Friends:

As you know, the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies – Columbia University’s central address for the academic study and discussion of Jewish life, history, and culture – has long been a national and international leader in the field. The last several months have been an excellent illustration of why, and how: and I want to share some of those reasons with you.

Our Undergraduate Israel Fellowship expanded this year from 17 students to 26, and this summer we’re planning to grow it even more. We’ve had incredible conversations with the hand-selected panel of academics in our New Media in Jewish Studies Collaborative; they’re making amazing progress in finding innovative ways to incorporate new media into Jewish studies programs across the country. The courses we’re offering continue to reflect our commitment to blending rigorous scholarship with cutting edge teaching and intellectual opportunities for all types of students on campus. (Check out a course sampling on the page 2.)

And we’re also proud of the diversity—and frequency—of our public programming, from guest speakers on foreign and Israeli policy, to academic lunch discussions with experts in their fields, to our newly expanded Israel Film Series, often featuring writers or directors of the screened films. (Check out the photo at right for an example.)

I’m extremely proud of what we’re accomplishing—and it wouldn’t be possible without your participation and support. I hope that you’ll join us for upcoming events. You can find a calendar and the latest details on our website.

Read ahead to learn all about the Institute’s wonderfully successful semester—and looking forward to seeing all of you soon!

Sincerely yours,

Jeremy Dauber
Atran Professor of Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture
Director, Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies
Another Exciting Year for the IIJS Undergraduate Israel Fellowship

This past summer, the Institute sent 26 Columbia and Barnard students to Israel as part of the Undergraduate Israel Fellowship. Now in its fourth year, the fellowship supports students spending at least four weeks in Israel to pursue academic study, internships, and volunteer positions. This summer’s cohort engaged in a wide array of exciting and impressive opportunities, such as:

- Interning at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs
- Working the Arava Institute in the Negev
- Researching mathematics at the Weizmann Institute
- Learning in a Hebrew immersion program at Hebrew University

Both in Israel and back on campus, the Fellows participate in programs designed to provide a strong understanding of the diversity and complexity of Israeli society. For example, they’ve explored Israel through the perspective of documentary filmmakers and African refugees, and participated in roundtable discussions with journalists and foreign policy experts, just to take a few examples.

We’re planning to send an even larger cohort this upcoming summer, and applications will be available early on in the spring semester. If there’s a student you know whom you think might be interested, tell them to contact our office!

Some fellows after a discussion on the Israeli Declaration of Independence with Yossi Klein Halevi (third from right)

IIJS Faculty Course Sampler Fall 2013

Crime and Punishment in Jewish Culture
Beth Berkowitz
This course explored the ethical, cultural, and political dimensions of Jewish criminal punishment from the Bible through modernity, with focus on the death penalty.

Medieval Philosophy
Zev Harvey
A general course in medieval philosophy, focusing on major Christian, Jewish, and Muslim medieval philosophers, written from the 4th through the 14th centuries.

Jewish Music of New York
Mark Kligman
This course focused on the musical life of New York Jews in three broad contexts: art music, popular music, and non-European traditions.

American Jewish History
Rebecca Kobrin
This course explored the interaction between the changing makeup of Jewish immigration, the changing social and economic conditions in the United States, and the religious, communal, cultural, and political group life of American Jews.

Reading Beyond the Core, And the Atlantic Ocean

This year, under the direction of Joshua Fattal (’CC15; second from right, below), undergraduate students created the IIJS Israel Studies book club to learn about and discuss different ideas relating to Israel and Jewishness today—and with opportunities to speak directly with selected authors. For the initial book selection, Second Person Singular, students were able to video conference with Sayed Kashua from Israel. The spring semester’s club meetings will include two in-person author gatherings: Ari Shavit and Yossi Klein Halevi.
Noteworthy News from the Institute

- Thanks to the generous support of the Knapp Foundation, the Institute is now responsible for the editorial management of *Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History*. For more than thirty years, this prestigious journal has been the leading scholarly venue for discussions of the field and study of Jewish literature and we are honored to have it housed at the Institute.

- Earlier this summer, the Institute hosted the second conference for the members of its **New Media in Jewish Studies Collaborative**. The Collaborative was launched in 2012 in collaboration with the Jim Joseph Foundation, building on an ignition grant awarded by the Covenant Foundation, to find deep and meaningful ways to engage students and propel Jewish studies into the forefront of the digital age. Professors in Jewish Studies departments around the country have been learning how to incorporate and use innovative technology, digital storytelling, and other documentary new media in the classroom.

- On November 20, the **Jewish and Israel Studies Graduate Student Association (JIGSA)** and the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies presented: “The Future of Jewish Studies: New Directions, Theoretical Considerations, and Professional Advice,” a conversation between Dr. James Loeffler (UVA) and Dr. Jeffrey Shandler (Rutgers). Dr. Shuly Schwartz (JTS) moderated. The lunchtime conversation was well attended by IIJS students and faculty and ended with a lengthy, in-depth Q&A session between the students and the esteemed panel.

Congratulations to our Faculty!

Congratulations are in order for Professor Beth Berkowitz, the Ingeborg Rennert Chair of Jewish Studies, who recently joined the faculty of the Religion department at Barnard College. In conjunction with her official arrival at the college earlier this semester, she gave an inaugural lecture titled *Frontiers in Jewish Studies: The Clever Ox, the Escaping Elephant, and Other Talmudic Animals*, exploring animal studies through the lens of rabbinics. We’re so excited to have her affiliated with the IIJS.

Additional congratulations to Professor Jeremy Dauber, Director of the Institute, and Atran Professor of Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture, on publishing his biography of Sholem Aleichem, *The Worlds of Sholem Aleichem: The Remarkable Life and Afterlife of the Man Who Created Tevye* (Random House). The biography received great reviews from myriad publications, from *The New Yorker* (“Dauber brings the ‘Jewish Mark Twain’ to life”) to *The Wall Street Journal* (“Dauber celebrates his hero’s ups and downs—from rags to riches and back again, and then again forth—in terms that mimic the chatty narrative of...so many of Sholem Aleichem’s tongue-in-cheek tales of lovable rouges and fools”). It was a National Jewish Book Award finalist and received a Sophie Brody Award honorable mention.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS from Fall 2013

**Eric Trager**
*Egypt After Morsi: The Anatomy of a Political Crisis*

**Adam Mendelsohn**
*Beyond the Battlefield: Reevaluating the Impact of the Civil War on America’s Jews*

**Avner Holtzman**
*40 Years Later: The Yom Kippur War in Israeli Literature*

Co-sponsored by the Institute for Israel & Jewish Studies and The Jewish Theological Seminary

**Michael Doran**
*The United States, Israel, and Iran: A conversation with Jordan Hirsch*

**Olga Gershonson**
*The Phantom Holocaust in Soviet Cinema*
The Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies – Columbia University’s center for the academic study and discussion of Jewish life, history, and culture – has long been a national and international leader in the field, and recently, the Institute itself has gone through an exciting season of growth.

With interest in Jewish and Israel Studies reaching new heights in and out of the university, the need to support academic opportunities, innovative programming, and cutting-edge teaching that enrich students, scholars, and the larger Columbia University community alike is crucial.

Please consider supporting the IIJS. To do so, visit https://giving.columbia.edu/giveonline.

Storytelling, from a Jewish Perspective

On May 5-6, 2013, the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies hosted “The Past – and Present – of Jewish Storytelling.” This conference, supported by the generosity of the Knapp Foundation, brought together scholars from all over the world to participate in fascinating discussions of both Ancient and Modern Jewish Storytelling.

On the first day of the conference, part of a larger collaboration with Stanford University’s Taube Center for Jewish Studies, the discussion centered on Ancient Jewish Storytelling, and the day included presentations by:

- Robert Kawashima from the Center for Jewish Studies and Department of Religion at the University of Florida
- Alan Cooper, the Elaine Ravich Professor of Jewish Studies and Provost of the Jewish Theological Seminary
- Hindy Najman, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Yale University
- Laura Lieber, Associate Professor of Religion at Duke University
- Tzvi Novick, Abrams College Chair of Jewish Thought and Culture at the University of Notre Dame

The second day of the conference focused on Modern Jewish Storytelling. The first panel of the day, “Jewish Writers on Jewish Writers,” was led by notable authors such as Melvin Jules Bukiet; Dara Horn; Rodger Kamenetz; and Philip Schultz. A later panel entitled “The Jewish Writer and the Jewish Literary Tradition: Contemporary Writers on Traditional Jewish Storytelling” included author Joshua Cohen; renowned poet Peter Cole; and distinguished writers Myla Goldberg and Joseph Skibell.

Jeremy Dauber and Michael P. Kramer, Associate Professor in the Department of English at Bar-Ilan University, along with Alan Mintz, the Chana Kekst Professor Hebrew Literature in the Department of Jewish Literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary, sat on a panel entitled “The Study of Jewish Storytelling.” The two day conference on Jewish Storytelling engaged participants in lively discussion and surely contributed to academic scholarship and fellowship in Jewish Storytelling – both Ancient and Modern – for many years to come.