

Reflections

Harvard and Rice Among New Posen Grant Recipients

Five North American institutions, including Harvard University and Rice University, were named Posen Grant recipients for the 2008-2009 academic year, bringing the number to approximately 40 institutions internationally that have developed unique, innovative courses in the subject of Jewish secularization. For the first time, three European institutions have also joined the program: University College London; Sorbonne, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris (School of Graduate Studies); and University of Wrocław, Poland.

The other new grantees, which will each receive a \$50,000 grant that can be renewed for two additional years, are Goucher College, in Maryland; Lehigh University, in Pennsylvania; and the University of Texas–Austin, which will defer its grant until the 2009-2010 academic year.

According to Myrna Baron, executive director of the Center for Cultural

Judaism, “Selections were made on the basis of a strong ‘core’ course in Jewish secularization”—the centerpiece of each application.

“Each institution submitted plans for a rigorous ‘core’ course,” Ms. Baron said. “Each showed a concrete plan for the grant money; an understanding of the study of Jewish secularism; and the ability to integrate these courses over time and make them permanent.”

Since 2000, when the Posen Project for the Study of Secular Jewish History and Cultures began with a single Israeli institution, the project has expanded greatly: today, about 30 institutions in North America—large and small, public and private—have developed courses in the study of Jewish secularism and secularization.

“Since the time of Spinoza, we’ve seen the emergence of a Jewish secularism, very much a product of modernization,” said Ms. Baron. “But only recently has there been a new academic

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European Institutions Join Posen Project

Three European institutions have become the first Posen Grant recipients outside of Israel and North America. University College London (UCL); Sorbonne, École Pratique des Hautes Études (School of Graduate Studies), Paris; and University of Wrocław, Poland, join more than three dozen institutions that have developed unique courses in Judaism as Culture and the academic study of Jewish secularism.

Beginning this Fall, UCL introduced a two-term course, “The Secularisation of Jewish Culture in the Modern Era”; and will add two new courses in Jewish secularism next year. The program at Wrocław offers two

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GOUCHER COLLEGE



4th Annual Posen Project Conference Explores Roots of Secularisms

The annual Posen Conference represents an important gathering of professors involved in studying the phenomenon of Jewish secularization. “We’re doing something very exciting that is cutting edge,” said Dr. Naomi Seidman: “The academic study of Jewish secularism.”

The 2007-08 conference, held in March, 2008, at the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, featured a crowded slate of lectures and discussions, including one by Dr. David Biale that raised the question: Were the seeds of Jewish secularism first planted in the 12th century? “This was an important discussion to understand the premodern origins,” said Myrna Baron. “The conference marked another advancement for the study of Jewish secularization.”

It began on Sunday morning with an introduction by Dr. Biale, the Emanuel Ringelblum Professor of Jewish History and Director of the Program in Jewish Studies at the University of California–Davis. “The conference has evolved in an interesting way,” said Dr. Biale, the conference’s moderator, addressing the 30 professors plus guests

in attendance, all of whom represented institutions that have developed courses in Jewish secularization with the help of Posen Foundation grants.

Those institutions now include five new recipients: Harvard, Rice, and Lehigh universities; Goucher College; and the University of Texas–Austin, which has deferred its grant until the 2009-2010 academic year.

*Do religion
and secularism
constitute a binary?*

The conference’s first morning included a screening of *The Tribe*, a fast-paced, 18-minute film on modern Jewish identity that asks: “What

does it mean to be a member of a tribe in the 21st century?”

“This generation wants fewer sermons and more conversation,” the narrator, Peter Coyote, intones. “Their version of the Talmud is the internet.”

“The word ‘secular’ is never mentioned,” said Dr. Andrea Lieber, who holds the Sophia Ava Asbell Chair in Judaic Studies at Dickinson College, and was one of four professors (along with Dr. Seidman and Dr. Lynn Davidman in the Posen Project, and Dr. Miriam Raider-Roth, a professor of Education at the University of Cincinnati) who developed a sophisticated curriculum to accompany the film. “Yet it completely underlies everything in the film.” Others noted that the film’s quick, MTV-style editing and its broad scope (“That’s everything I do in 18 minutes,” Dr. Lieber joked) appeal to students in their courses on Jewish secularism.

After *The Tribe* came presentations by four professors who taught Posen

core courses. The courses cover the history of Jewish secularization, from the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza through Moses Hess, Zionism, and other 20th century secular Jewish movements. Some use a specific academic discipline; others, a multi-disciplinary approach.

“Reviews of the class were overwhelmingly positive,” said Dr. Jessica Cooperman of Muhlenberg College, whose course—offered for the first time during 2007-08—explored “how Jews redefined themselves as tradition gave way to modernity,” according to a précis. Dr. Cooperman was seconded by Dr. Sven-Erik Rose of Miami University (of Ohio), who praised the Posen Lecture Series, which brought scholars from other fields and institutions to his university. “I believe it engaged students in the best possible way,” he said. “Students and colleagues

who never gave a thought to Jewish Studies are now taking notice.”

Dr. Brian Horowitz of Tulane University reflected on his core

course in Jewish secularization, and on Tulane’s unique service learning program.

“We had 52 students in the core course—a high number,” he said. “Thirty of them are doing community service” in New Orleans.

Throughout the two days, discussion shifted from the concrete to the abstract.

Do religion and secularism constitute a binary—two things reacting to, and evolving in tandem with, one another?

Can the story of Jewish secularism be told as a single, sweeping narrative—or has it taken a more tortuous path, with ruptures and setbacks?

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Dr. Eli Yassif (left) and Dr. David Biale
See more conference photos, page 12

Harvard, Rice, Lehigh, Goucher, UT are New Posen Grant Recipients

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field that explores the phenomena with scholarly rigor.”

The courses survey secular Jewish thinkers and movements; explore questions of Jewish identity in the post-Enlightenment era; and trace the process of secularization through several centuries to the present. Proposed courses are vetted by a seven-member Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) consisting of Dr. David Biale, the committee chair, of the University of California–Davis; Dr. Laura Levitt, of Temple University; Dr. Mark Raider, of the University of Cincinnati; Dr. Naomi Seidman of the Graduate Theological Union; Dr. Susan Shapiro and Dr. James E. Young, both of the University of Massachusetts–Amherst; and Dr. Andrea Lieber, of Dickinson College, who recently joined the Committee.

The Committee has approved courses such as: “Theories of Secularization” (Harvard University); “Judaism and Secularization: the Encounter with Modernity” (Lehigh University); and “Judaism, Secularism, Modernity” (Goucher College). As the Posen Project expands—eight institutions became new grantees in the 2007-2008 academic year—proposed courses are becoming ever-more sophisticated and multidisciplinary.

“There is no single template for courses supported by the Posen grant program,” Ms. Baron said. “Professors who have taught these courses include Yiddish scholars, sociologists, historians, professors of Jewish Studies and German Studies, and others.” Nor do the courses resemble more typical Judaic Studies courses.

According to Felix Posen of the Posen Foundation, “What distinguishes them is the fact they regard Jewish secularization as a discrete subject, worthy of a semester (or full year) of intense study. To understand Jewish secularization as a historical phenomenon, that’s how one must approach it.”

Other institutions that have received Posen Grants are: Bard College, Binghamton University, Brown University, Dickinson College, Graduate Theological Union, Hampshire College, Hunter College, Miami University of Ohio, Muhlenberg College, Queens College, Rutgers University, Temple University, Tulane University, University at Albany, University of California–Davis, UCLA, University of Cincinnati, University of Denver, University of Florida, University of Kansas, University of Massachusetts–Amherst, University of Miami, University of Michigan, University of Toronto, and University of Virginia.

Israeli institutions affiliated with the Posen Project include the Hebrew University; Tel Aviv University and the Ofakim Program at Tel Aviv University; Haifa University; the Interdisciplinary Center at Herzliya; Kerem Teacher Training Institute; and Open University, which is also developing a new textbook on the subject.

The Posen Grants have not only enabled universities to expand their Jewish Studies offerings; they have also—significantly—allowed institutions to hold faculty seminars and lectures series (see page 11), at which pre-eminent scholars and authors have lectured. The number of Posen lectures


has increased in the past several years, in part because the Posen Project itself has expanded: The 2007-2008 Grant recipients included the first Canadian institution to join the program (University of Toronto), the first New York City institutions (Hunter College and Queens College), as well as the prestigious Hebrew University in Israel.



European Institutions Join Posen Project

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new courses, “Modern Jewish History: Towards New Identities in the Secularizing World” and “From Particular to Universal: Jewish Literature in Search of Secular Identity.” The Sorbonne offers a new graduate course, “Emergence and Development of a Critical Thought in Judaism from Saadia Gaon up to Spinoza.” In subsequent years, the Sorbonne will offer “Modernization and Secularization in European Jewish Societies” and “Encounter with the West: Modernization and Secularization of the Jews in Islamic Lands.”

Discussions are underway with other European universities about future programs. Institutions with faculty available to teach these courses are encouraged to submit proposals. 

There is no single template for the 'core' course.

Posen Foundation Begins Continuing Education and Secondary School Education Programs

The Posen Foundation has plans to greatly expand its efforts into two new areas: adult continuing education and high school education.

The Posen Foundation introduced its first Continuing Education program in North America at Lehrhaus Judaica, a non-denominational Jewish Studies adult school in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Foundation plans to expand these efforts and support new courses in Jewish secularism primarily at university-based continuing education programs throughout North America and Israel. Proposals for continuing education programs in North America are due December 1, 2008 (see page 14).

In Israel, the Foundation is sponsoring a new program at Katedra: The Center for Experiential Learning, which offers continuing education to adults on a wide range of subjects. The first course, “Israelism, Judaism and Secularity,” features a series of lectures by renowned Israeli scholars on subjects including the roots of a modern Jewish nationalism; the break from tradition in modern Hebrew literature; the “voice of the people” and its impact on secular thought in Israel and the Jewish people; and the Israeli mosaics between secularism and religiosity.

The Foundation is equally committed to secondary school education. In Israel, the Foundation is engaged in a joint pilot project in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the


Rishon LeZion Municipality. In the framework of the project, Judaism as Culture programs are taught in grades 8 and 10 in 23 junior high schools in the city. The teachers include graduates of the Ofakim program at Tel Aviv University and teachers who receive special on-the-job training.

Through Meitar–The College of Judaism as Culture, the Posen Foundation is also engaged in schools throughout Israel.

In North America, the Foundation is directing its efforts to establish programs in middle schools and high schools to educate secular Jewish children in grades 7 through 12. Efforts are underway in several areas:

➤ To partner with other philanthropists to establish a new Middle School/High School of Jewish History and Cultures.

➤ Collaborate with existing Jewish day schools to broaden their mission to reach all Jewish students, including the secular, and to broaden curricular offerings to include studies in the secularization of Judaism and the modern secular Jewish experience.

➤ Establish and support teacher professional development to train teachers in non-sectarian private and public schools, and in Jewish schools, to understand the varieties and complexities of Judaism and the secular traditions within modernity. 

Posen Foundation Sponsors AJS Session on Jewish Secularization


In 2007, for the third year, the Posen Foundation sponsored a scholarly session on Jewish secularization at the Association for Jewish Studies (AJS) Conference, held in Toronto, Canada, from December 16-18. Plans are underway to sponsor a session at the 2008 AJS Conference in Washington, D.C.

At the 2007 conference, Dr. Naomi Seidman, the Koret Professor of Jewish Culture and Director of the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies at the Graduate Theological Union, presented a paper titled “Secularization and Sexuality: Theorizing the Erotic Transformations of Ashkenaz.” In it, Dr. Seidman deconstructed how secularization affected gender roles among 19th and early 20th century East European Jews. Additionally, Dr. Seidman’s paper offered notes toward a new “secularization thesis”—an overarching theory of how, and why, secularization took place among East European Jews. “It is within this rapidly evolving interdisciplinary field...that the construction of a methodology for understanding ‘the Jewish secular’ must take place,” Dr. Seidman said.

Dr. Seidman, who is also a translator of Yiddish, argued

that the rise of modern Jewish literature, in particular, “played an enormous role in Jewish secularization as in the sexual revolutions that secularization entailed.” Over the past several years, the AJS conference has served as an ideal place to witness, and discuss, how the academic study of Jewish secularism has evolved and expanded.

Each year’s session on secularism has featured professors who have taught “core” courses in Jewish secularization through the Posen Project for the Study of Secular Jewish History and Cultures.

At the 2007 conference, Dr. Lynn Davidman and Dr. Laura Levitt were given the opportunity—and the challenge—of responding to Dr. Seidman’s argument. The high level of discussion was reminiscent of the previous year’s AJS conference, when the secularism session focused on four independent secular movements. Four scholars—Dr. David Biale, Dr. Azzan Yadin, Dr. Ofer Nur, and Dr. Sven-Erik Rose—delivered papers on Moses Hess; the secularization of Hebrew; the Hashomer Hatzair youth movement; and the innovators of Jewish Studies, the brainy clique known as the *Verein*. 

Interviews with Tony Kushner, Natalie Angier

Anchor New *Contemplate*

The 2008-09 issue of *Contemplate: The International Journal of Cultural Jewish Thought* will feature two interviews with Pulitzer Prize-winning writers: Natalie Angier, a science reporter for the *New York Times*; and Tony Kushner, the playwright/activist best known for his epic drama “Angels in America.”



Tony Kushner (photograph by Gloria Wegener)

In the first interview, Angier, a passionate, outspoken secularist, discusses the need for a proud secular movement in the U.S., and also reprises an argument that she first made in the *New York Times Magazine*. “Readers said how glad they were to hear somebody express their dissatisfaction with the situation in America today,” Angier recalled, referring to the degree of religiosity in American life. “And everyone started off the same way: ‘I’m sure this will be the only good letter that you receive...’”

In the second interview, Tony Kushner discusses his Jewish roots; how Jewishness informed “Angels in America,” his masterwork; and the crucial importance of the separation of church and state—the foundation of a pluralistic democracy. “It’s the thing that makes it possible,” Kushner says in the interview. “There’s no such thing as

pluralist democracy without secular pluralist democracy.”

In the lengthy and wide-ranging interview, Kushner also discusses his sense of kinship with fellow Jews. “I, personally, am not an observant Jew,” Kushner says. “But it’s an interesting thing—there’s a level of comfort, a sense of belonging, that is only touched on in the company of other Jews. I’m speaking personally now, but I think this is something that a lot of Jews share.

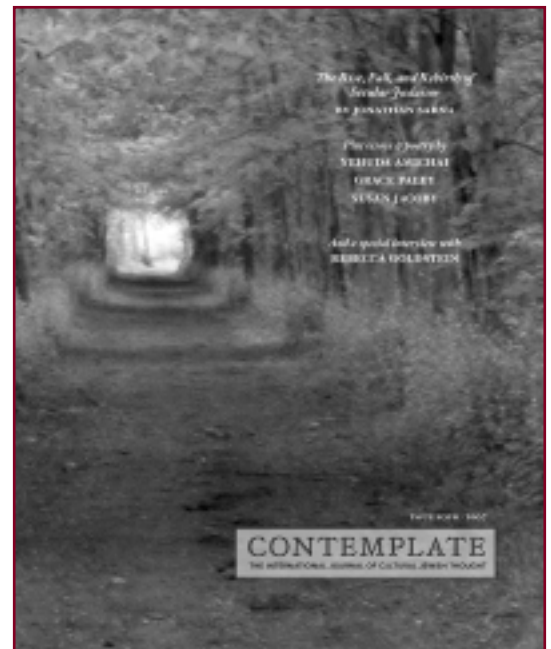
“For secular Jews in the United States,” he went on, “there may be a need, a hunger, that you’re not even particularly aware exists until you find yourself in the company of a lot of other Jews.”

Since 2001, *Contemplate* has served as a literary nexus for intelligent, secular Jewish writing from around the world. (Past issues have featured writing translated from French, Italian, Hebrew, and Spanish.) Along the way, *Contemplate* has defined itself as a rare type of journal—a hybrid of literary and academic writing, and a forum for the kind of lengthy, developed essays and interviews that seldom appear in mainstream publications.

Challenging the conventional wisdom about Judaism—in any language—has been among *Contemplate*’s missions. For instance, the 2007 issue featured essays by Jonathan Sarna, who proclaimed the “rebirth” of secular Judaism; Caryn Aviv and David Shneer, who drew attention to thriving Jewish communities beyond Israel and North America; and Douglas Rushkoff, who irreverently critiqued contemporary

Judaism in an essay adapted from his book, *Nothing Sacred*. The 2007 issue also took up the perennial question of who was the first secular Jew, Baruch Spinoza or Heinrich Heine, and featured a long interview with Rebecca Goldstein, who discussed her intellectual biography, *Betraying Spinoza*.

Contemplate has featured the work of luminaries such as Amos Oz and Ilan Stavans, Grace Paley and A.B. Yehoshua, and the former Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky, who contributed selections from two of his poetry collections to the 2006 issue. Amos Oz’s piece in the 2006 *Contemplate*, a version of a commencement address he gave to Bar Ilan University, lays out a progressive, secular vision for the Jewish people, a people “who have no Pope”—that is, who question authority and are averse to hierarchy.



The tradition of in-depth interviews continues with the forth-coming *Contemplate*, as both Tony Kushner and Natalie Angier reflect candidly about Jewishness and the task of writing. ☸

Universities Develop New “Core” Courses in Jewish Secularization

The Posen Project grants have inspired a multiplicity of approaches that universities use to explore Jewish secularism through new courses. Five institutions, including four that were named Posen Grant recipients for 2008-2009, have developed new “core” courses in Jewish secularization as part of the Posen Project.

Harvard University, Rice University, Goucher College, and Lehigh University all introduced new courses in the fall of 2008, as did the University of Kansas, which used its grant to support a new tenure-track faculty position in Yiddish language and culture.

The University of Kansas had deferred its Posen Grant from the previous academic year. (The University of Texas–Austin, which is among the new recipients, will defer its grant to the 2009-2010 academic year.)

All of the new core courses address a basic question: “What is secularization, and what was its effect on Jewish life?”

Harvard University’s core course, “Theories of Secularization,” was developed and will be taught by History professor Peter Gordon. From the theoretical, it moves quickly to the historical—and back again. First, however, students taking “Theories of Secularization” encounter Spinoza’s *Theological-Political Treatise*. That lays the groundwork for subsequent theorists and exegetes, including Amos Funkenstein and Steven Nadler. The course also surveys the theories of Marx, Weber, and Blumenberg, as it proceeds to answer questions like: “Is modern political identity intelligible apart from religion? Or does politics remain a translation of religious concepts and therefore a mode of political theology?” The course concludes with

the work of David Biale, editor of the omnibus *Cultures of the Jews*.

Some core courses emphasize the birth of secularization and its gestation. But what about its effects? How has secularization changed the way Jews live, act, and think about themselves?

Lehigh University’s core course, “Judaism and Secularization: the

Encounter with Modernity,” grapples explicitly, and often abstractly, with those questions. “In pre-modern times, questions such as ‘Who am I?’ were easily answered,” according to the

course description. But with secularization came new opportunities for self-definition. Where do I come from? To which community do I belong? “These kinds of questions would have been unthinkable to those who grew up...in a traditional Jewish society,” the précis states.

The riddle of Jewish identity is the subject of **Goucher College’s** core course, “Judaism, Secularism, Modernity.” For many Jews, the question “Who am I?” had been inseparable from the question, “What kind of Jew am I?” That changed, though, in the modern era. Examining many sources, including fiction, film, and autobiography, Goucher’s core course explores the fundamental question of Jewish identity in a modern, secular context.

A similar question is at the heart of “Jewish Identity in Modern Secular Thought: from Spinoza to Finkelkraut,” a core course that will be introduced in fall 2009 at **University of Texas–Austin**. “More secular than ever, Jewish culture has continued to flourish,” reads the course description.

At the **University of Toronto**, the core course—“Secularism and Strife: The Cultural History of Modern Jews”—covers similar territory: how Jewish identity evolved as Jews began “reforming, reframing, and abandoning” traditional religious practice.

Rice University’s core course, “Jewish but not Religious: Ancient and Modern,” contrasts modern secular Jewish cultures with an earlier period of secular Jewish culture—the 2nd Temple period.

Of course, there are multiple approaches to Jewish secularization—historical, sociological, and literary, to name several.

But there’s another method as well. And it involves mixing several approaches into one multidisciplinary course.

Kansas used its Posen Grant to support a new tenure track faculty position.

By integrating “multiple intellectual and methodological approaches to the subject,” some courses treat secularization as a historical phenomenon, a broad sociological trend, and a force that transformed politics in profound, long-lasting ways.

Hampshire College’s core course, “The Rise of Secular Jewish Culture,” begins with Spinoza, as many core courses do. But in taking the measure of the “pluralistic, multifaceted modern Jewish culture” that emerged in Europe and the U.S., the course “draws upon history, literature, political philosophy,

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Lynn Davidman Accepts Prestigious Chair at University of Kansas



Dr. Lynn Davidman

Dr. Lynn Davidman, a longtime professor of Gender Studies, Sociology, and Judaic Studies who has taught a Posen course in Jewish secularization at Brown University, has accepted a prestigious appointment as the Beren Distinguished Professor of Modern Jewish Studies and Director of the Program in Jewish Studies at the University of Kansas.

In an interview, Dr. Davidman said that she will seek to expand Kansas' Jewish Studies program. "What I'm hoping," said Dr. Davidman, "is that we come together as an intellectual community. That way we will hire new faculty and develop a department so that it can be first a major and then a graduate program." (At present, she said, Kansas offers Jewish Studies as a minor.)

Dr. Davidman taught previously at Brown University, where her "core" course in Jewish secularism used a sociological model, rather than a historical or "thought" model. "There are numerous ways to think about secularization," Dr. Davidman told *Reflections* last year. "It is not a process that happened only in the realm of ideas, but actually is a social process that shapes people's lives and institutions."

At the University of Kansas, Dr. Davidman will have substantial latitude to develop the Jewish Studies program.

"I have a particular conception of how I want to organize the department," Dr. Davidman said. "Most Jewish Studies departments include people from all the disciplines one would need—a historian, a Jewish thought person, a social scientist. But the only thing that holds the people together is that they all study Jews."

"I hope to create together with the current and future faculty, a department in which, no matter what discipline we're in, we think about concepts of narrativity and subjectivity, and understand that our disciplines are working with narratives. I want to build a department such that ten years from now, if someone is interested in studying any aspect of Jewish life or culture from the point of view of narratives, Kansas will be the place to come."

The chance to work with similarly minded colleagues—professors oriented toward narratives, and not simply data—was part of what drew Dr. Davidman herself to the University of Kansas.

"I'm going to a department that's totally suited to me," Dr. Davidman added.

Dr. Davidman is the author of *Tradition in a Rootless World* (University of California Press, 1991), which won a National Jewish Book Award, and *Motherloss* (University of California Press, 2000). She is co-editor of *Feminist Perspectives in Jewish Studies* (Yale, 2004) with Shelly Tenenbaum. ❧

New "Core" Courses on Jewish Secularism

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and sociology." This is secularization as a complex, evolving phenomenon. The syllabus is organized chronologically, but the class is informed by at least four different disciplines: history, political science, sociology, and literature.

In addition to examining the historical context out of which Jewish secularism grew, some syllabi will inspire envy in students who graduated before "core" courses existed. "Jewish Culture in a Secular Age: The Modern Jewish Revolution," at the **University of Kansas**, gathers scholarship and literature onto the same crowded syllabus, with students sampling an assortment

Harvard's and other core courses begin with Spinoza.

of treasures, from Talal Asad to Bialik to Kafka's *Letter to His Father*. **Temple University's** core course, "Secular Judaisms from Spinoza to Salami," advances through Spinoza and Freud to more modern avatars of Jewish secularism: Michael Wex, Douglas Rushkoff, and the actor Jerry Stiller. ❧

Reflections

is published annually by the
Center for Cultural Judaism

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Modern Jewish Culture: New Practices in a Secular Age

Dr. Jeffrey Shandler, Rutgers University

I planned **Modern Jewish Culture: New Practices in a Secular Age** (Spring 2008) as a complement to a Posen course previously taught by Prof. Azzan Yadin at Rutgers, which introduced Jewish secularism from the perspective of Jewish thought, by focusing my course on Jewish practices. If a course on secular Jewish thought examines “the intellectual struggle to define a Jewish collectivity in non-religious terms”—asking, in effect, “What ideas replace traditional Jewish notions of God, the covenant between God and the people of Israel, and the revelation of the Torah?”—then a course on secular Jewish culture asks, “What practices replace traditional Jewish engagement with rabbinic law and religious custom?” I decided to focus much of my course on East European (and particularly, Yiddish) and American Jewish culture, in part because the “canon” taught in courses on secular Jewish thought, including Yadin’s, tends to rely heavily on West European and Hebraic/Zionist texts. The focus of my course also shifts the study of secularism from a small intellectual elite to larger communities of “ordinary” Jews.

In organizing **Modern Jewish Culture** I was interested in addressing another pedagogical goal: helping undergraduates understand the relation between primary and secondary works of modern Jewish culture. This connection is an important scholarly skill for undergraduates to acquire in humanities courses generally, and it is of special importance for the topic at hand, for it is in scholars’ analyses that the significance of cultural practices as the makings of a new modern, secular Jewish culture is given attention it might not otherwise receive.

I decided to organize the course,

which met twice a week for 80 minutes a session, as a series of weekly units, each dedicated to a particular cultural focus or activity. These included: Reading, Theater, Press, Politics, Sports, Heroes, Philanthropy, Music, Museums, and Photography. My choice of which cultural practices to study was driven in part by the availability of primary and secondary materials I thought were appropriate for undergraduate students who would not bring to the class a common body of knowledge of Jewish history or culture from prior study (the course has no prerequisite, such as having taken a survey course in modern Jewish history). I also made choices that complemented other courses I teach. Thus, I did not include film or broadcasting as units, though I might well have done so, as I also teach a course on American Jews and Media on a regular basis; similarly, I did not include units on tourism or foodways, because I teach these topics in a course on the Ethnography of Contemporary Jewish Life. However, any of these might well fit within the rubric of the course.

The course made use of a variety of pedagogical activities. Typically, each unit centered on one or more primary and secondary readings. For example, the unit on Reading included chapters from Iris Parush’s *Reading Jewish Women* and two short stories by Isaac Mayer Dik, representative of some of the popular Yiddish fiction Jewish women (and men) were reading in the mid-nineteenth century in Eastern Europe. On a rotating basis, students were asked to initiate the class discussion of assigned texts and to post questions in advance of the class session to guide their fellow students’ reading of these texts. Over the course of the semester, students were asked to write



Dr. Jeffrey Shandler


three very short (2-3 pages each) guided analyses of primary materials: a letter of their choosing written to the Bintel Brief (in conjunction with the unit on Press), an online American Jewish Hall of Fame (in conjunction with the unit on Heroes), and the core exhibition of The Jewish Museum, New York (in conjunction with the unit on Museums). In each of these exercises, students were asked to relate secondary sources that were discussed in class to their observations about the primary material in question. I also invited two guest speakers—a theater historian and an ethnomusicologist—to talk to the class about particular readings and, in conjunction, to discuss how they study modern Jewish culture within the rubrics of their respective fields.

The students’ major assignment for the course was to write a research paper on a work of modern Jewish culture of their own choosing. To help them with this assignment, I asked students to submit proposed topics for my approval, then met with them to discuss preliminary outlines and bibliographies, and asked to see first drafts of their papers, so that I could offer more feedback as they prepared their final papers. My goal in doing so was to assist students in developing a scholarly

approach to studying phenomena of modern Jewish culture, looking beyond their personal responses to these works to consider the context in which they were created, the form and genre of culture and how this interrelates with its subject matter, as well as the response to these works by critics, scholars, and audiences—in other words, to bring a set of scholarly approaches to address the larger question of how modern Jewish culture “works.” For this assignment, students chose to write about feature and documentary films, plays, works of fiction, musical recordings, and websites; most of their examples were recent works of American Jewish culture, but some

included works of European and Israeli culture from throughout the past century. The course’s final sessions were given over to student presentations, allowing each member of the class to share with the others something of his or her research.

In conclusion, I feel that the course provided students with an opportunity to expand their understanding of the possibilities of discussing modern Jewish culture, notwithstanding the challenge of having these discussions without a shared prior knowledge of modern Jewish experience. Beyond addressing topics that I had selected for them to explore, the students raised

other issues for scholarly inquiry through their final projects. In particular, several students chose to analyze works of modern Jewish culture—including the Israeli film *Ushpizin*, a sound recording by the hasidic reggae musician Matisyahu, and Sholem Aleichem’s Tevye stories—in which modern, secular cultural practices interrelate with traditional religiosity in complex ways. These works provided an opportunity for the class as a whole to nuance their understanding of the categories of “secular” and “religious” as discrete entities and to consider the extent to which secular practices and sensibilities both inform and challenge notions of Jewish tradition. 

4th Annual Posen Project Conference Explores Jewish Secularism

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Does the “secularization narrative”—the standard model for understanding the historical path secularism has taken, and will take—still have validity?

Does Jewish secularism have its roots in the premodern era—specifically in Maimonides, or even earlier?

This last question was approached by Dr. Biale in a paper, “Not in the Heavens: The Premodern Roots of Jewish Secularism.”

“Within premodern Judaism—the Bible, Talmud, and medieval philosophy—one finds precursors to modern secular ideas,” Dr. Biale wrote. That statement challenged the conventional thinking that Jewish secularism begins with Spinoza in the 17th century, and offered grist for discussion as the conference separated into break-out sessions to debate Dr. Biale’s thesis.

On the conference’s second day, *New Jewish Time*, a mammoth encyclopedia project developed through Posen Foundation funding, was presented. The five-volume set is published in Hebrew; Dr. Biale praised its “very broad” scope, and he described the

encyclopedia as a “cultural, social, modern history of the Jews.” The encyclopedia’s reception in Israel was discussed by Dr. Eli Yassif of Tel Aviv University, advisor to the Posen Foundation for Israeli university programs. When *New Jewish Time* was embraced by Israel’s then-Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, “this raised a lot of criticism,” said Dr. Yassif. Dr. Yassif noted that some critics frowned on the inclusion of certain Jews—Kafka and Karl Marx, for instance—in the encyclopedia. (“They did not contribute anything to Jewish life; they contributed mainly to general society,” said Dr. Yassif, paraphrasing the criticism.) Nevertheless, Dr. Yassif said, “The publication of *New Jewish Time* actually brought to the surface of Israeli public and cultural life the question of the identity of Israeli culture.”

As the Posen Conference has evolved, so too has the discussion of Jewish secularization. At this year’s conference, the consensus seemed to be shifting farther away from a single, stable definition of secularism. The question of how religion and secularism evolve—in opposition to one another? In a more complicated, less definable

way?—has been addressed in increasingly sophisticated ways. As conversation traversed the religion/secular binary, the roots of secular Judaism in premodern Jewry, and other subjects, it became clear how far the conversation has come—and how far it has to go.

“Is this a post-secular world—and if so, what does that mean about the secular moment?” asked Dr. David Shneer, who directed the Posen Grant at Denver University and is now at the University of Colorado at Boulder, as the conference drew to a close. At a time when “the whole field is in flux,” as Dr. Biale put it, there was perhaps one statement that everyone could agree upon.

“We live in a time of interesting and very important work on secularization,” said Dr. David Myers, the Director of UCLA’s Center for Jewish Studies. [See conference photos, p.12]

Visit the new website
posenfoundation.com
for information on grants,
publications, seminars, and
other educational resources

Studying Jewish Secularization

by Dr. Robert Seltzer

As part of the Posen Grant we received last year, I agreed to teach a new course entitled “Secular Judaism.” At first I was concerned: courses sometimes get cancelled at the last moment for insufficient enrollment at a public institution like Hunter. To my delight, however, the course got an excellent enrollment not only in quantity but in quality—students of “Jewish extraction” and quite a few non-Jews, including bright guys and women from the Dominican Republic, India, Albania, China, Poland, Israel, and even the outer boroughs of New York City. Plus a handful of senior-citizen auditors. And a group of History majors with little or no Jewish knowledge, intrigued by the title, who wanted to explore parallels with their own ethical and religious wrestling.

But except for a few Jewish Social Studies majors and minors and a handful with a yeshiva background, most of the students knew almost nothing about Jewish history or literature.

Because it was a history course, I had to provide a chronological matrix to set secular Jewishness in the broadest possible context. The first classes were devoted to premodern Judaism (the duality of people and religion in the biblical and rabbinic traditions, the autonomous status of Jewry in the premodern Diaspora, interactions between high Jewish culture and Western civilization). We also discussed in a preliminary way the origins and meaning of secular (as paradoxically in the “secular clergy”) and its connotations as “worldly.”

I warned the students it was an experimental course and that, as the semester proceeded, I would tinker with the syllabus. I also pointed out that there were alternative threads to be explored in courses on modern Jewish religious thought or the socio-economic and political travails of the

Jewish people in the last two or more centuries. On the grounds that “secularism” is time-bound, relative to the worldview and cultural fashions of successive generations of intellectuals and the public they address, I initially intended to group individuals and movements according to stages of intellectual history: first, Jews affected by the early modern scientific revolution and the Enlightenment, next those shaped by Romanticism and the emergence of professional *Wissenschaft*, then the generations devoted to Utilitarianism, Comtean Positivism, and Darwinism, fin de siècle and twentieth-century psychology and sociology, and eventually by existentialism and postmodernism.

Needless to say, that was way too heavy a load to bear (or bare). I ended up focusing selectively on how secular Jewish identity was periodically redefined in Europe, plus to a limited extent in America and Israel.

By way of general background I spent several weeks describing the cultural and intellectual spill-over of the Scientific Revolution on the Enlightenment, and on the social and political transformation of the modern polity from ancien régime to democracy. With respect to the former I drew attention to the consequences of modern concepts of reason on religion; with respect to the latter I emphasized the impact on the status of the Jews and the Jewish community in modern times.

The heart of the course was as follows:

⇒ Spinoza and Mendelssohn were presented as contrasting early prototypes of the Jewish response to the new modern mentality, inasmuch as Spinoza initiated a historic break with sacred tradition, while for Mendelssohn Judaism was an eminently rational religion based on an inspiring revelation.

⇒ A proto-secularism appeared



Dr. Robert Seltzer

among the small cohort of nineteenth-century German Jews affected by Romantic liberalism and Hegelianism. (This provided an opportunity to discuss Marx on the Jewish Question and introduce the idea of the “non-Jewish Jew.”)

⇒ The Golden Age, so to speak, of Jewish secularism coalesced in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Eastern Europe, starting with certain late maskilim and the rise of secular antisemitism, flowered with Ahad Ha-Am and Dubnow (I wrote my doctoral dissertation on Dubnow), and took on a fully organized form in ideologies of Yiddishism, Folkism, the Bund, and socialist Zionism after its kinds.

⇒ The complex tree of twentieth-century secular Jewishness ranged from the Western disciples of Ahad Ha-Am (including the Prague Circle), Yiddish and Hebrew renaissances in the Lower East Side, interwar Poland, and to a limited extent the USSR, the ideological passions of the Yishuv, and via pragmatism in certain trends of American Judaism.

⇒ We did have a few days left to consider the permutations of post-World War II Jewish secularism in literature and literary criticism in America and in Israel, including the impact of the Holocaust. We had a guest speaker on the Humanistic Judaism movement which, I suggested, emerged out of Reform Judaism in a manner similar to Reconstructionist Judaism from Conservative Judaism.

continued on next page

Apart from the seminal exponents of militant secular Judaism in East Europe and its hinterlands, most of the figures were treated as individuals rather than ideological spokespersons. In class I dealt with Mendelssohn, Heine, and Hess, Smolenskin, J.L. Gordon, and M.L. Lilienblum, Ahad Ha-Am and Dubnow, Einstein and Freud, Ben Gurion and Jabotinsky. Besides chapters (I'm embarrassed to say) from Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought*, I

assigned Kogel and Katz, *Judaism in a Secular Age: An Anthology of Secular Humanistic Jewish Thought*.

Thanks to the Posen Grant I was able to invite a series of scholars to speak on Spinoza, Borochoy, Hans Kohn, Marie Syrkin, Irving Howe, Yehuda Amichai, Aharon Megged, and the circle around Levinas. Students wrote term papers on some of the above, as well as on Sholem Aleichem, Franz Kafka, Hannah Arendt, Golda

Meir, Saul Bellow, Woody Allen, and Sherwin Wine.

I had been concerned that such a mixed assortment would create more confusion than clarity, but the final exam showed that most students did get the Main Point: that there are multiple and creative ways in which the Jewish heritage and the Jewish situation as the classic Other can be appropriated by moderns. ☸

Posen Lecture Series Engages Students and Faculty

Over the past several academic years, institutions that receive Posen Grants have used part of their grant to bring elite scholars and authors to campus. The goal: to expose students to—and spark their curiosity about—topics related to Jewish secularism and secular Jewish culture.

“Because of our Posen Lecture Series, we were able to have guests at UVA that we never would have had before,” said Dr. Vanessa Ochs, University of Virginia’s director of Jewish Studies. For the 2007-2008 academic year, Hunter College, Miami University (Ohio), and several additional institutions organized their own Posen Lecture Series, and once again they managed to lure renowned authors and scholars.

The events, in turn, drew large, enthusiastic audiences. Peter Gay, E.L. Doctorow, and Calvin Trillin each spoke at Hunter as part of the Posen public lecture series “Secular Jews in Modern Culture and Society.”

“The idea behind the program was to find highly visible scholars, journalists, and artists whose names would mean something to people beyond the Jewish Studies program,” said Dr. Judith Friedlander, who put together Hunter’s lecture series. And the result? “There was a buzz around the campus,” said Dr. Friedlander, who also booked influential speakers to introduce each lecturer.

Miami University’s “Posen Lectures in Modern Jewish Culture” featured an esteemed group of scholars: Dr. Liliane Weissberg, the Christopher H. Browne Distinguished Professor in the School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania, who lectured on “Hannah Arendt and the Movies: Charlie Chaplin and the Hidden Tradition of Jewish Culture”; Dr. Naomi Seidman, the Koret Professor of Jewish Culture and Director of the Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies at Graduate Theological Union, who lectured on “Secularization, Sexuality, and the Rise of Modern Jewish Literature”; and Dr. Julie Klein, of Villanova University, who lectured on Spinoza.

The series was similarly successful; the lectures “drew interest from across the university,” according to Dr. Sven-

Erik Rose, who organized Miami University’s lecture series (and delivered a lecture of his own as part of the series, on Marx’s *On the Jewish Question*). “In addition to serving as the centerpiece of our core course,” he added, “the six spring 2008 Posen lectures created a vibrant forum for interdisciplinary dialogue and made some of Miami University’s most dynamic faculty and engaged students aware of the directions Jewish Studies is moving on our campus and beyond.”

In past years, Posen lectures have been delivered by scholars including Dr. Jeffrey Shandler, who spoke about “American Jewish Popular Culture,” and Dr. Jonathan Sarna, who spoke at University of Virginia about the “Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of Secular Judaism.” This past spring, Hampshire College’s lectures “drew audiences both from our college and other colleges and the wider community,” according to Hampshire professor Rachel Rubinstein. (And no wonder: visiting speakers included award-winning Israeli writer Meir Shalev and National Jewish Book Award-winning memoirist Daniel Mendelsohn, who spoke at nearby Smith College at a Five-College Consortium event co-sponsored by Hampshire College.)

“Our feedback has been very positive,” said Dr. Rubinstein. Hampshire’s lecture series continued in the fall of 2008, she said, with a “series of visiting poets and writers linked to our Posen course ‘Creative Betrayals: Secular Jewish Literature from Bible to Modernity.’”

A soon-to-be-created Posen Foundation Speakers Bureau will assist campuses wishing to expand (or begin) their own Posen lecture series. The Speakers Bureau will help offset the cost of bringing speakers to campus, and will link speakers with institutions.

Professors interested in lecturing on a subject or theme related to Jewish secularism will soon be able to post their name, institutional affiliation, and a proposed lecture subject in a new Speakers Bureau section on the Posen Foundation website (www.posenfoundation.com). ☸

First Volume of Posen Library Nears Completion

The *Posen Library of Jewish Culture and Civilization*, a 10-volume anthology that will gather "all the productions of Jewish culture and civilization," is edging towards completion. Dr. James E. Young, the project's Editor-in-Chief, and Felix Posen, founder of the Posen Foundation, hope to formally unveil the first volume—Volume 10 (1973-present)—in 2009, likely at the Association of Jewish Studies (AJS) conference in December.

The *Posen Library*, which will be published by Yale University Press, was conceived as an anthology of primary sources, documents, texts, and artifacts. Each volume in the *Posen Library* will include, among hundreds of chronologically and thematically organized entries: primary historical, philosophical, religious, legal, literary, exegetical, political, folkloristic, and aesthetic tracts, documents, and artifacts. All volumes will be richly illustrated with images of illuminated manuscripts, architecture, religious objects, folk art, design, drawings, paintings, sculpture, photography, film, and other arts, high and low, including music and theater, from ancient to present times.

It has significant academic scholarship behind it: an esteemed group of scholars, among them Deborah Dash Moore and David Roskies, serve as volume editors, and the prestigious Editorial Board for the *Posen Library* anthology includes Anita Shapira; Menachem Brinker; Fania Oz-Salzberger; Yehuda Bauer, Jonathan Sarna, and Paula Hyman, among others.

Each volume is like the anthology itself in microcosm. Volume 10, for instance, includes sections on literature, film, intellectual culture, and pop culture, as well as a companion CD/DVD, which will include "performative media" on music, film and theatre.

The remaining nine volumes of the *Posen Library* are scheduled for completion by the end of 2012. ❧



Some participants at the Posen Conference.
(See article, page 2)

Posen Grants Liaison Visits Campuses throughout the Program

Nick Underwood, the Grant Liaison at the Center for Cultural Judaism, has visited nearly half of the North American institutions that offer courses through the Posen Project.

Meeting, assisting, and getting feedback from professors who teach Posen courses has given Underwood, who started in July 2007, a unique look at how the academic study of Jewish secularism has expanded thanks to the Posen Foundation.

"When the Posen Project began, each institution was one of a handful—first six, then 11, then 16," said Underwood. "Now that 30 institutions in North America have received Posen Grants, the job of visiting them—and getting feedback from professors, and asking and answering questions—is both challenging and exciting.

"It's been a pleasure working with, and getting to know, the scholars who teach the courses," said Underwood, who holds a master's degree in Modern European History from American University. "The professors have given me feedback, some of it based on the feedback they've received from students. In the next academic year, I hope to have the opportunity to work with more of the institutions involved with the Posen Project." ❧



A Selection of North American Core Courses that have been Supported by the Posen Project

University at Albany: Secular Jewish Identity and Culture

Bard College: Jewishness Beyond Religion: Defining Secular Jewish Culture

Binghamton University: Secular Jewish Ideologies and Identities

Brown University: Secular Jewish Identities; Towards the Future: Secular Messianism and Utopian Hope in 20th Century Jewish Thought

University of California–Davis: Introduction to Religious and Secular Jewish Cultures

UCLA: The Spirit of Secularism: Jewish Cultures in a Secular Age

University of Cincinnati: The Emergence of Secular Jewish Identity and Culture

University of Denver: Jews on the Move: Culture, People and Ideas

Dickinson College: Jewish Identity in a Secular Age: The Genesis of Cultural Judaism

University of Florida: Key Texts in Jewish Secular Culture

Goucher College: Judaism, Secularism, Modernity

Graduate Theological Union: Secular Jewish Thought

Hampshire College: The Rise of Secular Jewish Culture

Harvard University: Theories of Secularization

Hunter College: Topics in History: Secular Judaism

University of Kansas: Jewish Culture in a Secular Age: The Modern Jewish Revolution

Lehigh University: Judaism and Secularism: the Encounter with Modernity

University of Massachusetts–Amherst: Negotiating Religion and State: Jewish Secularism and the Emergence of European Modernity

University of Miami: Secular Jewish Identity in the Modern World

Miami University (Ohio): Secular Jewish Culture from the Enlightenment to Zionism

University of Michigan: Secular Jewish Thought

Muhlenberg College: Jewish Experience in a Secular Age: A History of Modern Jewish Identity

Queens College: Jews Beyond Religion: Aspects of Secular Judaism

Rice University: Jewish but not Religious: Ancient and Modern

Rutgers University: Modern Jewish Culture: New Practices in a Secular Age

Temple University: Jewish Civilization I: Secular Judaisms from Spinoza to Salami

University of Texas–Austin: Jewish Identity in Modern Secular Thought (2009)

University of Toronto: Secularism and Strife: The Cultural History of Modern Jews

Tulane University: Building Jewish Identity: Secular Judaism in Historical Perspective

University of Virginia: Judaism between Modernity and Secularization

Call for Proposals for University-Based Continuing Education Programs

The Posen Foundation is expanding its grants program and invites applications from Adult Continuing Education programs to introduce courses in the study of Jewish secularism and secularization. Recipients will receive \$50,000 annually, for up to three years, towards new courses of study.

These grants are intended to provide adult learners with the opportunity to explore this new field of study, which is growing at the undergraduate level and is now offered in more than three-dozen institutions. University-Based Continuing Education programs in Jewish Studies, Humanities, Religious Studies, History, Philosophy, Literature, Sociology, Anthropology or other related disciplines are encouraged to apply.

As in the undergraduate program, grants will be awarded to support the teaching of at least three new courses per year, including a core course in the history, texts, philosophy, and literature of Jewish secularism and secularization. Selections will be made on the basis of a strong proposed core course; an understanding of what it means to teach courses in Jewish secularism and secularization; scholarship in this area; and the ability to integrate these courses over time and make them permanent.

The application deadline is December 29, 2008 for programs to begin during the 2009-2010 academic year.

More information is available online at posenfoundation.com 

Secular Culture & Ideas Enters Second Year

Since its debut in March of 2007, the online magazine *Secular Culture & Ideas* has taken a sharp look at secular Jewish life, using the web as a vehicle for exploring Jewish history, issues, and people.

But *Secular Culture & Ideas* may be most notable for questioning, debating, and rethinking some well-worn assumptions about Jewish life today.

For instance, the cliché that Yiddish is a dead or dying language. Or that secular Jewish life in the U.S. is moribund. Or that there is little worth spotlighting beyond the Ashkenazic heritage so often celebrated in the U.S.


Hold those post-mortems, please. *Secular Culture & Ideas'* Yiddish issues investigated the renaissance of Yiddish culture, with articles by Michael Wex, author of the bestselling *Born to Kvetch*, and Aaron Lansky, founder of the National Yiddish Book Center. Their message—that Yiddish is alive and well—seemed to carry its own proof and validation. In fact, there were so many articles on the renaissance of Yiddish culture that *Secular Culture & Ideas* presented them in two special issues.

Likewise, SCI's "Mizrahi and Sephardic secularisms" issue took the measure of Sephardic life around the world, drawing attention to vital and diverse—yet often overlooked—Jewish cultures with their own traditions, history, and heritage.

Finally, an excerpt from the book *New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora*, by Dr. Caryn Aviv and Dr. David Shneer, challenged the notion that the Jewish world is limited to the United States and Israel. (Jewish life is thriving around the world, they point out: "More Jews moved to Moscow from Israel than vice-versa" in 2003, according to recent migration statistics.)

Not surprisingly, SCI has drawn attention—and plaudits—from readers, bloggers, and other media. The website MyJewishLearning.com called *Secular Culture & Ideas* "Significant food for thought." Chanan Tigay, a reporter and blogger, praised *Secular Culture & Ideas* on his blog. "A new online journal out there for secular Jews... is great news," he wrote. And assorted bloggers have linked to *Secular Culture & Ideas*.


Secular Culture & Ideas will continue to publish essays by scholars and journalists, much as it has done. Past issues, accessible through the *Secular Culture & Ideas* archive, include interviews with Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua, and Pulitzer Prize-winning science reporter Natalie Angier.

Secular Culture & Ideas is sponsored by the Posen Foundation and edited by the Center for Cultural Judaism. To submit article ideas, contact Hilit Surowitz at sci@culturaljudaism.org 

As seen in the New York Times Book Review

NEW WEB CONTENT

Heretics, Heresy, and Secular Jews



Discover the heresy of Spinoza and other secular Jews as explored through new college courses on Jewish secularism, secularization and secular Jewish culture.

This month, *Secular Culture & Ideas* offers a glimpse into readings from those unique courses in our special back-to-school issue featuring Baruch Spinoza: Medieval Heretic or the First Secular Jew? by David Blau, author of the forthcoming *Not in the Weavers: An Intellectual History of Jewish Secularism*. Plus, we bring you essays on Jewish heresy, Jews and Sports, and modern Yiddish culture.

Also in this issue:

- Jewish representations of Native Americans
- Judaism and modernity
- Imagining the shtetl in Jewish life

Secular Culture & Ideas takes a sharp look at secular Jewish life, culture, and literature.

Visit www.JBooks.com/secularculture

Secular Culture & Ideas is sponsored by the Posen Foundation

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Temple Conference Addresses “Jews and Race”

Blacks and Jews are sometimes regarded as separate, even mutually exclusive, groups. But as a fascinating conference at Temple University demonstrated, black Jews may be “a minority within a minority,” but they’re also a part of a diverse American-Jewish community. Thus, “There’s no such thing as the ‘Jewish’ view of African-Americans,” as Dr. Jonathan Schorsch, a Columbia University professor, put it at Temple’s “Jews and Race” conference, a one-day event held in April in Philadelphia and that addressed notions of “authenticity” and “normativity” within the American-Jewish community. Temple continued the discussion of “Jews and Race” during a subsequent conference in October, 2008.

“There are a multiplicity of Jewish views, just as there are a multiplicity of African-American views of Jews,”

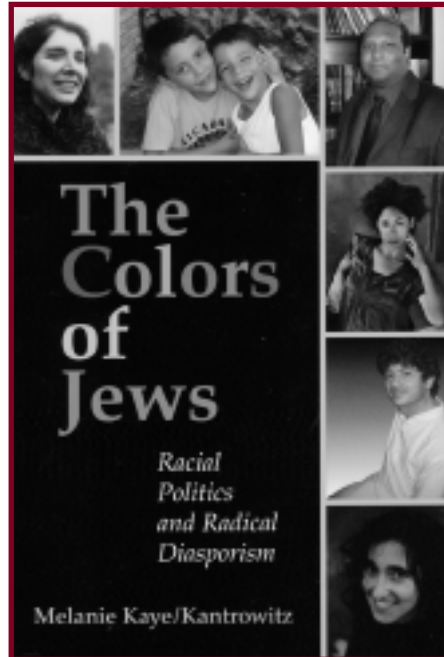
Dr. Schorsch continued. It was a point that was reaffirmed throughout the busy day of lectures, discussions, and informal discussions among the atten-

dees, roughly 40 percent of whom were black Jews.

Dr. Laura Levitt, the Director of Jewish Studies at Temple and one of several organizers of the conference, and Dr. Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz, a professor at Queens College, both of whom have taught Posen courses on Jewish secularization, each spoke eloquently about the importance, and the urgency, of having an open discussion about Jews and race.

According to Dr. Kaye/Kantrowitz, the fight to draw attention to Jewish diversity is part of the larger fight against racism in America—a point that she argues at length in her recent book, *The Colors of Jews* (Indiana University Press, 2007), and which was affirmed by the day’s many speakers.

“I really think,” said one participant, “that the next step for Jews is to break the color barrier.” ∞



Approaches to Jewish Secularism

The Posen Summer Seminar

The Posen Foundation invites applications for a ten-day intensive seminar examining Jewish secularity from historical, sociological, philosophical and cultural perspectives. The seminar is open to professors, independent scholars and advanced graduate students in Jewish Studies, social and intellectual history, political theory and philosophy, literary studies, and sociology of religion.

The seminar will be led by David Biale (UC–Davis), Susan Shapiro (UMass–Amherst) and Naomi Seidman (GTU). The program will consist of discussion of common readings and presentations of participants' research. Time will be reserved for participants to work on their own research.

Participants will be awarded a stipend of \$2000 plus transportation and lodging will be covered.

June 15-25, 2009

**Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA
Application Deadline: December 15th, 2008**

**Deadline Extended
Thru 12/29**

Applicants should submit a curriculum vitae and a 3-5 page research proposal to Myrna Baron at posenseminar@culturaljudaism.org

More information is available online at posenfoundation.com

Modernity is deeply associated with secularization...

... and Jews are heirs to a secular tradition stretching back to Baruch Spinoza, Theodore Herzl, and Ahad Ha-Am. The Posen Foundation is pleased to support new university courses examining the varieties of Jewish secularism. Posen Grants for the study of secular Jewish history and cultures are awarded annually to well-established university programs and departments of Jewish Studies, Philosophy, Literature, Sociology, Anthropology and other related disciplines.

North American Posen Grant Recipients: Bard • Binghamton • Brown • Denver • Dickinson • Goucher • Graduate Theological Union Hampshire • Harvard • Hunter • Kansas • Lehigh • Miami University (Ohio) • Muhlenberg • Queens College • Rice • Rutgers • Temple • Tulane University at Albany • UC–Davis • UCLA • University of Cincinnati • University of Florida–Gainesville • U. Mass–Amherst • University of Miami UT–Austin • University of Toronto • University of Virginia

Israeli institutions include: Hebrew University • Tel Aviv University • Ofakim Program at Tel Aviv University • University at Haifa Open University • Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya • Kerem Teacher Training Institute • and others

European Grant Recipients: University College London • Sorbonne, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris University of Wrocław, Poland

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The Posen Project is administered in North America by The Center for Cultural Judaism.



Information and guidelines are available at 212-564-6711 or www.culturaljudaism.org



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