

The Michael & Irene Ross Program in Jewish Studies
Proudly Presents

JEWISH STUDIES

Fall 2025

Any City College student is welcome, but if you are registered this semester for a Jewish Studies course, here's a way to earn extra credit for your class:

Each of the following club hour events begins on **Thursdays at 12 noon** with pizza and apple juice (yes there is such a thing as a free lunch). The event itself runs from 12:30 till 1:30. *All events are in the Jewish Studies major's lounge: NAC 5-202.*

Come to each event, submit a short one-page response paper to your Jewish Studies prof, and you can earn up to 1% extra credit for each event you attend. (The fine print: if you are taking two or more classes in JWST, this can be submitted to only one class). It adds up fast and can make the difference between a grade and a higher one.

Now for the very cool stuff:

Thursday, September 11th: Rachel Gordan

Postwar Stories



Rachel Gordan researches and writes about 20th and 21st-century Jews, Judaism, and American culture. She is also interested in mid-century, middlebrow American literature.

Her book "Postwar Stories: How Books Made Judaism American" will be published in March 2024.

Thursday, September 18th: Alicia Svigals

Klezmer Violinist

Alicia Svigals, violinist/composer and a founder of the Grammy-winning Klezmatics, is the world's foremost klezmer fiddler. Alicia almost singlehandedly revived the tradition of klezmer fiddling, which had been on the brink of extinction until she recorded her debut album *Fidl* in the 1990's.

In Svigals' band the Klezmatics, she created contemporary Jewish music that combined the joyous and mystical Yiddish tradition with a postmodern aesthetic and an overtly political worldview.



Thursday, September 25th: Gerardo Blumenkrantz



Grinding Nemo: Jewish Humor with no (Ge)Filter

For centuries, self-deprecating wit and satire have been powerful tools for Jewish storytellers to navigate the complexities of identity, persecution, and displacement. Irreverence and irony are central to this tradition, allowing for a critical examination of both internal and external challenges, often as a means of transforming pain into laughter. But what happens when this tradition of equal-opportunity offending has to coexist with modern standards of political correctness? With self-deprecation as their main mantra, Gerardo Blumenkrantz's cartoons explore Jewish and pop culture through the lenses of Yiddish schtick.

Gerardo Blumenkrantz is an educator, artist, and advertising creative, currently serving as chair of the Media & Communication Arts Dept. at CCNY. He ventured to the US from Argentina right after high school, with a suitcase full of local folk tales and Jewish guilt. These, along with some New York humor he picked up along the way, shape his artwork and storytelling today.

Gerardo was one of three artists chosen by Maurice Sendak for the 2012 Sendak Fellowship.

Thursday, October 9th: Sarah Seltzer

Short Story Writing Workshop

How does a piece of writing with no obviously Jewish content qualify as Jewish—and what does that say about writing by writers of many different backgrounds? We will read a famous short story by Grace Paley and try writing our own short pieces in response.

Sarah Seltzer is the executive editor of Lilith Magazine and a widely published journalist. Her first novel, *The Singer Sisters* (Flatiron) arrived on shelves in 2024.

For more than a decade, Sarah Seltzer has been a feminist journalist and cultural critic. Her lively writing for publications including *The New York Times*, *TIME*, *Jezebel*, *Glamour*, *Cosmopolitan*, *The Nation*, and many other places.



Thursday, October 16th: Dr. Joel Hoffman



"Will the Real Bible Please Stand Up?"

What does the Bible really say about violence? About marriage? About men and women? The Bible has been reinterpreted and misinterpreted almost from the day it was written, so most people reading the Bible now have very little sense of the original text. We'll peel back 2,000 years of revisionism and take a look at the Bible as it originally was.

Dr. Joel M. Hoffman is author of, *And God Said* (Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Press), and of the critically acclaimed *In the Beginning* from NYU Press.

Thursday, October 23rd- Paul Radensky

Introduction to Jewish Genealogy and JewishGen



Please join us for an exciting introduction to the field of Jewish genealogy and to JewishGen, the leading source for genealogy information and support. In the presentation, Dr. Paul Radensky, the Director of JewishGen and the Kalikow Center at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, will lay out the way for people to begin researching their ancestors and build their own family tree.

Paul Radensky is the director of JewishGen, the world's leading resource for Jewish genealogy. Prior to coming to JewishGen, Paul was in the Education Department of the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust. Paul Completed his Ph.D. in Jewish history at the Jewish Theological Seminary and his master's in history at Columbia University. Paul is the president of the Old Broadway Synagogue in west Harlem. Paul and his wife, Laura, live in Manhattan. They have four children and four grandchildren.

Thursday, October 30th - Dr. Marisa Hollywood

Internships 101: Finding, Applying to, and Landing the Perfect Placement



In this interactive workshop, learn more about the Humanities Internships Program open to undergraduate students with majors in the Division of Humanities & the Arts. Join Dr. Marisa Hollywood, HI Director, as she discusses the criteria for participating in the program and opportunities open to Jewish Studies and other Humanities majors. Then she will present tips for drafting a winning resume and cover letter, ideas for portfolio development, and review email and interview etiquette. Take the next step in planning for your future career!

Thursday, November 6: “When in Rome”- Jewish Studies Study Aboard Trips

In the spring of 2025, a dozen students led by stellar faculty took 2 fabulous trips as part of 2 excellent classes: One to the Dominican Republic, one to Italy. Hear about what the students saw and learned on their trips abroad and find out how to take advantage of CCNY’s Study Abroad programs yourself!



Thursday, November 13th: Dr. Bob Rovinsky

The Jews of Sweden

The presence of Jews in Sweden was never a given. Yet, thanks to one man's chutzpah, the year 2025 marks the 250th anniversary of the establishment of the Swedish Jewish community.

As Swedish society has changed through the years, from an absolute monarchy to a representative parliamentary democracy, so too has the character of the Jewish community, its position in Swedish society and the degree and nature of acceptance by non-Jewish Swedes. It is their story, from the tenuous beginning to the rather uneasy present day, that will be told by Robert Rovinsky, a former professor of Scandinavian Languages and Literature, who has researched, written and spoken on Jewish themes in Sweden.



Thursday, November 20th: Dr. Amr Kamal



Emporialism: Department Store Fictions and the Politics of the Mediterranean

Amr Kamal received his PhD in Comparative Literature, from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Amr will be discussing his book "Emporialism: Department Store Fictions and the Politics of the Mediterranean." This book examines what Amr Kamal calls the phenomenon of emporialism, or the convergence between the spaces and imaginaries of empires and emporia in the context of a modern Mediterranean divided among the British, French, and Ottoman empires. By "emporia," Kamal refers to the commercial network of nineteenth-century department stores, which gained prominence after the Suez Canal project. Taking as a focal point French and Egyptian department stores, the author examines emporialism as a set of phenomenological experiences, discursive and social praxes, and mechanisms of control and resistance, born from the intersection of modernity, colonialism, and mass consumption. Drawing on archival evidence, Kamal reads iconographic and literary representations of emporia in English, French, Arabic, and Hebrew, from the nineteenth century to the present.

Thursday, December 4th: Terry Wasserman



Buried Treasure

When we think of history, we might think of Indiana Jones digging up the Ark of the Covenant! Archaeology is one of the amazing ways that we can gain a window into the past. But another equally important way is to "dig through" the historical texts themselves, to see what clues the authors left, intentionally or accidentally, about themselves, their contemporaries and their time period. Let's see what we can discover about antiquity!

Wasserman teaches at City College; her courses include The Bible as Literature, Jesus the Jew, Female Sexuality in Judaism, and Women in the Bible. Find out what she'll be teaching in Spring 2026!