Matching Gift Establishes New Distinguished Lecture Series

The Sam & Helen Stahl Center for Jewish Studies is pleased to announce the receipt of a generous matching gift from the Baye Foundation to establish a new Distinguished Lecture Series in Jewish Studies. This gift creates a fund that will further expand the Stahl Center’s ability to bring leading scholars of Jewish Studies to Milwaukee and introduce faculty, staff, students, and community members to the latest discoveries in the field of Jewish Studies.

The Baye Foundation has given the Stahl Center $17,500 and has pledged an additional $17,500 if we are able to raise another $35,000 by the end of 2016. A successful campaign will thus establish a $70,000 endowment to underwrite, in perpetuity, the costs of an annual lecture. Each year, a noted Jewish Studies scholar will deliver the Distinguished Lecture. Topics will span the wide variety of disciplines that Jewish Studies embraces, including religion, history, literature, the arts, politics, languages, and other fields.

Provost Johannes Britz is enthused about the potential impact of the Distinguished Lecture. “The Sam & Helen Stahl Center for Jewish Studies is one of UWM’s ‘gems,’ and the Distinguished Lecture Series will provide a platform for further engagement within the University and with the public. This gift will advance the Center’s ability to carry out its mission.”

The Stahl Center currently has one endowed lecture fund, the Faye Sigman “Woman of Valor” lecture, which serves as a model for the new series. The Sigman lecture, established by Myra Taxman and Lee Temkin and their husbands in memory of their mother, has brought a series of outstanding speakers to Milwaukee to educate audiences on the role of Jewish women in history and society. Past speakers have included Jill Dolan (Princeton), Robin Judd (Ohio State), Deborah Dash Moore (Michigan), and UWM’s own Lisa Silverman.

Joanie Eisenberg, President of the Baye Foundation’s board, commented on the foundation’s rationale in awarding the gift. “The Baye Foundation has decided to establish a matching fund to establish an annual speaker series in perpetuity for the Stahl Center. We feel it is important to expand the programs offered by the Stahl Center to UWM students and the greater community. With Joel Berkowitz’s knowledge of which speakers would be most appropriate, we believe the series will be highly successful.”

Those wishing to contribute to the matching campaign can do so in several ways:

- Checks can be mailed to UWM accompanied by the form on the back page of this newsletter.
- Online gifts can be made at: www.uwm.edu/jewishstudies/giving.cfm.
- To give by phone, please contact Annie Prak in the UWM Foundation office at (414) 229-3294.

Darcy Buerkle
Lisa Silverman
Jill Dolan

Recent Women of Valor Lectures

Robin Hessman
lecture & screening of My Perestroika
It recently became clear to me that despite all our efforts to publicize the work that we do, even some of our most generous donors and most stalwart supporters don’t always know—through no fault of their own—the full extent of our activities. At the same time, the lively statewide discussion sparked by this year’s budgetary battles has brought to light some significant misconceptions about funding allocations throughout the UW System, and it’s worth clearing up some of those here. So, as they say on the radio, let’s do the numbers.

0 The amount that the Stahl Center pays its faculty and teaching staff (including our fringes and benefits). No, we don’t work for nothing, nor does the money fall out of the sky. Our salaries come out of the budget of the College of Letters & Science, the division of UWM that houses the Jewish Studies and Hebrew Studies programs. Thus, while the generosity of Milwaukee’s Jewish community has been critical to the success of the Stahl Center, UWM’s investment in its own Jewish Studies program is even greater: it is the combination of funding from sources on and off campus that makes the totality of what we do possible.

7 The number of faculty and instructional staff teaching courses in Jewish Studies and Hebrew Studies: Rachel Baum, Yael Gal Ben-Yitskhak, Joel Berkowitz, David Brusin, Dana Margolis, Yair Mazor, and Lisa Silverman.

10 The number of new funds, supporting Hebrew and Jewish Studies faculty, students, curriculum, and public programs, established in the past five years.

18.5% The percentage of UWM’s funding that comes from state sources, as opposed to many other revenue streams: tuition and fees, grants, private philanthropy, etc. That percentage is down from 25.1% in 2005-06, reflecting a steady downward trend at public colleges and universities nationwide over the past few decades. So your tax dollars help fund UWM—but perhaps not to the extent that you may have thought.

100 The number of public events organized by the Stahl Center from the fall of 2010 to this coming June—an average of 20 per academic year. The formats have varied widely: lectures, film screenings with talkbacks, art exhibitions, concerts, workshops, colloquia, and academic conferences. So has the subject matter, ranging from ancient times to the present, in disciplines throughout the humanities and social sciences, covering topics of Jewish interest in many different countries.

$15,000 The amount of scholarship and award money given to deserving students in Hebrew Studies and Jewish Studies since 2010.

2,500+ The total enrollment in UWM’s Jewish Studies and Hebrew Studies courses over the past five years, in courses on Jewish history, culture, and religion, and as well as Hebrew language. Most of our majors and minors go on to work in or with the Jewish community, either locally or in other cities.

10,000+ Total Attendance

$35,000 The dollar amount we need to raise, by the end of the 2015-16 academic year, to take full advantage of the Baye Foundation’s generous matching gift toward a new distinguished lecture series. Please give generously to help us reach our goal!
In the past two years, the Stahl Center has partnered with four UWM-based film festivals—the LGBTQ Film/Video Festival, Festival of Films in French, Nordic Film Festival, and Latin American Film Series. Our selections in these festivals, all shown at UWM’s Union Theatre, explored many avenues of Jewish culture and life. Large crowds made up of UWM students, faculty, and staff, along with many members of the wider Milwaukee community, attended each screening.

The fall 2014 season kicked off with two films in the LGBTQ Film/Video Festival. The Israeli comedy Cupcakes (2013) is a whimsical, quirky musical about a group of friends who are the underdog in an international song contest that closely resembles Eurovision. UWM professor Tasha Oren, who led a talkback after the screening, said, “We were so much to say.” By contrast, the Stahl Center’s other entry in the festival, The Rabbi’s Cat (2011), was far more serious, though the audience found it interesting fruit in the past two years. In spring 2013 this involved three films: The Other Son (2012), Aliyah (2012), and The Rabbi’s Cat (2011). The Other Son examines the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through the lens of two families, one Jewish and one Palestinian, who learn that their sons were accidentally switched at birth and raised on the wrong side of the struggle. UWM professor Hamid Ouali helped the audience contextualize the film’s complex issues during his talkback. Aliyah focuses on a Jewish drug dealer in Paris who tries to save money to join his cousin in Israel, but his older brother’s constant demands, a new love interest, jeopardize his plan. The last selection, The Rabbi’s Cat, is an animated feature, based on Joann Sfar’s acclaimed graphic novel, about a rabbi’s cat that learns to speak after he eats a parrot, and requests to convert to Judaism. The film was named best animated film at the Césars, France’s equivalent of the Oscars.

The partnership with the Festival of Films in French continued in 2015 with two documentaries and a classic feature. This year’s offerings began with a long, riveting documentary by Claude Lanzmann, best known for his 1985 epic, Shoah. The Last of the Unjust (2013) grew out of his research on the earlier film, and revolves around a series of interviews Lanzmann conducted at the time with Rabbi Benjamin Murmestain, the only Jewish head of a major Nazi ghetto to survive the war. In his talkback, Shay Pfliz, director of the Nathan and Esther Petz Holocaus Education Resource Center, skilfully guided the audience through some of the moral quandaries raised by the film. The last two selections were presented as a double feature. Nathan: The Untold Story of French Cinema’s Forgotten Genius (2013), introduced by UWM visiting assistant professor Maggie Levantovskaya, documents the curious story of Bernard Nathan, a pivotal figure who made pioneering contributions in the 1920s and 30s that forever changed the French film industry. Nathan was eventually murdered by the Nazis, and then all but erased from history. Nathan was followed by Wooden Crosses (1932), a masterpiece about World War I produced by Nathan’s studio. Fabienne Bullot, a UWM French professor and coordinator of the festival, introduced the powerful drama, and also led a bilingual talkback along with her husband and colleague, Nicolas Russell.

The Stahl Center also had the privilege of co-sponsoring a feature-length film in the 2014 Nordic Film Festival. Set in a Swedish coastal community, Simon and the Oaks (2012), based on the Scandinavian best-selling novel of the same name, centers on Simon, who goes to college and meets Isak, a son of a wealthy, Jewish bookkeeper who has fled the persecution. The families of the two boys become intertwined in unexpected ways as war wages across Europe. In April 2014, the Stahl Center partnered with the Latin American Film Series to bring The German Doctor (2013) to the Union Theatre. A 2014 festival audience favorite, the chilling thriller/drama is about an Argentine family that unknowingly lives with Josef Mengele and entrusts their daughter to his care. The film, written and directed by Latin American star Lucia Puenzo, was Argentina’s submission to the Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film. Puenzo has always been intrigued by the hundreds of Nazis that were accepted and in operation after the war, not only in Argentina, but also across the continent. The 2015 Latin American Film Series also featured a Latin American Jewish film. Like last year, this year’s feature is also Argentinean, based on true events, and directed by a woman. My German Friend (2012), directed by Jeannine Meerapfel, tells the story of a German-Jewish girl who befriends the son of an SS officer. The two remain friends, while struggling to escape their political inheritance over the next three decades.

During my second-semester meeting with my advisor, I learned that I was able to declare a Jewish Studies minor before graduation. The Jewish Studies minor requirements were fulfilled due to the fact that I was able to receive credit for the religious courses I completed at my previous institution of study. All in all, I will admit that I jumped at this opportunity because of my passion for Hebrew courses.

The first time I met the professors and staff of the Sam & Helen Stahl Center for Jewish Studies was at a scholarship and awards ceremony, where I not only received a generous award, but was warmly welcomed into the Jewish Studies and Hebrew Studies “family.” Additionally, I have been pleased with the fact that the Jewish Studies plan of study offers a variety of courses in many different disciplines. I will finish my undergraduate degree by taking both Hebrew 202 and “Representing the Holocaust in Words and Images” as independent-study courses, along with a course on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

I graduated from UWM in May 2015 with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a minor in Jewish Studies. In 2013, I transferred from a small religious college in Michigan to UWM, where my undergraduate studies focused on Social Work. I completed courses in social policy and government, but soon realized that my passion aligned more with Hebrew language studies. In hindsight, this journey began a few years earlier when I purchased some Hebrew-language books that I was very interested in learning how to read. I chose UWM because of its proximity to home. However, I was nervous about transferring from a school of 30 to a university of 30,000! To my benefit, I found a strong network of friends in an introductory Hebrew class. And I might as well come out and say it right away: I LOVE HEBREW. Everything connects and makes sense. My instructor, Yael Gal, is excellent. My classmates challenge me, celebrate my successes, and help me grow intellectually.

As a UWM undergraduate, I was required to take two semesters of a language, but extended my studies to include four. It has definitely been worthwhile; I have never learned more about English than I have about Hebrew. The Hebrew minor not only provided me with tools to navigate the language, but teach me a great deal about Jewish history and culture as well.

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THE THREE NOVELISTS brought to Milwaukee this year by the Stahl Center have been showered with awards and nominations. Stuart Rojstaczer, David Bezmozgis, and Boris Fishman each gave readings from their recent work at Boswell Book Company, which hosted the writers in partnership with the Stahl Center. Bezmozgis has been a fixture on the literary scene ever since his first book, the story collection _Natasha_, was showered with praise and honors when it was published in 2004. Rojstaczer and Fishman, well established in other fields, are enjoying auspicious beginnings as first-time novelists.

David Bezmozgis, our second visiting writer this year, also won a 2014 National Jewish Book Award for _Betroyn_, his most recent novel, won the best fiction prize (J Greenberg Memorial Award). The novel also won the 2015 Sophie Brody Medal for Achievement in Jewish Literature and was named as a finalist for the prestigious Sami Rohr Prize and for the National Jewish Book Award for best fiction. A Replacement Life was also named to the New York Times list of the 100 most notable books of 2014.

A memorable debut by a wonderfully gifted young writer. In tracing the adventures of a "curious of suffering" who forges Holocaust restitution claims for his grandfather and his grandfather’s Russian immigrant neighbors in South Brooklyn, Boris Fishman has written a beautifully numbed, tender, and often very funny novel about conscience and familial loyalty that will linger long in the memory.

—Joyce Carol Oates

When was the last time you tore through a work of literary fiction at the rate of a Tom Clancy thriller?... I consumed David Bezmozgis’ third book and second novel, _The Betraytners..._ in roughly the amount of time the planet of the apes took to dawn in the cinemast... This is not a testament to the simplicity of the work but to the exceptional skill and effort with which its author has constructed the narrative. —Boris Fishman _The New York Times Book Review_

**Faculty Updates**

Joel Berkowitz recently completed the entry on Yiddish Theatre for Oxford Bibliographies in Jewish Studies. The bibliographic essay will be posted to the series early this summer. During the current year as a Global Studies Fellow at UWM, Prof. Berkowitz has laid the groundwork for a book-length study of Yiddish Holocaust Drama, and presented his findings at recent conferences at UWM and the University of Toronto. He is also presenting papers on other aspects of Yiddish theatre this spring, at New York University and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He is currently serving as script consultant on a new play by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Paula Vogel. Vogel’s drama, _Indecent_, will premiere at the Yale Repertory Theatre in October. Berkowitz was recently named to the editorial board of the journal _European Jewish Affairs_.

**Rachael Blugerman** was principal investigator in a partnership between UWM libraries, UWM’s Digital Humanities Lab, and the Jewish Museum Milwaukee. Working through the 2014-15 academic year, the UWM team created a digital exhibit of JMM’s successful exhibit, “Stitching History from the Holocaust.” The exhibit gives the public the opportunity to engage with the story of Hedy Strnad, a dressmaker who did not survive the Holocaust. The digital exhibit can be found at www.uwm.edu/stitchinghistory and was highlighted in a recent article in _Time_’s November 2014, _Bainm_ spoke about “Holograms and the Future of Witnessing,” at the USC Shoah Foundation’s conference, “Memory, Media, and Technology: Trajectories of Schindler’s List.” In March 2015, she was an invited guest of the Forschungsinstitut für Philosophie Hannover in Germany, where she presented a workshop on Digital Storytelling.

In February 2015, Bloomsbury Academic Press, London, published Holocaust Representation in History: An Introduction; the book _Lisa Silverman_ co-authored with Daniel H. Magilow. Both authors presented the book for the first time at the Duke University Workshop on German-Jewish Studies. In March 2015, Prof. Silverman’s peer-reviewed entry _Vienna_ was also published in Oxford Bibliographies in Jewish Studies.

An article based upon her Faye Sigman Woman of Valor Lecture on Madame d’Ora last September was accepted for publication in the 2015 issue of _The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book_. Tasman co-convened the conference “Grammars of Coherence and Difference: Jewish Studies in Baltimore. Also in December, she was also interviewed for Radio Slovenia on photographer Alice Schalek. In January 2015, she presented on _Madame d’Ora_ at a conference at the Imperial War Museum, London, UK. In May 2015, she co-convened the conference “Grammars of Coherence and Difference: Jewish Studies through the Lens of Gender Studies,” a conference sponsored by the Stahl Center and Bardeman College.

Yair Mazor recently published a book, entitled _Under A Silky Sky_: The Symbolist Poetry of Edith Covenaly, and was also accepted for publication, entitled _The Crypto Bible_: The Bible Surrenders its Aesthetic Secret. In May, Mazor was invited to deliver two lectures on Biblical literature and modern Hebrew poetry at Kumamoto University in Japan.

Mark Tasman was awarded the Mary L. Nohl Suitcase Export Fund for Visual Art Award to support his participation in a solo exhibition at Galerie Remise in Saint-Hippolyte, Quebec. Tasman also installed and showed excerpts from his “Dear Family, I Love You” photo series at the Back House Gallery in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Tasman was one of 40 artists exhibiting in Culture Jam MIKE at the Hide House in Milwaukee on Gallery Night and Day in July.

Tasman and Christopher Willey (Lecturer in Art and Design, Peck School of the Arts) were awarded the Leslie Whitaker Memorial Fund Award ($2,000) by UWM’s Department of English. Tasman also reviewed Kevin Miyazaki’s photo book, _Dear Family, I Love You_, published this spring, at New York University and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Tasman was also invited to participate in a panel presentation at the Jewish Museum Milwaukee featuring local Jewish artists.

Mark Tasman: _From Av VeNissances_, 2013

Stuart Rojstaczer’s _The Mathematicsian’s Shovel_, set in his native Wisconsin, won the 2014 National Jewish Book Award for Outstanding Debut Fiction (Foundation for Jewish Culture’s Goldberg Prize), along with a mantelpiece full of other honors and awards. His novel explores, with uproarious dark comedy, the madness that ensues when a brilliant math professor at the University of Wisconsin passes away, leaving behind rumors that she deliberately took the solution to one of the great puzzles of mathematics to her grave. Rojstaczer, a PhD geophysicist who was raised in South Brooklyn, Boris Fishman has made his fictional second novel and third work of fiction, _The Betrayers_ of one’s loved ones, men together again in Crimea, where the mad agent, himself Jewish. Fate brings the two years earlier in his native USSR by a KGB agent, himself Jewish. Fate brings the two for his grandfather and his grand-
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