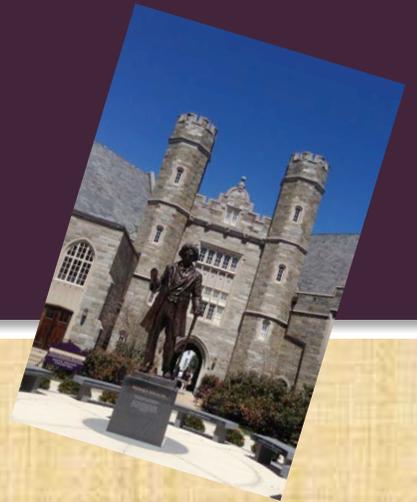


# Holocaust and Genocide Studies

## 2016-2017 Newsletter

West Chester University has been a pioneer in Holocaust Studies since 1978 when an undergraduate course on the Holocaust was first offered. The program now includes a Master of Arts in Holocaust and Genocide Studies, a certification program, an undergraduate minor, a regional education center, and a library collection.



## From the Director's Desk...

2016 was a difficult year for many in the field of Holocaust and genocide studies. The new political climate has brought a spike in hate crimes, in particular antisemitism and Islamophobia, and there are two fewer voices in the world to address this alarming trend—Yaffa Eliach, Holocaust survivor and scholar whose tower of Faces is in many ways the focal point of the US Holocaust Museum's permanent exhibit, and Elie Wiesel, survivor and philosopher, whose works are canon of global modern literature. Both scholars passed away in 2016.

Holocaust and Genocide Studies is needed more than ever before at West Chester University. As African-Americans, Latinos, Native-Americans, members of the LGBT community, Muslims, and Jews experience a rise in verbal threats, physical assault, and state-sanctioned discrimination, programs like ours can serve as a spotlight to bring awareness to acts of racism and prejudice. To that effect, in the past year, Holocaust and Genocide Studies has partnered with WCU's Departments of Social Work, Philosophy, and Women's and Gender Studies to create a Social Justice forum. This body constitutes a clearinghouse of information, programming, education, and counseling for faculty and students seeking ways to be informed about and to resist both subtle and legal forms of bigotry.

In February 2017, faculty and students from Holocaust and Genocide Studies participated in a day long forum sponsored by the Social Work department entitled "Cultivating Change," which featured sessions on activism and empowerment. Holocaust and Genocide Studies also held symposia and programs on the Holocaust and featured events about reconciliation, bringing in an Israeli and Palestinian who work together for peace despite having lost loved ones in the ongoing conflict. Finally, faculty and graduates of Holocaust and Genocide studies took part in Philadelphia Jewish Federation's Stand Against Hate rally on March 2, which was a response to the destruction of one of the city's Jewish cemeteries. In the summer 2016, the program will lead students on a field studies course to Pine Ridge and Standing Rock Reservations in South Dakota in order to place the current controversy over the Dakota Access Pipeline into the broader context of Native American history.

It has been one of my foundational goals as director of Holocaust and Genocide Studies to forge connections between all groups who have experienced persecution, believing that shared narratives bind us together as one humanity and create the conditions for a more accepting and peaceful world.

Jonathan C. Friedman, Ph.D.  
Director

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# Table of Contents

## From the Director's Desk

By Jonathan Friedman ..... Cover

Faculty Listing .....2

## Field Studies 2016: Germany and Poland

by Kaylee Gallagher .....3

## Annual Lecture Series

by Jenna Fagan.....4

Course Offerings Fall 2016 .....4

## My Work with The JFGP

by Sarah Jewett .....5

## Academic Publications and News

*Dr. Friedman at Oxford* .....6

## Annual Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches

by Meghan Bilger .....7

Contact.....7

## Germany and Poland: Field Studies 2016

Every year the Holocaust and Genocide Studies program organizes a field studies trip for students to experience a hands-on approach to studying genocide. In June 2016, five H&GS graduate students, myself included, traveled to Poland with Dr. Friedman to study the Holocaust and Jewish history in the country. The trip lasted almost two weeks. This allowed us to travel all over the country to tour historical sites and museums. We visited Warsaw, Krakow, Lublin, Lodz, and the small towns where many of the concentration camps existed. This presented a better understanding of the complex history of Polish Jewish history and the Holocaust in Poland.

The foremost purpose of the trip was to visit each of the six Nazi death camps in the country. In these camps, the Nazis and their collaborators murdered millions of Jewish people during the Holocaust. We traveled to Treblinka, Majdanek, Sobibor, Belzec, Auschwitz, and Chelmno. While Nazis destroyed the camps at Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec, and Chelmno to hide their crimes, many of the buildings at Majdanek and Auschwitz remain. Visiting those camps that still had the original camp buildings intact was especially poignant. We walked through the barracks, the prison blocks, the gas chambers, the crematoria and so on. We could see the barbed wire fencing and the true enormity of these expansive camps. The physical camps remain as a reminder for visitors of the past. Visiting these camps and memorials allowed us to truly understand the importance of “never again.”

We also visited other important Jewish historical sites and museums in Poland. In Warsaw, we viewed the last remaining wall of the Warsaw Ghetto, saw where the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising took place, and visited the Museum of the History of Polish Jews. The museum offered a comprehensive and interactive multi-media experience to help learn about Polish Jewish history. In both Warsaw and Krakow, we toured the few remaining synagogues left in the cities. Only a few still held religious services, while the others are open to the public as a historical site. In Krakow, we also stayed in the Jewish quarter which allow easy access to the Jewish cultural sites of the city. Touring the Jewish historical sites and museums offered a break from the emotional trips to the concentration camps and gave students a well-rounded idea of Jewish history in Poland.

Students and alumni of the program are extremely lucky to have opportunities to participate in field studies trips with Dr. Friedman. These trips offer a once in a lifetime learning experience and memories that will remain with the students long after graduation.

*This article was written and submitted by Ms. Kaylee Gallagher, a 2016 graduate of the WCU Holocaust & Genocide Studies Department.*



## The Parents Circle at West Chester University, February 2017

On February 23rd 2017, the West Chester University Holocaust & Genocide Studies Department had two guest speakers from the Parents Circle group comespeak. The Parent Circle – Family Forum is a group of people that have lost family or friends to the Israel-Palestine conflict. The stated mission is to “promote reconciliation as an alternative to hatred or revenge.” The two speakers, Mazen Faraj and Robi Damelin, were kind enough to share their stories.



The first speaker was Mazen Faraj. A Palestinian man who lost his father to the conflict. He began his story talking about the everyday trials and tribulations of being Palestinian. The limitations on movement, the check points, the camps, and the feeling like a foreigner or prisoner in your own country. Mazen’s father was killed by the Israeli army. He goes on to explain that he was, understandably, furious. Upon the suggestion of a friend, he went to a meeting if the Parents Circle though he admittedly did not believe that it would do anything for him. He was proven wrong. He ended his segment by explaining that his eyes were opened to the reality that the “enemy” was not his enemy. The “enemy” was really a collection of people suffering and grieving just like him.

The second speaker was Robi Damelin. Robi is an Israeli woman who lost her son David to the conflict. David was shot by a Palestinian sniper who was responsible for the deaths of many Israelis. She shared her story which included how her background working on the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission helped her come to the realization that reconciliation, not hate or revenge, was the only way forward for her and, ideally, the conflict as a whole. She

also shared the tremendous amount of grief she carries with her and how acceptance as a part of the grief process is an ongoing practice for her and her work with the Parents Circle helps her with that practice.

The last segment of the evening was a question and answer forum. The questions that came from our West Chester students were thoughtful and the unity of the room seemed apparent. However, there were two rabble-rousers in the crowd. The speakers handled the questioners with a grace and poise that was mesmerizing to watch. The Holocaust and Genocide Studies department are thankful to the Parents Circle for coming to speak and hope that the lecture was informative for those that attended. Additionally, we hope this shows that West Chester University is a place for holding and challenging discourse in positive ways.

## Course Offerings Fall 2017

### Undergraduate Courses

HIS 332 Holocaust Thursday 7:15-10:00 pm Brandywine 011 Dr. Jonathan Friedman

### Undergraduate Courses (that can also be taken for Graduate Credit)

EGE 409 Holocaust in Film Monday/Wednesday 4:25-5:40 pm Ruby Jones 104 Dr. Joseph Moser

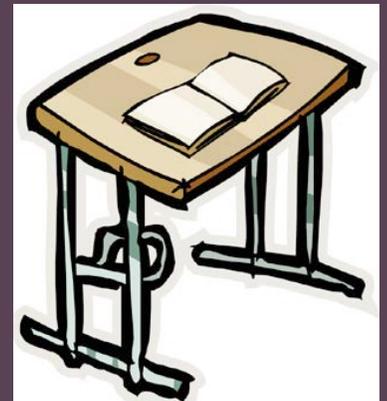
PHI 411 The Problem of War Wednesday 4:25-7:10 pm Main 302 Rebecca Subar

### Graduate Courses

HIS 545 Holocaust Tuesday 7:15-10:00 pm Recitation 212  
Dr. Jonathan Friedman

PHI 512 Ethical Theories Thursday 4:25-7:10 pm UNA 162  
Dr. Ruth Porritt

EDF 511 Foundations of Transformative Education Monday/Wednesday 5:50-7:05 pm Brandywine 010  
Dr. John Elmore



## My Work with the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia

In November of 2016, I was hired by the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia (JFGP) as their Administrative Assistant for Holocaust Programming. The position requires both a sensitivity and knowledge of the Holocaust, as well as experience in the exhibition of art; I received my Bachelor of Fine Art in 2012 and my Master's in Holocaust and Genocide Studies (WCU) in 2015, a strange combination perhaps, but a perfect one for this position.

The Holocaust Programming at the JFGP is responsible for the Annual Youth Symposium on the Holocaust, the Mordecai Anielewicz Creative Arts Competition, and the Dorothy Freedman Memorial Conversation with a Survivor. The Symposium and Conversation are of particular importance because it provides young people with the opportunity to interact with Holocaust survivors directly, in which they hear their stories and can ask them questions afterward. Sadly, we are getting even closer to a time in which there will be no survivors left, which makes this a once in a lifetime experience for most of the students and educators, as well as the volunteers who help facilitate the event. Most students who take part in our Holocaust programming are not Jewish, so the experience, as well as the information, is often new and captivating for them. The Arts Competition has students engage with the Holocaust on a more emotional level, in which they may feel a personal attachment to the events, instead of it being something that happened to an "other." I feel very fortunate to be a part of these great programs and to use my Holocaust education towards positive ends.

The JGFP is a great place to work for numerous reasons; for one, it is refreshing to work in an environment that celebrates Jewishness openly. Being surrounded by individuals helping to make sure that every aspect of the Federation's operation is dedicated to Tikkun Olam (healing the world) for both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities in the region is a great feeling. The progress that the JGFP's interfaith work makes is also heartening, especially in these troubled times which threaten to further divide the religious communities and country.

I feel confident in assuming that the work the Federation does with the Holocaust is something that all current and former students of the HGS program at WCU can get behind; we have all dedicated our education in varying degrees to upholding the history and lessons of the Holocaust, or in the very least, bearing witness. I am grateful to the Holocaust and Genocide Studies program at WCU, and particularly thankful to Dr. Friedman for helping prepare me to be in a position to engage others with the Holocaust in a rewarding and productive manner. I will certainly be proud to be an alumnus of the program when I return on March 16th, WCU being the location of the second of the four Youth Symposium events this year.

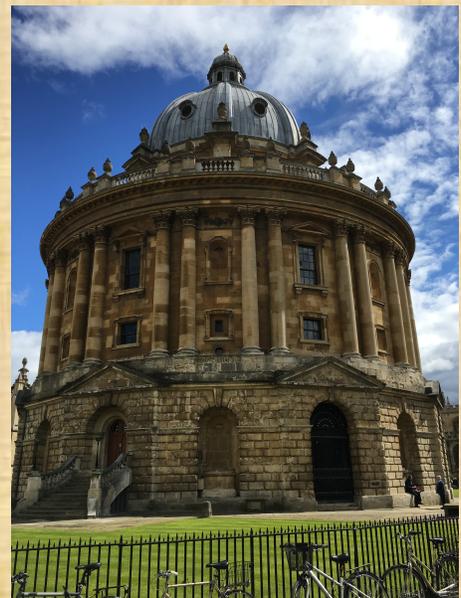
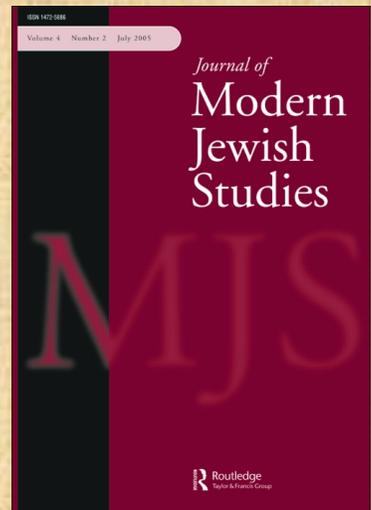
by Sarah Jewett

## **Academic Publications & News**

Dr. Friedman, Director of Holocaust and Genocide Studies, was a visiting scholar at the Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies at the University of Oxford from 20 April to 10 June. During that time, he carried out research into the identity of, and challenges facing, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Jews in Britain.

He focused mainly on the London community, estimated to comprise a couple thousand out of Britain's total Jewish population of over 270,000, a "double minority" of religion and ethnicity as well as of sexual orientation and gender identity--one that has to address not only homophobia from both Gentiles and Jews, but antisemitism from the straight and gay worlds. Dr. Friedman made contact with Rainbow Jews, an organization which maintains an exhibition and oral histories on the history of LGBT Jews in Britain at the Montague Centre in London, the headquarters of Liberal Judaism. He also attended a symposium entitled Twilight People at the University of Warwick, which dealt with how transgender people of faith, including Jews, maintain their spirituality in and often intolerant environment.

Dr. Friedman also published an article with the Centre's peer-reviewed Journal of Modern Jewish Studies. The article, entitled, "Performing Grief: The Music of Three Children of Holocaust Survivors—Geddy Lee, Yehuda Poliker, and Mike Brant," features theories from scholars who have studied the psychology of the "second-generation," and sheds light on the diverse ways in which these musicians have confronted their trauma and the trauma of their parents. For Lee and Poliker, this has taken the form of developing personal identities on and off stage as Jewish musicians with a cause, either for social justice or for preserving Holocaust memory; for Mike Brant, who committed suicide in 1975, his career and body of work involved a toxic mix of superstardom and depression, which many in his family, even his mother who survived the Holocaust, linked to his inability to address childhood anxieties about his parents' suffering. The study is a revealing window into two worlds that rarely intersect—that of pop (and especially rock) music and Holocaust trauma. Far from trivializing the study of the latter, this essay enriches our understanding on a number of fronts, especially with regard to how ordinary people who suffered in extraordinary ways sought healing through the power of song. Dr. Friedman presented a shortened version of the essay to faculty and students at the Centre in May 2016.



## Annual Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches by Meghan Bilger

On March 11- 13, 2017, I had the opportunity to attend the 47th Annual Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, hosted by Temple University. Although I did not present any research, this opportunity gave me the insight for future research and conferences.

While in attendance, I met many historians and academics from around the world, which further deepened my understanding of Holocaust education in many European countries. This, combined with the field studies trip to Eastern Europe during summer 2016, helped to bring my education full circle. I was able to listen to these presenters discuss how local churches keep the memory of the Holocaust alive, and also witness that firsthand while abroad.

One particular panel discussed the consequences of war and genocide on children and future generations. The speakers discussed the Holocaust and some personal stories from the Armenian genocide.

The 47th Annual Scholars' Conference, founded by Franklin H. Littell and Hubert G. Locke in 1970 provides scholars and academics with a forum to present the latest findings in Holocaust research. In recent years, the ASC has expanded their focus to include a discussion of other genocides, as well as, what we, as humans, can learn from these atrocities.

The interdisciplinary nature of the conference created a diverse and interesting atmosphere. All involved were welcoming and inspiring for future endeavors.



For Information about WCU's Master of Arts Program or the Minor in Holocaust Studies

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