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NEWS FROM THE MELTZER SCHWARTZBERG CENTER FOR ISRAEL STUDIES AND JEWISH STUDIES PROGRAM ■ FALL 2024

"SCENARIOS FOR THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL IN 2048" CONFERENCE

On November 10-11, the Meltzer Schwartzberg Center for Israel Studies (CIS) and Kogod School of Business (KSB) hosted an international conference, "Israel at 100: Scenarios for the Future of Israel in 2048." A dozen speakers, many from Israel, presented scenarios for what Israel will look like on the 100th anniversary of its founding. CIS Director Michael Brenner, who co-chaired the conference with KSB Professor Erran Carmel, opened the proceedings with a reminder that Israel itself grew out of the utopian vision of Theodor Herzl. Carmel brought with him a crystal ball to visually remind the audience to forget the present and put on their futures caps when listening to the scenarios presented. They covered aspects such as religiosity, climate sustainability, Palestinian-Jewish and Arab-Israel relations, "startup nation" economy, and connections with Diaspora Jewry.

Opening keynote speaker, futurist David Passig, forecast a "Demographic Dividend," whereby in

2048 Israel will have 12 million Jews along with 4 million non-Jews. A key to Passig's optimistic economic scenario was that 30% of ultra-orthodox Jews will drop out from the Haredi community and become strongly integrated in the country's society.

Eugene Kandel proposed a dramatic shift in Israel's governance structure to a Federalist model to stave off what he sees as an otherwise inevitable collapse of the state. His creative scenario proposed three "layers" for society who share foundational values, one for liberal democratic Jews, one for religious nationalist Jews and one for an Arab-Jewish society of all citizens. A retired professor of economics and finance at Hebrew University, Kandel was a former Head of Israel's Economic Council.

Among pessimistic scenarios were a "Nuclearized Middle East" by Yoel Guzansky and Anwar Mahajne's "Ethno-Nationalism Wins," whereby "Arabs have less access to



Eugene Kandel



Amy Zalman, Shira Efron, Eyal Hulata and David Schenker

technology, and fall further behind." Several presenters predicted new leadership in Israel and collaboration among countries to solve problems, such as Eyal Hulata's "Pragmatic Regional Alliance," Tsvi Bisk's "Israel Becomes Super Massachusetts," and Shira Efron's "Climate Change: Opportunity Multiplier." ■

FROM THE DIRECTORS

More than one year after the October 7 massacre, Israelis and Palestinians live in a different reality. They experience terror and war every day, and the chances for peace seem slimmer than ever. As we all witnessed, the events in Israel and Gaza had long-term repercussions on American campuses. What does this mean for Israel and Jewish Studies at AU? Can we do business as usual in a climate in which Jewish students feel threatened, Zionism is equated with racism, and Israel vilified as an illegitimate settler colonial state?

As we see science and academic work increasingly questioned and replaced by pseudo-truths and populist opinions, we strongly continue to believe in the mission of education. While we realize that promoting knowledge is not sufficient to fight antisemitism, we also know that this fight will be lost if we give up spreading knowledge. The Center for Israel Studies and the Jewish Studies Program refuse to swap scholarship for activism and research for propaganda. Our mission is to teach our students, excel in research, and engage with our community in a meaningful dialogue.

During the recent academic year, we have done so in manifold ways. We organized a lecture series on antisemitism; we held a conference on the future of Israel; we brought scholars, diplomats, and politicians with a broad range of views and different backgrounds. Our speakers included Jews and Muslims, Palestinians and Egyptians, Ethiopian-Israelis and Russian-Israelis, Americans and Europeans. We heard from family members of October 7 victims, and we were hosted by the Ambassador of Ukraine. Our students continued to excel in their academic work and, after graduation, in the professional world. While the challenges to our missions are growing, we will increase our efforts to promote knowledge and help to make our campus a welcoming place for every student. ■



Left to Right: Michael Brenner, CIS Director; Pamela Nadell, JSP Director; Laura Katz Cutler, CIS Managing Director; Guy Ziv, CIS Associate Director

GLOBAL ISRAEL: UKRAINE-ISRAEL RELATIONS

March saw the return of our students' favorite CIS event, our Global Israel Series of visits to foreign embassies. Ukrainian Ambassador Oksana Makarova welcomed AU students to Ukraine House to discuss Ukraine-Israel relations in the rich historical and contemporary contexts. She commented that Israel and Ukraine were the only two countries in the world with both a Jewish prime minister and president. She also underlined that Israel and Ukraine are similarly under attack by their enemies. CIS Director Michael Brenner moderated the discussion, which featured Ukrainian counselor Dr. Kateryna Smaglyi, Israeli Embassy political officer Nadav Zysblat, and historian Vadim Altskan from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The discussion was followed by a delicious Ukrainian supper. ■



Ambassador Oksana Markarova



Members of AU Students Supporting Ukraine who attended the event

2024 ISRAELI WRITERS SERIES



Etgar Keret and Lauren Strauss



Left: Ayelet Gundar-Goshen. Right: Appreciative students at Etgar Keret lecture.



In a continuation of the Center for Israel Studies and Jewish Studies Program's Israeli Writers Series, Professor Lauren Strauss interviewed best-selling writers Ayelet Gundar-Goshen (*Waking Lions*, 2015 and *The Wolf Hunt*, 2023), and Etgar Keret (*Auto Correct*, 2025). Gundar-Goshen, an award-winning novelist and a clinical psychologist, spoke in February about trauma and recovery in her literary and therapeutic work. Keret, whose many books have been translated into over 40 languages, visited AU in September. Like Gundar-Goshen,

Keret spoke about the trauma experienced by mental health professionals. He shared his conviction that creativity, imagination and story-telling are survival tools, remarking: "telling a story is a way to give love when you have nothing else to give."

The Israeli Writers series is co-sponsored by the Department of Literature and supported by the Ken and Mimi Heyman Israel Studies Programming Fund. ■

"MY LIFE IN RECIPES" WITH JOAN NATHAN

Cookbook author Joan Nathan discussed her new book *My Life in Recipes* with CIS Director, Michael Brenner, in the beautiful AU Museum in front of Mark Kelner's "New American Landscapes" exhibition. The wide-ranging discussion on Nathan's love and exploration of Jewish food was co-sponsored by CIS and the Jewish Studies Program (JSP). ■



Joan Nathan



Natan Sharansky

NATAN SHARANSKY GIVES 2024 AMOS PERLMUTTER MEMORIAL LECTURE

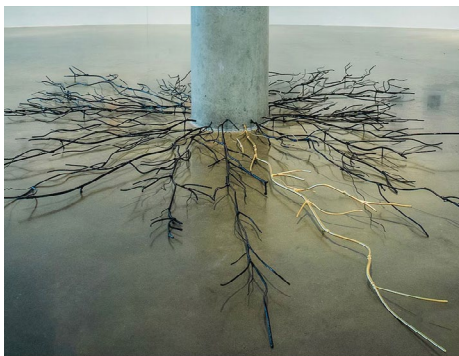
In January 2024 Natan Sharansky delivered the 2024 Perlmutter Memorial Lecture "Challenges of the Free World in Connection with Ukraine, Russia, and the Middle East," followed by a discussion with School of Public Affairs (SPA) Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education,

Saul Newman. The standing room only lecture was co-sponsored by SPA, CIS, SIS, the College of Arts and Sciences, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), Students Supporting Ukraine and AU Hillel. ■

SONENSHINE LECTURE BY DENNIS ROSS



Dennis Ross and Michael Brenner



Installation by artist Dahlia Luttwak. The gold represents roots her parents made in Israel after they escaped Czechoslovakia, while the others are the ones they left behind.

In February, CIS Director Michael Brenner discussed U.S.-Israel foreign relations with Ambassador Dennis Ross, a diplomat and peace negotiator under Presidents G.H.W. Bush, Clinton and Obama. The event, the postponed 2023 Helen and Daniel Sonenshine Lecture, was co-sponsored by the Meltzer Schwartzberg Center for Israel Studies, Kogod School of Business and Sine Institute of Policy and Politics. The standing room only event was held in the AU Museum, amidst the exhibition "Art and the Demands of Memory Works by Second Generation Holocaust Survivors." The exhibition featured art from local Israeli artist Dalya Luttwak and Mindy Weisel. ■

READING HERZL IN BEIRUT

Princeton Professor Jonathan Gribetz delivered the 2024 Helen and Daniel Sonenshine Lecture on October 21 on his book, *Reading Herzl in Beirut*. Gribetz explores why the PLO invested in research about the Jews, what its researchers at the PLO Research Center learned about Judaism and Zionism, and how their knowledge in "enemy studies" informed the PLO's relationship to Israel. The PLO Research Center was established in 1965 and expelled from Lebanon in 1983. ■



Jonathan Gribetz signs his book for Julian Weiss '26.

BLACKNESS IN ISRAEL



Efrat Yerday and Adane Zawdu

In April, BAMA Visiting Israeli Artist Efrat Yerday discussed "Emplaced Blackness: Thinking about Blackness and Anti-Blackness from Israel" with cultural sociologist Adane Zawdu, who was a postdoctoral fellow at Brandeis University. Zawdu is working on a project examining the changing relations between ethnic culture and skin color among Ethiopian Israelis, from the early years of migration to present day. ■

ADDITIONAL LECTURES AND PROGRAMS 2023-2024

The Cornell-Technion Partnership: Case Study with Israel Cidon (Jacobs Technion-Cornell Institute). Co-sponsored by the AU Veloric Center for Entrepreneurship, CIS, and Jacobs Technion-Cornell Institute and American Technion Society.

Victimhood Narratives as a Challenge for Reconciliation in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict by Karsten Fischer (University of Munich). Co-sponsored by the American University Political Theory Institute and CIS. ■

CENTER FOR ISRAEL STUDIES

American University's Meltzer Schwartzberg Center for Israel Studies is one of the nation's premier centers for educating about today's Israel—its achievements and its challenges. Our approach is multi-disciplinary, going beyond the Arab-Israeli conflict to study modern Israel's history, vibrant society, culture, multi-ethnic democracy, and complex geopolitical issues. The center's goal is to enhance scholarship and knowledge in the university and the wider community about a multifaceted Israel. Using AU's expertise in global education, and its central location in Washington, D.C., CIS seeks to connect Israel to the next generation of young leaders and to serve as a national and international hub for nurturing and catalyzing Israel studies.

JEWISH STUDIES PROGRAM

American University's commitment to the Jewish Studies Program dates back to the early 1970s. Since then, AU's Jewish Studies Program has included a major and a minor and offered courses across the curriculum, including in our General Education Program, for all AU students. For more than forty years, AU's Jewish Studies Program has advanced research and teaching and fostered a greater understanding of Jewish Studies scholarship on our campus and among our wider community.

MEET OUR STUDENTS



Anoushka Naik

Anoushka Naik SIS '24 International Studies Major, chose AU in large part due to the existence of CIS. From a young age, she has been passionate about issues surrounding Israel thanks to experiences with Jewish and Israeli friends. Guy Ziv has been her favorite AU professor, since "he's such an engaging lecturer...it's almost like he's telling a story, and he's good at inspiring passionate class discussions." In summer 2024 she interned at Tel Aviv University, helping a law professor conduct research on constitutional law and disparate treatment of groups within Israel. She plans to pursue a law degree and work in Israel-related fields.



Max Lagoy and Maya Lobel '26

CIS Intern **Maxwell Lagoy SIS '25**, Israel Studies Minor, has taken full advantage of CIS opportunities. He has been an avid participant in Professor Guy Ziv's Israeli politics discussions and has particularly enjoyed Professor Dan Arbell's classes since he "brings in a variety of speakers with differing perspectives." Max spent summer 2023 doing a translation internship in the office of sustainability for the city of Herzliya and plans to make Aliyah after graduation. ■



Professor Lauren Strauss organized an event for a group of Israeli Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Druze teens brought by Heart of a Nation to visit and meet with 15 diverse students from AU in April.

CIS ISRAEL WRITING AWARD

Congratulations to our two 2024 CIS Israel Writing Award winners. Sophomore **Erica Liff** won her award for her poem, "Walk to Caesaria." The poem incorporates ideas from the Hebrew poem Eli Eli (written in 1942 by Hungarian resistance fighter Hannah Szenes) to share her memory of visiting Caesarea during an Israel trip she took in high school. **Ariel Plevan '27** wrote his paper, "Fortifying Israeli Democracy: The Imperative for Constitutional Reform in Addressing



Left: Laura Cutler and Erica Liff. Right: Laura Cutler and Ariel Plevan

Political Cleavages and Corruption," for his writing, Literature Professor Emerita Myra Sklarew established this annual student prize. Entries were judged anonymously by a panel of professors. ■

In recognition of her deep commitment to understanding Israel and her love of



writing, Literature Professor Emerita Myra Sklarew established this annual student prize. Entries were judged anonymously by a panel of professors. ■

OUR ALUMNI: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Danielle Cohen

Danielle Cohen SIS MA '23 started to develop her passion for Israel and Jewish studies as a child with her Israeli parents and family. At SIS she enjoyed Professor Guy Ziv's falafel lunch discussions which "provided an intellectually rigorous platform for discussing Israel policy." This motivated her to co-lead AU's first itrek trip in March 2023, where she and two of her peers led 40 graduate students on a policy-focused program of Israel. Following her time as Senior Research Analyst at AIPAC, in October 2023 she was named Assistant Director of Policy & Advocacy at the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations where she focuses on advocating for the return of the hostages held captive in Gaza, antisemitism policy in the U.S. and abroad, the U.S.-Israel relationship, and the relations of Jewish diaspora groups.



Eliana Goodman

Eliana Goodman SPA '16, Israel Studies minor, grew her love for politics at AU. She worked in policy positions for various congressmen after graduation, most recently as Deputy Chief of Staff for Congressman

David Kustoff (R-Tenn). In May, Goodman became the First Director of Public Policy at the Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM), a non-partisan, global grassroots movement of individuals and organizations, across all religions and faiths, united to combat antisemitism. "This is a combination of my love of policy and desire to ensure the Jewish community and students feel protected and other communities are educated about the history of the Jewish community and people," says Goodman, who remains "very grateful for my experiences and the skills acquired during my time at AU."



Kelly Whitehead

Kelly Whitehead '15, history major, Jewish studies minor, graduated in May 2024 from Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem." In July Rabbi Whitehead began her current position as Asst. Director of Learning and Engagement, "Jewish Your Way," at the Union of Reform Judaism, focusing on Jews with marginalized identities. Kelly says her interest in Jewish Studies was sparked by an independent study she did with Professor Pam Nadell, who wrote her current job recommendation. "It was incredible to have a one-on-one with a real thought leader in Modern Jewish History," says Rabbi Whitehead.



Micah Winograd

Micah Winograd SIS '07 was one of AU's and the country's very first Israel Studies minors. Winograd recalls his classes in the School of International Service as "offering a nuanced insight into the intricacies of the region, including its history, peoples, and conflicts." He served as a first responder with Magen David Adom during his impactful year abroad at Hebrew University and has since pursued a career in public service and international public health care. Currently a Senior Contracts Officer for Management Sciences for Health, an international public health company, he remains close to Israel, visiting every couple years and even creating personalized trips to the country for his friends. ■



AU alumni and American Jewish Committee staff met up at AJC's Global Forum in June. Pictured left to right are **Jackson Pincus '19** (Seattle, WA), **Adam Cohavi '22** (Westchester, NY) and **Julie Rayman Fishman '03**, AJC's Senior Director of Policy and Political Affairs, Washington, DC. ■

FACULTY NOTES

Dan Arbell, Israel Studies Scholar in Residence, College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), is an associate fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies-Americas. Since October 7 he has done numerous interviews and provided commentary in leading US and international media outlets.

Boaz Atzili, School of International Service (SIS), presented “Defenders of Democracy? Israeli Reservist and Resistance to Democratic Backsliding” (with Manaswini Ramkumar), at the International Studies Association IS-ISSS Joint Conference in Colorado Springs, October 2023 (under review for publication). He contributed “Sacrificed on the Alter of Netanyahu’s Political Power,” in *Benjamin Netanyahu’s Dark Legacy: The Abandonment of October 7th Hostages* (Forum For Life, Washington DC: 2024). Atzili was interviewed widely on CNN, MSNBC, FOX, NPR, and others and contributed a number of opeds and policy articles on the October 7th Hamas attack.

Michael Brenner, Department of History, (CAS) was awarded the Cultural Prize of Honor of the City of Munich in June, 2024, for his lifetime achievement. He published “The Wall and the Mountain: Symbols of Two Israels,” in a recent volume on *New Perspectives on European Jewish History*. He continues to serve as a member of the Commission of the German Government to Reappraise the Terror Attack at the Munich Olympics 1972 as well as a board member of the Hebrew University’s Franz Rosenzweig Research Center and the DAAD Institute for German Studies at Haifa University.

Nathalie Japkowicz, Department of Computer Science (CAS), is leading a project along with Wendy Melillo (SOC) and Jeff Gill (SPA/

CAS) entitled “Unmasking Antisemitism”. The project uses lexical analysis and AI technology to discover emergent coded antisemitic terminology and antisemitic tropes.

Julie Keresztes, Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of History-Jewish Studies Program (CAS), will publish her first book, *Photography and the Making of the Nazi Racial Community*, in January 2025 with Cornell University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Alan Kraut, Department of History (CAS), authored an essay, “Mass Migration and Immigration Policy” which will appear in the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of American Jewish History* edited by Michael R. Cohen and Shari Rabin. Kraut serves on the Executive Committee of the National History Coalition and continues to chair the History Advisory Committee (HAC) of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation.

Lisa Leff, Department of History (CAS), continues to serve as director of the Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Leff widely presented her research about post-Holocaust restitution of Jewish property looted by the Nazis. She serves on the Executive Committee of the American Academy for Jewish Research.

Manaswini Ramkumar, SIS PhD Candidate, joined CIS as a Research Fellow in Fall 2023. With Prof. Boaz Atzili (SIS), she co-wrote an article manuscript titled, “Defenders of Democracy? Israeli Reservists and Resistance to Democratic Backsliding,” and presented a draft at the ISA-ISSS Conference at the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs in October 2023.

Jeffrey Sosland, Washington Semester Program, School of Public Affairs, has been quoted multiple times in the European weekly, *Expresso* after the October 7 Hamas attack on Israel, he. He was also a consultant to the editors of DK Press (part of Penguin Random House) for maps and history about the Arab-Israeli Conflict.

Lauren Strauss, Jewish Studies Program (CAS), served as historian and is featured in the 2024 film, *The Catskills*. She participated in a widely attended webinar on “Teaching About Israel in the Current Moment,” organized by University of Maryland and spoke about DEI and antisemitism to a standing room only crowd at Association for Jewish Studies annual conference. She continues to serve on the boards of the Association for Jewish Studies, Heart of a Nation (Israeli-Palestinian-American dialogue group), and is co-chair of the Greater Washington Forum on Israeli Arab issues.

Efrat Yerday, Seymour and Lillian Abensohn Visiting Israeli Professor (CAS) taught “Blackness in Israeli Popular Culture and Contemporary Art” in fall 2023 and “Israeli Society” in Fall 2024. She published “Softening the Gaze: Between Sexual Harassment and Racial Harassment” in the journal *Theory and Criticism* (59) of the Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem.

Guy Ziv (SIS) received two awards from SIS, the SIS Faculty Exceptional Research Award (FERA) – Summer 2024 and the SIS Outstanding Scholarship, Research, Creative Activity, and Other Professional Contributions Award, American University, 2024. He has had dozens of media interviews focused on the October 7 Hamas Massacre and Gaza War in outlets including BBC, CNN, MSNBC, and NPR. ■

GUY ZIV BOOK LAUNCH: NETANYAHU VS THE GENERALS



AU’s School of International Service and the Meltzer Schwartzberg Center for Israel Studies hosted a timely book launch for Professor Guy Ziv’s new book, *Netanyahu vs The Generals: The Battle for Israel’s Future* (Cambridge University Press, 2024). In the book, Ziv sets out to explain the mutual distrust and intense disagreements between Netanyahu and the security community, as well as the underlying reasons behind the Israeli public’s inattention to the collective judgment of hundreds of ex-generals and former spymasters. Professor Ziv toured widely at universities in the U.S. and abroad talking about the book, including at the Association for Israel Studies annual conference in Prague (July 2024). ■

PAM NADELL’S CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY



Pamela Nadell, Patrick Clendenen Chair in Women’s and Gender History, testified before Congress for the third time in December on antisemitism on college campuses, along with three Ivy League Presidents. Nadell’s testimony covered antisemitism’s classic tropes and canards, noting that “antisemitism visible on colleges and universities today is just part of the toxic stew of antisemitism Jews in the US now face.” Nadell’s expert testimony elevated the work of AU’s Jewish Studies Program internationally, as will her new book, *Antisemitism, an American Tradition* (expected fall, 2024). Nadell previously won the National Jewish Book Award for her book, *America’s Jewish Women: A History from Colonial Times to Today*. ■

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Maya Lobel '26 and Israel Studies Council member Richard Linowes, enjoy a Ukrainian dinner.

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A FUTURE PATH FOR JEWS AND ARABS IN ISRAEL

CIS hosted an inspiring discussion with Professor Ilan Troen, a founder and leading representative of Israel Studies, and Mohammad Darawshe, Director of Strategy at the Center for Shared Society at Givat Haviva. Despite having lost close family members on October 7 both developed hopeful visions of Arab-Jewish coexistence in Israel.



Mohammad Darawshe, Michael Brenner and Ilan Troen

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"ANTISEMITISM: A POLITICAL TRADITION" FALL SERIES

In the Fall of 2024, scholars from CIS, Jewish Studies, and beyond joined forces to present a wide-ranging series of one-hour lectures on antisemitism. The series, organized by Professor Lauren Strauss, drew on the speakers' areas of expertise to explore the history of modern antisemitism and anti-Jewish hatred in America and Nazi Germany, as well as hate across the internet and embedded in imagery of diseases and racial stereotypes. The webinars enabled us to reach hundreds of viewers during the talks, and even more who watched the recorded sessions afterward. Although the subject of antisemitism has been addressed by many outlets in recent years, our series stands out for its unique approach that puts the topic in a political context, and the deep learning reflected in each lecture. Video recordings of the six talks are available

on our website (<https://www.american.edu/cas/israelstudies/antisemitism-political-tradition.cfm>) and stand together as a mini-master course in this essential subject:

Dr. Michael Brenner (AU) "How Jew-Hatred Became a Political Weapon: From Anti-Judaism to Antisemitism"

Dr. Pamela Nadell (AU) "Understanding Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism: A Guide for the American University Community"

Dr. Julie Keresztes (AU) "Antisemitism in Times of Crisis: The Case of Hitler's Photographer"

Dr. Lauren Strauss (AU) "Walking on a Tightrope: How Antisemitism Shapes the Image and Self-Image of America's Jews"



Memorial at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life Synagogue where, on 10/27/2018, an antisemite and White supremacist murdered 11 people

Dr. Nathalie Japkowicz (AU) "Combatting Antisemitism in Extremist Social Media"

Dr. Robert Williams (Shoah Foundation) "Antisemitism and its Dynamics during Pandemics and Public Health Crises." ■