic Director to Shurat HaDin, and works as an international expert for the Open Society Institute. Hammer’s research focuses on international law and human rights. His most recent publication, Sacred Space in Israel and Palestine: Religion and Politics, will appear in bookstores soon.

Dr. Deborah Kaye has been recognized by the University for her excellence in online course development and has received a substantial grant that has been used to produce state-of-the-art distance education. Kaye teaches an array of courses including modern and medieval Jewish history, Israeli fiction and history, and women and Judaism. She is well regarded on campus as an authority on the teaching of history and memory of the Holocaust. This year, with the support of the College of Humanities, she developed a permanent course on the history of the Holocaust in France and Italy.

Professor Thomas Kovach is an affiliated faculty member whose academic home is in the German Studies Department. His current research is on Jewish participation in German and Austrian culture. He has developed and taught two courses that reflect this interest: German Jewish Writers and another on the Representation of Jews in German Literature. Professor Kovach was a frequent contributor to the Center’s adult education series, Sekhel v’Lev, Mind and Heart, where he taught a course in “Images of Jews and Judaism in German Texts.”
Arizona Center for Judaic Studies faculty are committed to bringing the best education to The University of Arizona. They are scholars renowned in their fields and respected by their colleagues.

Dr. Abby Limmer has been teaching for several years, The History and Religion of Ancient Israel, Jewish Thought and Culture, Jewish Civilizations, and Elementary Hebrew. Her research focuses on jewelry in ancient Israel and its surrounding societies, with side interests in ancient magic and private religion, particularly as they are reflected in archaeological remains. She is also very interested in the process of teaching, and how to better teach both in person and online. In the summer, she teaches modern Hebrew at the Critical Languages Institute at Arizona State University.

Professor Sharon B. Megdal is Director of The University of Arizona Water Resources Research Center and C.W. and Modene Neely Endowed Professor in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Her work focuses on water resources management and policy. She is the lead editor of Shared Borders, Shared Waters: Israeli-Palestinian and Colorado River Basin Water Challenges (2013) and co-author of “A Tale of Two Rivers: Pathways for improving water management in the Jordan and Colorado River Basins,” Journal of Arid Environments (2014). Dr. Megdal teaches the graduate course “Arizona Water Policy,” serves as President of the National Institutes for Water Resources, and is an elected board member of the Central Arizona Project.

Professor Beth Alpert Nakhai is an Associate Professor in the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies, and is affiliated faculty in the School of Anthropology. She served as Acting Director of the Center in the Fall 2014 semester. She teaches courses on archaeology, Hebrew Bible, and women in ancient Israel. She recently published three articles, Plague and Recumbent Figurines of the Late Bronze II, The Household as Sacred Space, and Mother-and-Child Figurines in the Late Bronze – Persian Period Levant; two of them appear in volumes that she co-edited. In the fall, she presented papers at the University of Helsinki in Finland and York University in Canada. She chairs the Initiative on the Status of Women for the American Schools of Oriental Research.

Thomas L. Price teaches “Israel, Islam & The West” and “The History of Anti-Semitism.” He contributes regularly to the local radio show, “Too Jewish.” In addition, he has become a frequent “Faculty Host” on many UA Alumni Association trips and over the past 18 months has hosted trips to Morocco, Central Europe, Istanbul, the Black Sea region, and the Ukraine.

Dr. Max Strassfeld, the newest member of the Judaic Studies faculty, is an Assistant Professor of Religious Studies. Strassfeld received his doctorate in Religious Studies in 2013 from Stanford University, with a focus on Talmud and rabbinic literature. His research explores categories of gender variance in classical Jewish law. He is a part of the Transgender Studies Initiative at The University of Arizona and also teaches our “Jewish-Christian Relations” course.

Professor Asher Susser is The Andrea and David Stein Professor of Modern Israel Studies at The University of Arizona, Professor of History in the Department of Middle Eastern History at Tel Aviv University (TAU), and a Senior Fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern Studies at TAU. He was the Director of the Dayan Center for twelve years and has taught for over thirty years in TAU’s Department of Middle Eastern History. His most recent book is Israel, Jordan and Palestine: The Two-State Imperative (2012). He is the author or editor of eight other books and a monograph, including The Rise of Hamas in Palestine and the Crisis of Secularism in the Arab World (2010).

Professor J. Edward Wright is the Center’s Director and serves on the Executive Committee of the American Schools of Oriental Research. He recently completed an article on “The Syriac Textual History of The Prayer of Manasseh” and is writing a critical commentary on the apocryphal Book of Baruch. He is also a co-editor of the forthcoming textbook The Bible in Archaeology and History. This past summer, Wright led the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences’ Magellan Circle donor tour of Israel, Palestine and Jordan.
Faculty

A native of Israel, **Anat Maimon** has been the Coordinator of the Hebrew Program at the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies for the past seven years. A graduate of Tel Aviv University in Hebrew Literature and Grammar, she has been teaching Hebrew as a second language for over twenty years. Anat teaches courses in “Elementary,” “Intermediate” and “Advanced Modern Hebrew.”

**Uri Maimon**, a native of Israel, has been teaching Hebrew at the University of Arizona for the past seven years. Uri graduated from Tel Aviv University in Social Studies, and received two Masters Degrees from The University of Arizona, in Management Information Systems and Political Science. Uri teaches courses in “Elementary” and “Intermediate Modern Hebrew.”

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*Intermediate Hebrew*
JUS 203A & 203B

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JUS 303A & 303B

*Biblical Hebrew*
Introductory and Advanced (undergraduate and graduate credit)

*Classical Aramaic*
(undergraduate and graduate credit)

*Hebrew Credit-by-Exam*

*Travel Abroad Opportunities*

*Scholarships*
Jennie Taer
Student Administrative Assistant
Jennie Taer is a freshman at The University of Arizona, studying Political Science with a focus of Foreign Affairs. When she isn’t studying, she spends her time involving herself in her sorority and Greek life. She is Hebrew student and enjoys traveling to Israel and learning about its culture. She truly enjoys working in the Judaic Studies office and contributing to her school.

John Winchester
Outreach Coordinator
Born and raised in Tucson, John comes to the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies after working with Christians United for Israel for three and a half years. He has traveled to several hundred universities around the country, worked with students on Israel-related issues, studied Middle Eastern Studies at The University of Arizona at undergraduate and graduate levels, and engaged in volunteer work in the Tucson community. John is excited to promote the Center’s people and programs nationally and internationally.

Martha Castleberry
Sr. Business Manager
Martha moved from UA Residence Life to a position in The Arizona Center for Judaic Studies in 2001, and began working half-time with the SBS Marshall Business Center in 2012. Born and raised in Tucson and San Manuel, Arizona, she received a BA from The University of Arizona and a K-8 teaching certificate from the State of Arizona. Martha enjoys her family, music, learning about different cultures, gardening and college sports.

Leigh Jensen
Media Specialist
Leigh is a senior studying Religious Studies, Creative Writing, and Public Policy. She maintains the Center’s Facebook and Twitter accounts, and its website, in addition to writing stories about the incredible people affiliated with Judaic Studies and the work they do.

Daniela Tascarella
Student Administrative Assistant
Daniela has been the Center’s Student Administrative Assistant since 2011. She is a senior minoring in Arabic and majoring in Judaic Studies and Political Science. Daniela studied Hebrew at Hebrew University of Jerusalem in the summer of 2013.

The Arizona Center for Judaic Studies welcomes Prof. Asher Susser to The University of Arizona as a permanent faculty member in the Center. Prof. Susser is an internationally recognized historian, a former director of the Moshe Dayan Center of Middle Eastern Studies at Tel Aviv University, and has served as an advisor to several Israeli Prime Ministers. Modern Israel Studies is a fairly new academic discipline in the United States, but it is attracting enormous attention. The Center has long had a core strength in the study of Ancient Israel, but prior to Susser’s appointment the UofA lacked a permanent faculty member specializing in the study of Modern Israel. Prof. Susser’s appointment in the Center is the first step in developing a robust Modern Israel Studies program at the University. We fully expect this program to attain national and international prominence very quickly. This new faculty position was made possible by the generous support of Dean John Paul Jones III, and David and Andrea Stein of Houston.

The Center is also pleased to welcome Dr. Max Strassfeld as an affiliated faculty member in Judaic Studies. Dr. Strassfeld (Ph.D. in Religious Studies, Stanford University) joined the UA faculty this year as an Assistant Professor in the Institute for LGBT Studies and the Religious Studies Program. He specializes in Rabbinic Literature, Religious Studies Theory and Method, and Transgender Studies. Strassfeld’s research is already receiving high praise. He served as a Frankel Research Fellow in Gender and Jewish Life at The University of Michigan during the 2013-14 academic year.

While on campus for only a few months, Dr. Strassfeld and his innovative courses are quickly becoming popular among the students. Center Director Prof. Ed Wright noted, “Max’s hire is part of a significant investment by the University in Transgender Studies. We are honored to have Max join us, and I fully expect that he will have a lasting impact on our campus and community.”
Shaol & Louis Pozez Memorial Lectureship Series

Shaol and Louis Pozez Fine Arts Symposium
Monday, January 12
Symposium, 3-6 pm, UA Music Building Room 146 | Concert, 7 pm, UA Holsclaw Hall

The Symposium will explore the lives and music of various European composers of Jewish descent—Mendelssohn, Mahler, Bloch, and Schoenberg, among others—who lived and created their works in a mostly Christian society. Their music comprises a living, breathing Jewish heritage that has carried over powerfully into the 21st century. The concert will feature the famed Israeli cellist Amit Peled playing the late Pablo Casals’ cello and accompanied by pianist Alexander Tentes.

Putin’s War Against the West
Monday, February 2, 7pm
Tucson JCC

Masha Gessen, Author, journalist and LGBT global human rights activist

According to Gessen, in the last two and a half years, Putin has gone from being a post-ideological, nostalgia-mongering president to a president with an ideology and a civilizational mission. This talk will explore that mission and how it came to be.

What Do the Dead Sea Scrolls Teach Us about the Bible?
Monday, February 9, 7pm
Tucson JCC

Sidnie White Crawford, University of Nebraska

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has caused a revolution in scholarship concerning the canon and text of the Hebrew Bible. Fully a quarter of the scrolls discovered in the region of the Dead Sea are copies of the books of the Jewish Bible. The lecture will reveal what new information the scrolls have given us about the growth of the biblical text and the development of the canon, explaining that we now know that the text of the Bible was fluid, not fixed, and that Jews did not all agree on what books constituted sacred scripture.

In 1996, the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies, then known as the Committee on Judaic Studies, began what was called the Distinguished Lecture Series. Lectures were held at The University of Arizona Hillel Foundation and attendance was small—but not for long. After only a few years, the series was moved to the Tucson Jewish Community Center, to accommodate the large crowds.

Cousins Shaol and Louis Pozez were major supporters of the series from the beginning. It wasn’t until after Shaol’s death in 2000 that the series was named The Shaol Pozez Memorial Lectureship Series, in his honor.

The Shaol Pozez Memorial Lectureship Series is made possible by the generous support of the Pozez Families & The Pozez Family Fund at the Community Foundation of Southern Arizona.

In recognition of their and their families’ support of the Series and the Center, the Series is now named in their honor and memory.

Jeffrey Plevan Memorial Lecture
Before and After the Gaza War: American Jews’ New Relationship to Israel
Tuesday, January 27, 4:30pm
UA Hillel

Ted Sasson, Middlebury College and Brandeis University

The latest Gaza war renewed speculation about American Jews’ relationship to Israel. Did Hamas rocket fire galvanize the world’s largest diaspora community and strengthen its connection to the Jewish state? Or did Israel’s tough military response divide American Jewish opinion and alienate the younger generation? In this lecture, Prof. Sasson will present new evidence concerning American Jews’ responses to the Gaza war, and discuss broader trends in their relationship to Israel.

In 2013 Betsy and Ken Plevan graciously and generously endowed the Jeffrey Plevan Memorial Lecture in Israel Studies to honor the memory of their son Jeffrey Plevan. Jeff graduated from The University of Arizona with a degree in History and Minor in Judaic Studies and is fondly remembered by those who knew him as an infectious and upbeat person with an endless supply of curiosity, enthusiasm, passion for learning, and a profound love for Judaism, Israel, and The University of Arizona. To remember Jeff and his contributions to Judaic Studies and The University of Arizona, the Jeffrey Plevan Memorial Lecture seeks to shed new light on topics that interested Jeff and to promote the key values that Jeff cherished.
Sally And Ralph Duchin Campus Lecture Series

What is it About the Gays?
Monday, February 2, 4pm
UA Hillel

Masha Gessen, Author, journalist and LGBT global human rights activist

What is the nature of the Russian anti-gay campaign, and why has it been such an easy sell not only to the Russian public but too many audiences near and far?

National Identity and Human Rights in Israel
Wednesday, April 15, 4:30pm
UA Hillel

Dr. Leonard Hammer, David and Andrea Stein Visiting Professor of Modern Israel Studies

Israel proposed a Basic Law on National Identity that arguably led to the downfall of the coalition during the latter quarter of 2014. What is this proposed law and what are its potential implications? What does the law really imply and what new aspects might be introduced that can impact on Israel as a Jewish and Democratic state? The lecture shall examine the meaning of Basic Laws, the framework for domestic human rights in Israel, and various provisions of the proposed Basic Law.

Religious Values of American Jews
Wednesday, February 18, 4:30pm
UA Hillel

Prof. Jeffrey S. Gurock, Yeshiva University

Dr. Jeffrey S. Gurock questions—through documentary evidence—long-standing definitions of the religious values of American Jews and identifies the nuances of observance that have characterized Jewish life in America from the 17th century to contemporary times.

Demons and Evil Spirits in Early Judaism and Christianity
Monday, March 30, 4pm
UA Hillel

Prof. Matthias Henze, Rice University

Dr. Matthias Henze will explore the origins of the beliefs in demons and evil spirits. The rich literature of the late Second Temple period attests to a wide array of speculations about the origin, nature, and function of demons and evil forces. There are incantations against demons and liturgies for exorcism among the Dead Sea Scrolls. While rabbinic Judaism later on dismissed such beliefs and practices, demons had a major impact on Christianity and continue to be alive and well in some Christian circles today.

Torah Scroll Restoration
February 10-11

Rabbi Gedaliah Druin, Sofer (scribe) with Sofer on Site, N. Miami Beach, FL

Rabbi Druin will come to Tucson to continue restoration of our 200-year-old Torah scroll. The scroll was acquired for Judaic Studies in 2009 by Prof. Beth Alpert Nakhai. It is thought to be nearly 200 years old, originally used by a Sephardic Jewish community, perhaps in northern Italy or Amsterdam. It is the only Torah scroll owned by The University of Arizona.

The 2014 restoration of the Judaic Studies Torah was made possible through a generous donation by the Thomas and Sara Borin Foundation. Continuing work on the Torah is possible thanks to the generosity of Matthew and Julie Harelson, and of the Borin Foundation.
Rabbi Marcus Breger Memorial Lecture

The Vatican and Israel: Legal and Political Issues

Tuesday, February 24, 12:30pm
UA Hillel

Marshall Breger, Columbus School of Law, The Catholic University of America

The relationship between the Church and Judaism is well known. After World War II, the Church began to reconceptualize its relationship with Judaism, culminating in 1965 with the Papal Encyclical Nostra Aetate. Its relationship with the State of Israel, however, took years longer to mature. In 1993 the Holy See and Israel signed a Fundamental Agreement in which the Holy See formally recognized Israel. In 1997 the Holy See and Israel signed a ‘Legal Personality’ agreement normalizing the legal status of church institutions in Israel. In this lecture, Breger will discuss the background to the Fundamental Agreement and the remaining issues to be addressed, as well as its significance for Jewish-Catholic relations. Berger will also address the politics of this relationship in the Vatican, Israel, and the Arab world.

In 1938 Rabbi Dr. Marcus Breger, his wife Dr. Bertha Breger and daughter Liba came to Tucson. During WWII, Breger served in the US Army, becoming the highest ranking Jewish chaplain in the Pacific theater. Along with his long and successful rabbinate at Congregation Anshei Israel, Breger was instrumental in founding many Jewish educational and communal organizations in Tucson and the Southwest. Among those many institutions was the Judaic Studies Program at The University of Arizona.

Raphael Patai Memorial Lecture

The Exodus as Cultural Memory
Monday, March 9, 4:30pm
UA Hillel

Ronald Hendel, University of California, Berkeley

The Exodus is a central event in biblical and Jewish memory, but according to the archaeological and historical record, it is unclear what it is a memory of. In this lecture Prof. Hendel will propose that it is, in part, a transformed memory of the demise of the Egyptian Empire in Canaan, which facilitated the emergence of Israel as an independent people. The story served as an engine of a distinctive cultural identity, a function that it continues to perform today.

The Raphael Patai Memorial Lectureship Series is a bi-annual endowed lecture honoring the late Professor Raphael Patai. Raphael Patai, a prominent cultural anthropologist, historian, and Jewish Studies scholar, wrote over three-dozen books in his lifetime. The Hebrew Goddess, which discusses the role of a goddess in ancient Israelite religion, was regarded as radical, even heretical when it was published in 1967. In the early 1970s however, archaeological discoveries vindicated his seemingly radical thesis.

Upon his death in July 1996, Patai was memorialized in the Jerusalem Report as a “prolific cultural anthropologist and Jewish and Mideast Studies scholar.” The subjects of his books ranged widely, including Jewish history, Biblical Studies, family life in the ancient and modern Middle East, Jewish alchemy, a history of the Hungarian Jews, and Jewish seafaring.

Valerie Schlegel
Florence Kaiserman Memorial Scholarship

Valerie Schlegel, a senior at The University of Arizona, majoring in Judaic Studies, has focused on antiquity within Judaic Studies and has worked on research on women’s representation within archaeology. “As a student, it can be hard or even overwhelming to not only manage academics but also multiple jobs in order to pay for an education. The scholarship has been extremely helpful in alleviating the financial stress and allowing me to better focus on school,” writes Valerie. “I have been able to study ancient Israelite history, archaeology, ancient and modern Hebrew, and many more subjects within the Judaic Studies department that I love.”
Shana Metzger (2004)
Some might be surprised that Shana Metzger, litigation lawyer-turned-marketing representative, majored in Judaic Studies during her time at The University of Arizona. However, she was drawn to the major through her relationship with Prof. Beth Alpert Nakhai, Associate Professor of Judaic Studies, and then formed many other great relationships within the Judaic Studies community. Shana says that her Judaic Studies education caused her to think about Judaism, people, life, and customs differently. Her studies deepened her understanding of her own Judaism, and gave her the confidence and knowledge to have a well-informed perspective on Jewish issues.

Gideon Levin is a second grade teacher at The Abraham Joshua Heschel School in New York City. After majoring in Judaic Studies at The University of Arizona, Gideon went on to earn a Master’s Degree in Childhood and Special Education, and another in Jewish Education from the Jewish Theological Seminary in Upper Manhattan. During his time at Arizona, Gideon utilized the resources of the SALT Center to help him be successful with a learning disability. When he was younger, Gideon hated school because of the additional challenges he faced, but was inspired by the support system he found at The University of Arizona. Gideon feels that the most important factor of his experience in Judaic Studies was how comfortable he felt, an environment he hopes to recreate for his own students.

Adam Bellos (2010)
By nature, Adam is an entrepreneur, and this has led him to take his skills and education into many areas of business and activism since leaving the Center. Currently Adam is working with a new Israeli non-profit, The Am Yisrael Foundation. The foundation is an umbrella organization that facilitates the work of nine other organizations, which include Israel’s largest high profile speaker series, a big brother big sister program pairing Holocaust survivors with young professionals, farm guarding programs to protect vulnerable farms from being raided, JNF Future Israel to connect young professionals with environmental education projects and in Israel, and White City Shabbat, which provides communal Shabbat meals to young professionals in Israel twice a month. (More than 200 people attend these Shabbat meals.) He is also involved in the Tel Aviv Arts Council, which promotes all forms of Israeli art among young professionals in an effort to create new patrons of the arts. Through this effort, they share Israeli art to the world. Adam also works as the Outreach Coordinator for English-speaking Israelis, for Ambassador Michael Oren’s Knesset campaign.

Drew Alyeshmerni (2006)
As an Arizona native and Iranian-American Jew, Drew views her multi-cultural upbringing as driving force in her work to form bridges between people of different cultures and religions. Between the 2006-2013, Drew lived in Israel, where she served in the IDF at the forefront of diplomatic relations, obtained a Masters in Public Policy from Tel Aviv University, and worked with a variety of non-government organizations, such as Hiddush: Freedom of Religion for Israel, and the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI), Israel’s oldest and largest nature conservation organization. Drew is currently Manager of Campus Leadership Initiatives with the Jewish Federation and Family Services of Orange County, where she focuses on student leadership development at University of California in Irvine, California State University in Fullerton, and Chapman University.

We interviewed Adam Bellos and Drew Alyeshmerni about their experiences during last summer’s Gaza War. The interview appears on page 12.
How did this summer’s conflict affect your or your friends/family?

Drew Alyeshmerni: My friends who lived in Israel had to change their routines in order to be within running distance of a bomb shelter at all times. My 86-year-old aunt suffered from anxiety because she could not run fast enough to the bomb shelter on her block. I spoke with her several times throughout the war in order to calm her down and brainstorm about ways she could stay safe in her own apartment. In the end, she didn’t sleep in her own bedroom, but rather stayed in a small guest room that was well away from windows. It was very frustrating that she was put in a situation where she had very little control over her own safety.

Adam Bellos: I think everyone’s hearts were hardened from the length of the previous conflict. This was a very long and drawn out process which, in many people’s eyes, should have been quick and decisive. The fact that it took so long shows, based on the extent and quality of the tunnels, that Hamas has become stronger and has turned into a systematic terror network. They now have vast capabilities, and has turned into a systematic terror network. They now have vast capabilities, and has turned into a systematic terror network. They now have vast capabilities, and has turned into a systematic terror network. They now have vast capabilities, and has turned into a systematic terror network. They now have vast capabilities, and has turned into a systematic terror network. They now have vast capabilities, and has turned into a systematic terror network. They now have vast capabilities, and has turned into a systematic terror network. They now have vast capabilities.

What do you think of the prospects for peace between Israelis and Palestinians at this point?

Drew: I think that peace between the Israelis and Palestinians will happen once radicalization and incitement ends. The Palestinian leadership, Hamas and the PLO continuously incite violence against Israelis, and Hamas regularly murders suspected “collaborators.” Palestinians who try to maintain ties with Israelis are intimidated, and “normalization” is discouraged. Until the Palestinian Authority and Hamas stop squandering international aid and make true moves for economic development and educating for peace, there can never be peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

Adam: Now more than ever, I think people understand the need for peace and want it even if it does not look like the politicians can make it possible. It seems to me that peace will never come through negotiations. In my opinion, the only path to peace is economic partnerships and the promotion of business between Palestinians and Israelis. Truth be told, when peace is profitable for both sides, there will be peace.

What is your opinion of mainstream media coverage of the conflict? What have they gotten right/wrong?

Drew: I think the only real source of information in war time is the local news of each side. For example, 124 news is a great new English news outlet broadcasting 24 hours a day from Israel. Relying on mainstream media that is disconnected and often constricted by censorship or harsh intimidation will only report what they can safely report, which may leave out the most crucial information.

Adam: I think that if you get your information from mainstream media you’re not getting a complete picture. It’s a 24-hour news cycle, so the second something happens it appears on the news, often before facts can be checked fully. The people who best understand the situation are those who understand the various nuances within both narratives, Israeli and Palestinian. This is the most complex political situation on earth, and it demands hard work and circumspection from both those producing media and those consuming it.

Do you think mainstream media that is directed at your generation “get” the situation?

Drew: I do not think that the mainstream media is even ‘allowed’ to get the situation because there are greater politics at play. Network executives and major shareholders always have an agenda. Young people these days are coming out of a college campus atmosphere where they have been bombarded with anti-Israel messaging from various groups.

Adam: War is war. Horrible things happen during war. Children and women are killed. And even more women and children are killed when they are being told to stay in areas that the IDF is making very clear are going to be bombed as part of the war. Does Hamas drop leaflets in Tel Aviv and Beersheba before it shoots a rocket toward them? Obviously not. Last summer, more rockets were shot toward Israel than the number of bombs that were dropped on London during WWII. The media rarely reports these facts, and that is why people don’t understand the overall context of what is going on here.
What would you say to UA students who are contemplating Study Abroad programs in Israel?

Drew: The best thing you can do for yourself, for your future, and for the future of Israel is to study abroad. As someone who will have lived in the land, you will possess invaluable information and a credibility that most others do not have.

Adam: I would tell every student that has the opportunity to spend time studying abroad in Israel to do it and never look back. This is one of the most interesting, vibrant and eclectic countries on the planet. There is something here for everyone. The time I spent in Tel Aviv studying in 2007 changed my life, and taught me to seek out as much as I could. If you have the opportunity, seize it!

How did your studies at the UofA prepare you for your time in Israel?

Drew: I learned basic Hebrew, which served as a great base to expand my vocabulary and integrate into Israeli society. From a political point of view, I learned that not all Israelis support their own country. This was evident as I encountered an expatriate Israeli professor who clearly disliked Israel. I learned quickly how important it was that I, as a Jew, go to Israel and work for the betterment of our homeland. Through moving to Israel and serving in an army unit that cared for the humanitarian affairs of Palestinians, I felt I was doing more for my country than that ex-pat Israeli professor enjoying the comfort of a tenured job abroad and indoctrinating the young impressionable minds of college students with toxic outlooks on the Israeli-Arab conflict. I also learned about the complexities on the ground from my conversations with Dr. Ed Wright. He at the time was the President of the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem. I at the time was serving in the IDF and coordinating entry permits for Palestinian employees working for non-profits in Jerusalem. One day I was called down to the reception area in my army base. The Albright Institute’s director was there trying to resolve an issue. It turns out that one of the Institute’s longtime Palestinian workers had a problem getting his visa renewed. Because I knew the organization, I was able to vouch for the integrity of the employee and resolve the issue immediately. Sometimes the connections between the UofA and Israel simply amaze me.

Adam: The Center did an excellent job of preparing me for my move and time so far in Israel. I owe an immeasurable amount of thanks to professors Ed Wright, David Graizbord, Sholmo Aronson, Aomar Boum, and Maha Nassar. I was very fortunate to spend a significant amount of time with all of them prior to leaving for Israel.

My relationship with each of them prepared me for something when I moved to Israel. The time I spent with Prof. Nassar prepared me for my service in the army. I was stationed in the West Bank, and I was always chosen out of my unit to talk with Israeli soldiers about how to work with Palestinians on the ground. I would give lectures with other officers about the perspectives of Palestinians. My work with her prepared me to do a better job in the army, perhaps more than anything else I learned at the university.

Professor Aronson taught me how to understand the political landscape of Israel. His advice was invaluable to advancing my career, and it gave me the ability to teach new politicians how to articulate foreign and domestic policy in a pragmatic way.

Professors Boum, Graizbord and Wright have been valuable resources for advice on navigating life since I graduated. When stuck in a situation that I could not fully grasp or handle, they were always a phone call or an email away to give me the advice I needed to succeed. Without them I don’t think I would have had the confidence to continue on the path I have chosen for myself. I owe a lot to them, and I have a lifetime of gratitude for their help.

“Finally, a book that unpacks the history of efforts to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with a detailed yet lively narrative, careful weighing, and fair shake for the perspectives of all sides. The author is able to give a sympathetic perspective on virtually every player, a remarkable feat in itself. Low on polemics, high on source citations and direct quotes from the many players, this helps the reader clearly see why, with so many issues actually seemingly close to resolution, a ‘grand-bargain’ continues to elude everyone involved. The strongest this author’s voice gets is in his artful dismantling the tangle of ill-conceived, self-contradictory, naive, and self-and-others deceiving arguments underlying the ‘One-state’ advocates. Anyone who not coming to this issue with an axe to grind will find this enlightening. Unfortunately, the clarity does not reveal much ground for optimism. But the most indispensable one-volume work on the issue I’ve read, and I’ve read a fair amount.”

–Geoffrey W. Dennis
In 2009, The Arizona Center for Judaic Studies received an anonymous donation of a 200-year-old Torah scroll (sefer Torah), thanks to West Coast colleagues of Prof. Beth Alpert Nakhai. According to the scholars and scribes who have studied it, the scroll originally belonged to a European Sephardic Jewish community, perhaps in Amsterdam or northern Italy. It survived World War II, made its way to Israel, and eventually to Tucson. It is the first and only Torah owned by The University of Arizona.

When the Torah arrived at the University, it no longer had its rollers (eitzei hayyim), nor its mantle (me'il) and belt. Its finials, breastplate and pointer (yad) were long gone. The scroll was in need of repair on account of the damage it had incurred over nearly two centuries of use. The parchment was torn or discolored in some places, some of the lettering was cracked, and some of the seams were coming apart. In 2014, with the generous support of the Thomas and Sara Borin Foundation, the Center commissioned a sofer (scribe) to begin the work of cleaning and repairing the Torah. It also began the search for Torah ornaments that would honor the traditions of the European Sephardic community that had used this sacred scroll for so many years. The first repairs were done on February 4, 2014, when a sofer from Sofer On Site in N. Miami Beach, Rabbi Yochanan Salazar, spent a day working on the Torah. As he worked, he spoke with people from the UofA campus and the Tucson Torah Restoration Project. 

Repairs will continue on February 10th and 11th of this year, when master sofer Rabbi Gedaliah Druin comes to The University of Arizona. This year’s work, as well as the purchase of Torah ornaments and the construction of a secure case in which to display it, is made possible by the generosity of Matthew and Julie Harelson, and of the Thomas and Sara Borin Foundation. The UA Hillel Foundation is the gracious host for all the Torah repairs. For the time being, the Torah Scroll is housed in the climate-controlled vault at the UofA Special Collections Library. When repairs are complete, the scroll will be properly dressed, and its special case has been constructed, the sefer Torah will be on display in the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies.

The Arizona Center for Judaic Studies hosted the 2014 meeting of the Western Jewish Studies Association. Taking place in the Student Union Memorial Center and the Marriott University Park Hotel, panels ranged from topics like North African hip hop artists to Italian Jews and Fascism. Attendee Gerald H. Barkan commented that the conference “allowed for an intimacy between presenters and attendees that encouraged interactions and greatly enhanced the learning opportunities.”

The WJSA is a nonprofit organization founded in 1995 to organize a Jewish Studies conference every spring at alternating sites in the western United States and Canada. The conference serves as a forum for Jewish Studies scholars in this region to present their research, discuss pedagogical issues, network with colleagues in their disciplines, and share information about the funding and organization of Jewish Studies programs. For 2014, The University of Arizona was selected as the site of the conference.

The diversity of content in the conference really underscored what an interdisciplinary field Judaic Studies is. In a panel on Israel and the Middle East, attendees heard from Adam Howard, of George Washington University and the U.S. State Department, speak about peacemaking during Jimmy Carter’s presidency. Immediately following Dr. Howard, attendees heard from Naomi Sokoloff, who teaches in the Comparative Literature department at the University of Washington, present about representations of Israel in recent American Jewish fiction.

The keynote speaker was Dr. Theodore Sasson of Brandeis University and Middlebury College. He spoke about American Jews’ new relationship with Israel to the conference’s 56 attendees. Barkan summed up the conference when he wrote, “This conference gave us a unique survey of the field, both by topic and often with considerable depth.”

WJSA Conference Features Diversity of Scholarship
I trust that this newsletter is giving you a clear picture of what we’ve been doing in the Center. But we also want you to know where we are headed, so here is a brief outline our short-term goals.

First, we will expand “engaged learning” activities for our students, and especially for our majors. We will mentor them with more hands-on learning experiences and internships that will provide them with the skills they will need for success in life after the UofA.

Second, the Center will establish an Institute of Israel Studies. The recent addition of Prof. Asher Susser to our faculty is just one of the initial steps in that initiative. Another is the “Arizona in Israel” study abroad program created by Prof. David Graizbord and Dr. Leonard Hammer. Next year, two Israeli artists will share their talents with our campus and community as visiting professors in the Center. The new Institute will also host additional lectures and conferences on Israel and the Middle East.

Third, we hope to add a new faculty member in Modern Judaism, a position that has been an acute need for years. In addition to the scholarly impact on our curriculum, we expect this person to continue the Center’s now well-established tradition of community service by our faculty.

These are just a few of the items we have planned, but as you can see, we are prepared to build on the success we now enjoy. Thank you again for your part that has made this success possible.

J. Edward Wright
Arizona in Israel

June 8-July 6, 2015

Classes June 10-July 3 | UofA Summer 1 session
Rothberg International School, Hebrew University
Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem, Israel

IMAGINE spending a month in one of the most fascinating parts of the world, surrounded by thousands of years of history, where ancient and modern coexist in the meeting place of four of the world’s great religious traditions.

While you bask in Israel’s history, culture and spiritual richness, you’ll earn 6 credit units (including at least 1 UofA Tier II/Gen. Ed. offering). See inside front cover for details.