



JEWISH STUDIES AT RICE UNIVERSITY

Greeting from the Interim Program Director

The Jewish Studies program at Rice University is off to a strong start. This year our focus has been on expanding our course offerings, enhancing our communication efforts and commencing a community outreach initiative. Over the course of this academic year, eight classes will be offered in the program. We are fortunate to have two visiting scholars — Drs. Shira Lander and Alec Mishory — who are helping to broaden the program's curriculum.

We launched our Web site, jewishstudies.rice.edu, where prospective and current students can learn about the program and the Houston community can learn about upcoming lectures. Our faculty has been teaching in the community through the Center for Living and Learning at the Jewish Community Center. This fall, over 150 adults attended our lecture series on Moses Maimonides.

I invite you to explore our Web site and to join us at the JCC as we share our knowledge about Jewish music and art. If you have questions or would like to discuss a gift, please contact Debbie Diamond, development liaison, at 713-348-4619 or ddiamond@rice.edu.

Paula Sanders

*Dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies
and professor of history*

Faculty Spotlight

Matthias Henze, *the Watt J. and Lilly G. Jackson Chair in Biblical Studies, associate professor of religious studies and director of the Jewish Studies program*

Matthias is participating in a yearlong fellowship at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in Wassenaar, Netherlands, and is making very good progress with his research on Second Baruch, a Jewish text from late first century CE Israel. The author of

this ancient text wrote in response to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and tried to develop a program for post-70 CE Judaism to ensure its survival. Matthias is investigating how this neglected book compares to other, better-known Jewish and Christian texts from roughly the same period.

Academic Highlights

Eight Jewish studies classes will be offered this academic year. The following two courses are new to the Jewish studies curriculum. To learn about all of the classes, visit jewishstudies.rice.edu.

The Sephardic [Spanish] Jews and their Diaspora: A Contribution to Hispanic Culture

Luisa Kluger, *lecturer in the Center for the Study of Languages*

This course, which is funded by The Maurice Amado Foundation, will investigate the contribution of the Sephardic Jews to the Hispanic cultural heritage in Spain and in the Ottoman Empire. The class will explore questions such as: Why is the expulsion of the Spanish Jews called “a Diaspora within a Diaspora”? When did the Jewish Golden Age of Spanish literature take place?

Jews and Art

Alec Mishory, *the Schusterman Visiting Israeli Professor in Israel Studies*

This course will explore art made by Jews, for Jews, as well as depictions of Jews by themselves and others. The class will address questions such as: How do Jewish artists reflect their Jewish identity in their works? What Jewish ritual objects are used at home? Mishory's position is funded jointly by Rice University and the American Israeli Cooperative Enterprise.

(Continued)

Community Outreach

Rice is once again partnering with the JCC's Center for Jewish Living and Learning to offer two lecture series as part of Rice's efforts to serve the Houston community.

Influence and Identity:

3 Ways of Being a Jewish Composer

Richard Lavenda, *professor of composition and theory and director of graduate studies at The Shepherd School of Music*

January 10, 17 and 24 at 10 a.m. at the JCC (free)

The Early Zionist Artists:

Utopian Ideas in the Modern Land of Israel

Alec Mishory, *the Schusterman Visiting Israeli Professor in Israel Studies*

January 14, 21 and 28 at 7 p.m. at the JCC
(\$24 JCC members; \$34 general public)

The Rice University Department of Art History is hosting an international conference of scholars entitled "Crossing Borders." The conference will bring together specialists in Christian, Jewish and Muslim studies to explore how art, architecture and material culture illuminate the complex ways in which Jews interacted with their neighbors during medieval times. Two lectures will take place in the community:

Becoming Visual: The Emergence of the Visible Jewess in Later Medieval Art

Sara Lipton, *associate professor of history at SUNY-Stony Brook*
March 14, 2010, at 7 p.m. at Congregation Beth Yeshurun

"Which is the Merchant Here, and Which the Jew?": Shakespeare's Jewish Questions

David Nirenberg, *Deborah R. and Edgar D. Jannotta Professor of Medieval History and Social Thought at the University of Chicago*

March 15, 2010, at 7 p.m. at Congregation Brith Shalom

More information can be found at jewishstudies.rice.edu.

Fundraising Priority

The university is seeking support for a Jewish Studies postdoctoral fellow to expose students to a wider variety of scholars and academic topics and to ensure that Houston has ongoing access to the brightest minds at the forefront of the Jewish studies field. Fellows teach classes, engage in research and publishing, interact with student groups and provide scholarly opportunities — such as lectures — for the community. We seek to attract scholars from the United States and Israel. If you have questions or would like to discuss a gift in support of this fundraising priority, please contact Debbie Diamond, development liaison, at 713-348-4619 or ddiamond@rice.edu.

Recent Gifts to Jewish Studies at Rice University

- The Desiree and Max Blankfeld Fund for Jewish Studies provides annual awards for student projects in Jewish studies, including but not limited to internships, research projects, workshop participation and study abroad. The first awards will be available during the 2010–2011 academic year.

"Deisi and I were thrilled when we learned that Rice University would be establishing a Jewish studies program. We feel that it is of utmost importance to provide a program at Rice for both Jewish and non-Jewish students that will, among other things, emphasize the rich tradition of Jewish heritage encompassing cultural, religious, historical and geographic contexts."

— Max Blankfeld

- For the third consecutive year, the American Israeli Cooperative Enterprise has awarded Rice a grant to support an Israeli visiting professor during the 2010–2011 academic year.

The Jewish Studies program thanks the following donors whose generous gifts provided the funding to commence our efforts:

American Israeli Cooperative Enterprise
The Maurice Amado Foundation
Myra '63 and Arthur Bahme
in honor of Nathalie and Herman Shultz
Deisi and Max Blankfeld '95
Gloria and Buzzy Bluestone
Susan and Raymond Brochstein '55
Debbie and Stuart Diamond
Matthias Henze and Karin Liebster
Michael Ozer and Patricia Kalmans
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Gloria and Joe Pryzant
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