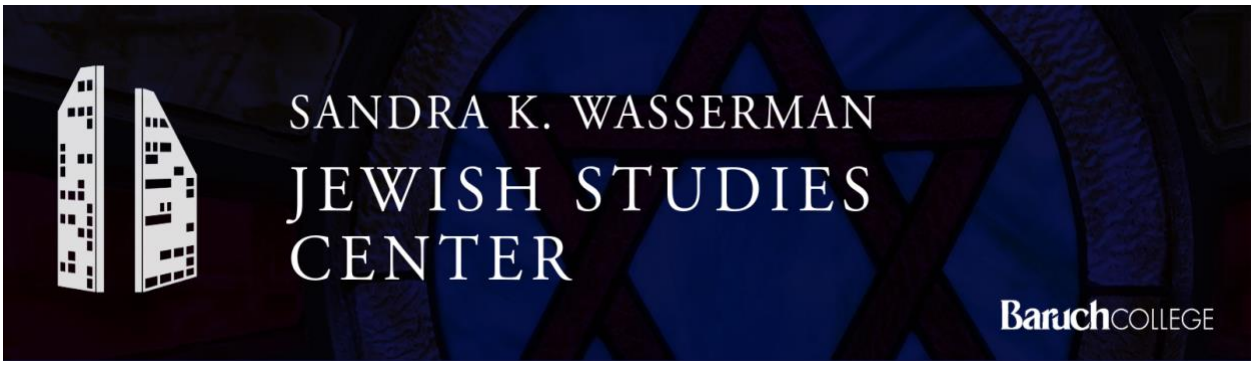


Annual Report of Activities
Fiscal Year 2024-2025

Message from the Interim Director:

As we look back on the 2024-2025 academic year, we are proud to share the meaningful impact of the Wasserman Jewish Studies Center (WJSC). Guided by our mission to illuminate the history, culture, and experiences of global Jewry, the WJSC offered a rich array of programs that inspired critical inquiry and deepened understanding across our campus and beyond. Our dynamic course offerings invited students to explore Jewish Studies through diverse lenses—from Sephardic Jewish history and Holocaust literature to Yiddish theatre and Latin American Jewish experiences—fostering connections to the past and present with curiosity and rigor.

This past year, our programming reached new heights, ensuring the WJSC's position as a vibrant hub of learning, dialogue, and intellectual engagement at Baruch College and beyond. We welcomed distinguished scholars, celebrated authors, award-winning filmmakers, journalists, and musicians who led conversations engaging students, faculty, and the public bridging memory, identity, and the urgent moral questions of our time. We also established the Antisemitism Studies Lab, which will serve to deepen the Center's role as a forum for meaningful dialogue and rigorous research. We also strengthened partnerships across the College and cultural institutions to foster collaboration and scholarly exchange. The WJSC supported experiential learning opportunities, taking Baruch students beyond the classroom to engage directly with Jewish history and culture in NYC.

In a year marked by global complexity and local challenge, we are especially grateful to our supporters, board members, and faculty colleagues, whose generosity and dedication sustain our mission. Together, we continue to build a community where scholarship illuminates, dialogue bridges, and memory endures.

Sarah Valente

Sarah Valente, Ph.D.
Interim Director, Wasserman Jewish Studies Center

About the Center

Established in 2010 as an outgrowth of Baruch College's Jewish Resource Center, the Wasserman Jewish Studies Center (WJSC) advances Baruch's mission of educational access and inclusion. Rooted in the College's historic commitment to New York's immigrant communities, the WJSC celebrates diversity as a foundation for intellectual and cultural exchange. Over the past fifteen years, the Center has offered dozens of courses, hosted hundreds of public programs, and supported faculty and student research that deepens understanding of Jewish history, thought, and experience. Today, Jewish Studies at Baruch draws a remarkably diverse student body—most of whom are not Jewish but seek to explore themes of migration, identity, and resilience that mirror their own family histories. The WJSC's growth and success have been made possible by extraordinary philanthropy. Founding support from Sandra Kahn Wasserman endowed the Center, and William Newman named the directorship. Ruth Prinz O'Hare's visionary gifts—including an endowed chair in Jewish Studies—along with contributions from Mildred Weissman, Andrew and Dori Katz, Dov Schlein, Charlie Dreifus, and the Safra Foundation, have sustained our mission for more than a decade. This past year, the Laterman Family Foundation, the Herbert Simon Family Foundation, and Erick Kirsch have provided seed funding for the newly established Antisemitism Studies Lab, expanding the Center's reach into vital contemporary scholarship. Thanks to this enduring generosity and sound financial stewardship, the WJSC stands on firm and independent footing, serving as an intellectual hub in the heart of New York City. We remain committed to advancing Baruch's mission through teaching, research, and programming that ensure Jewish Studies continues to illuminate the human experience for all students.

Mission & Vision

The Sandra Kahn Wasserman Jewish Studies Center (WJSC) in the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences at Baruch College reflects the legacy and heritage of Baruch College: its tradition of educating New York City immigrants, its diverse population, and its special relationship to and place within Manhattan. The WJSC is dedicated to teaching and informing the Baruch community and public about the history and experiences of global Jewry, with a focus on Jews in America, specifically in New York City. Public programs, courses, events, and campus activities focus on the Jewish experience, from a range of disciplines and lenses, and address some of the biggest issues and challenges facing today's American and world Jewish community — Jewish history, Jewish philanthropy, Jewish business ethics, Jewish politics, Jewish identity and continuity, and the changing face of American Jewry.

Scope of Activities: The Year in Review

The Wasserman Jewish Studies Center serves as Baruch College's and as CUNY's home for the celebration and study of Jewish life, with a focus on Jewish life in America. It is CUNY's only Center that is dedicated to Jewish Studies. The WJSC rests on four pillars, which serve as its strategic priorities: 1) an academic minor that supports student research, a minor in the field of Jewish Studies, and the development of innovative courses including micro-study abroad; 2) community engagement through relevant and engaging public programming relating to Jewish Studies; 3) the arts and Jewish Studies, through a strong relationship with the Baruch Performing Arts Center; 4) faculty research in the field of Jewish Studies.

Key Achievements

In a typical year, the WJSC runs between twelve and fifteen events that are open to the Baruch community and the broader community. This past year we ran 15 events, reaching overall thousands of audience members.

We annually host distinguished authors and changemakers in the arena of Jewish Studies. Our distinguished guests this past year included: Aomar Boum, Justin Cammy, Gershom Gorenberg, Devin E. Naar, Chaya Nove, Alyssa Quint, Sarah Abrevaya Stein, Miriam Udell, and Sheva Zucker. We welcomed writers and authors Matthias J. Becker, Roslyn Bernstein, and Ari Richter. We co-sponsored events featuring world renowned scholars and celebrated thinkers including Yosef Blau, Thomas Friedman, Ruth Messinger, David Myers, Leah Shakdiel, and Chaim Seidler-Feller.

We regularly run a film series that focuses on a specific theme. In 2024-2025, the theme was *Resistance During the Holocaust: The Courage to Care*, we provide free screenings of *Irena's Vow* and *Resistance: They Fought Back and* hosted engaging talk backs with executive producer and director Paula Apsell, award-winning screenwriter Dan Gordon.

Together with Baruch's Performing Arts Center, we hosted our annual commemoration events centered around Kristallnacht and Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day), which included music performances and poetry readings. This past year, we featured pianist Itay Goren's *Banned Music* program and Klezmer trio Alex Parke's NYC Kapelye. Our Yom HaShoah Poetry Reading event featured Baruch students reading poetry written by those who witnessed the Holocaust in various languages, this powerful event highlighting the rich language diversity of our student body and community. To date, hundreds of students have participated in this annual somber commemoration.

We were honored to co-sponsor the Smol Emuni NYC 2025 conference at B'nai Jeshurun Synagogue, which explored Jewish tradition's values and teachings about peace, equality, dignity, co-existence and self-determination for Israelis, Palestinians, and all people, and brought together over seven hundred attendees; we also co-sponsored Thomas Friedman's talk together with the Weissman Dean's Office, the Department of Journalism, and the Harman Writer in Residence Program.

We supported faculty research in the field of Jewish Studies and also celebrated accomplishments of faculty in the area. Faculty who have taught in Jewish Studies and/or have featured in events feature Ruth Adler, Tim Aubry, Roz Bernstein, Ralph Blumenthal, Debra Caplan, Jerome Chanes, Mitchell Cohen, Erika Dreifus, Linda Weiser Friedman, Stephanie Golob, David Gruber, Thomas Heinrich, Jamel Hudson, Polina Kroik, Doug Lackey, Jessica Lang, Meir Lubetski, Eric Mandelbaum, Hannah Rothstein, Grace Schulman, Brigit Sion, Andrew Sloin, Michael Staub, Sarah Valente, and Elizabeth Wollman.

Jewish Studies Courses taught in 2024-2025 included:

- JWS 4900: Mapping Jewish Experience: Yiddish in Modern Jewish Culture (Debra Caplan)
- JWS 3810: Holocaust Literature (Sarah Valente)
- JWS 3950: Special Topics in Jewish Studies: Jewish Short Stories (Erika Dreifus)
- JWS 4900 Mapping Jewish Experiences: Sephardic Jewish History (Sarah Valente)

We supported experiential learning experiences for students beyond the classroom with guided tours to the Museum at Eldridge Street, the Jewish Museum, the Spanish Portuguese Synagogue, and the Met Museum.

A major and significant achievement of the Wasserman Jewish Studies Center this past year was the approval for the establishment of the Antisemitism Studies Lab (AS Lab), which will begin its operation in AY25-26. With generous support from donors, it is the first academic research hub dedicated to the study of antisemitism within CUNY. The Lab will seek to advance the field of antisemitism studies by taking a three-pronged approach focusing on these actionable areas of impact: research, students, and community engagement. Affiliated faculty researchers who work to advance the study of contemporary antisemitism in different domains, specifically social media studies, discourse studies, data science, communication and journalism, public policy, and political sciences, will be welcomed to Baruch and/or over Zoom for topic-focused research seminars, visiting lectures, or short-or-long term research. Researchers will be invited to give informal

"working paper talks" about their findings. Student engagement will focus on faculty/ practitioner/student engaged research, internships, externships, and independent study opportunities that will animate a living, breathing laboratory of the history of antisemitism globally all the way to current iterations and expressions. The AS Lab will engage New York City community partners to provide students with outside classroom learning experiences. In line with the WJSC's mission, the AS Lab holds as its mission the need to educate, create understanding, support research, and address the pressing challenges of antisemitism locally, nationally, and globally. It will become a hub of innovation and proactive scholarship for leading research and interdisciplinary pedagogies about contemporary antisemitism at Baruch College.

Baruch College Unveils Antisemitism Studies Laboratory, Backed by the Laterman Family Foundation's "AddressHate" Initiative

April 2, 2025

Baruch College President S. David Wu (2nd from left) announces The Antisemitism Studies Laboratory, backed by the Laterman Family Foundation's "AddressHate" Initiative, along with Foundation Trustee Joshua Laterman, Dean Jessica Lang (left) of the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences, and Dr. Sarah Valente, Director of Baruch's Wasserman Center for Jewish Studies.

Source: https://newscenter.baruch.cuny.edu/news/baruch-college-unveils-antisemitism-studies-laboratory-backed-by-the-laterman-family-foundations-address-hate-initiative/

Events in Chronological Order of Occurrence

Fall 2024

Date: **September 22 through 23,** free 48-hours streaming of *Irena's Vow*; Zoom talk back with Hollywood screenwriter Dan Gordon on **September 24, 5:30pm**. Event type: Film Series: "Resistance in the Holocaust: The Courage to Care"

- About the Film: Warsaw, 1939: when the Nazis invade Poland, nurse Irena Gut (Sophie Nélisse) is displaced and forced to work in support of the German war effort, eventually assigned to run the home of a Nazi commandant (Dougray Scott). Instead of following the path of least resistance and gambling on her status and ethnicity to keep her safe, Gut risks everything to save a dozen Jewish refugees from persecution and murder, sheltering them under her boss's nose. With fascism proudly elbowing its way back onto the national stage, it sadly feels urgent and necessary to give this story a dramatic spotlight.
- Speaker Bio: **Dan Gordon** is the author of twenty produced Hollywood features, including, mostly recently, Irena's Vow (winner Best Screenplay, Writer's Guild of Canada), *Big George Foreman*, *The Hurricane*, starring Denzel Washington, *Wyatt Earp*, starring Kevin Costner, *Murder in the First*, with Kevin Bacon and Gary Oldman, *The Assignment*, featuring Sir Ben Kingsley, and *Passenger 57*, starring Wesley Snipes. He recently wrote and directed the four-part documentary series for TBM entitled, *October 7th, 2023*. He has over 200 hours of television credits, as Screen Writer Show, Runner/ Executive Producer, Created by and Directed By. His plays have been produced on Broadway (*Irena's Vow* was nominated for Best Play by the Outer Circle Critics Awards) and London's West End. His stage adaptation of *Rain Man* earned an Olivier Award (Best Actor, Adam Goddley). His Stage adaption of *Terms of Endearment* had its premiere in the British production, staring Linda Gray, followed by the New York production staring Molly Ringwald. In addition, Gordon is the author of eleven published novels.
-

Date: **October 23 through 25,** free 48-hour streaming of *Resistance: The Fought Back*; Zoom talk back with director Paula Apsell on **October 24, 6pm**. Event type: Film Series: "Resistance in the Holocaust: The Courage to Care"

- About the Film: "People have this myth stuck in their heads that Jews went to their deaths like sheep to the slaughter. But this is where the real story begins… Jews did not go as sheep to the slaughter. They fought back."—Professor Richard Freund. We've all heard of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, but most people have no idea how widespread and prevalent Jewish resistance to Nazi barbarism was. Instead, it's widely believed "Jews went to their deaths like sheep to the slaughter." Filmed in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Israel, and the U.S., Resistance – They Fought Back provides a much-needed corrective to this myth of Jewish passivity. There were uprisings in ghettos large and small, rebellions in death camps, and thousands of Jews fought Nazis in the forests. Everywhere in Eastern Europe, Jews waged campaigns of non-violent resistance against the Nazis.
- Speaker Bio: **Paula S. Apsell** is Senior Executive Producer Emerita of PBS' *NOVA* and *NOVA scienceNOW*, an American Association for the Advancement of Science Fellow, and CEO of Leading Edge Productions. She is the first science journalist to receive the Lifetime Achievement Emmy Award from the National Association of Television Arts and Sciences. Under her leadership, *NOVA* became the most popular science series on American television and online. In 2004, Apsell brought Dr. Neil deGrasse Tyson to television in *Origins,* and in 2005, Apsell introduced a NOVA spinoff in *NOVA scienceNOW,* a critically acclaimed science newsmagazine hosted by Tyson. Other signature NOVA productions produced under Apsell's leadership include *The Elegant Universe* and *The Fabric of the Cosmos with Brian Greene, Einstein's Big Idea, Judgment Day: Intelligent Design on Trial, Making Stuff,* the large format feature *Shackleton's Antarctic Adventure*, *Black Hole Apocalypse* with Janna Levin, and *Making North America* with Kirk Johnson of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History; and *Holocaust Escape Tunnel* with archeologist Richard Freund.

Date: **November 7, 6pm.** Location: NVC 13-270. An Evening with journalist Gershom Gorenberg in commemoration of Kristallnacht. Event type: talk

- Talk overview: In his thoughtful presentation, "October 7th and Kristallnacht: What we Should and Shouldn't Learn from History," Gorenberg invites the audience to reflect on the convergences of history and antisemitism and current challenges to discourse and dialogue in a post-October 7 reality.
- Speaker Bio: **Gershom Gorenberg** is an iconoclastic Israeli journalist and historian. His latest book is *War of Shadows: Codebreakers, Spies and the Secret Struggle to Drive the Nazis from the Middle East*. He teaches at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism and has lectured world-wide at leading universities and for organizations seeking a nuanced view of politics, Mideast affairs and religion.

Date: **November 12, 4-5pm**. Location: NVC 14-266: New-York based artist **Ari Richter** about his debut graphic novel, *Never Again Will I Visit Auschwitz*. Event type: Holocaust Literature Series author talk

- Talk Overview: With delicacy, immediacy, and an attention to surreal detail, Ari Richter's debut graphic memoir weaves together haunting family stories of imprisonment in Dachau, Buchenwald, and Auschwitz with his own awakening to the contemporary rise of authoritarianism and the continuing crisis of anti-Semitism. *Never Again Will I Visit Auschwitz* is an act of self-discovery and a resuscitation of historical memory, an exploration of the intersection of a genocide and the author's personal history. Part travelogue, part memoir, part historic retelling, it includes first-person perspectives of four generations of the author's family, from pre-war Germany to post-Trump America. It is a rare glimpse into the firsthand stories of Holocaust survivors and their descendants, told as an intertwined tapestry of faith, grief, and ultimately, survival, brilliantly using different expressive graphic styles to portray each historical period. Relying on extensive genealogical research and his family's archives, Richter illustrates the lives of his grandparents as he contemplates the obligation of a storyteller to carry on these legacies.
- Speaker Bio: **Ari Richter** is a visual artist, cartoonist and Professor at LaGuardia Community College in the City University of New York. He is the author of *Never Again Will I Visit Auschwitz: A Graphic Family Memoir of Trauma & Inheritance* (Fantagraphics Books, 2024). Richter is the recipient of recent fellowships from the Mellon Foundation/American Council of Learned Societies and the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, as well as a fully public education from grade school to graduate school. The grandson of Holocaust survivors and son of therapists, he lives in New York with his wife and two daughters.

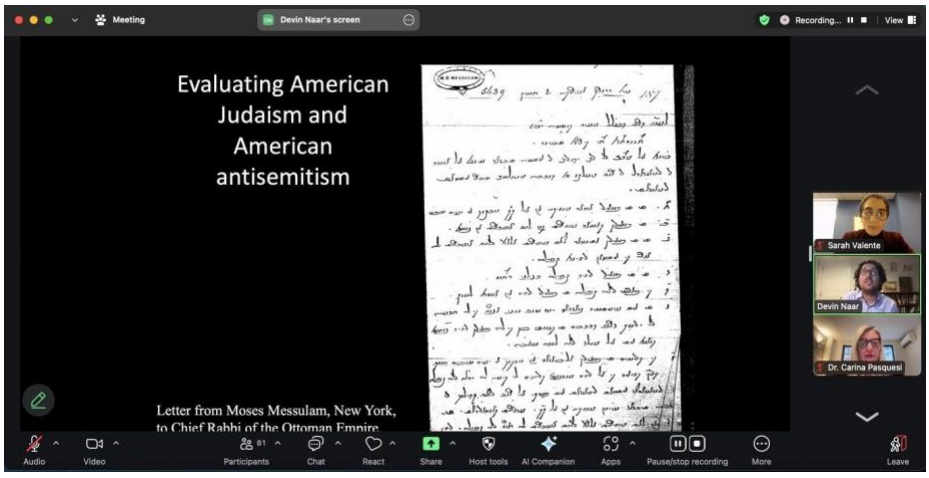
Date: **December 3, 4:15-5:15pm**. Location: NVC 13-280: Professor Emerita Dr. **Roslyn Bernstein** to speak about her gripping novel, *The Girl Who Counted Numbers*, Winner of Kirkus 100 Best Independent Books 2023 and National Jewish Book Council Awards Finalist. Event type: Holocaust Literature Series author talk

- Talk Overview: Did Uncle Yakov, her father's older brother survive the Holocaust? That was the challenge given to Susan Reich, a 17-year-old American girl by her father in 1961, the year of the Adolf Eichmann trial in Jerusalem. After years of failure in his search, it was now Susan's turn to find out what happened to Yakov, who did not come to America with the family in 1920 and whose records were never found after the concentration camps were liberated. *The Girl Who Counted Numbers* brings to life two intertwined coming-of-age stories, a generation apart and an ocean apart. It is both a family mystery and a personal revelation. The seven months that Roslyn Bernstein spent in Jerusalem in 1961, when she listened to the stories of immigrants and survivors and daydreamed about their meanings, was a source of inspiration for the novel. She has been attentive to historical accuracies of time and place but the story of Susan Reich, her family, and friends is fictional.
- Speaker Bio: **Roslyn Bernstein** is Professor Emerita of journalism and creative writing at Baruch College, CUNY. She is the founding director of the Sidney Harman Writer-in-Residence Program at Baruch College. Bernstein has reported on arts and culture from around the globe for such print publications as the *New York Times, Newsday, the Village Voice, New York Magazine, Parents, ARTnews, and the Columbia Journalism Review*, and for such online publications as *Tablet, Art slant, Tikkun, Huffington Post*, and *Guernica*. Her previous books are *Boardwalk Stories*, a collection of fourteen linked tales set in the years 1950 to 1970 and *Engaging Art: Essays and Interviews from Around the Globe* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing). She is also the co-author with the architect Shael Shapiro of *Illegal Living: 80 Wooster Street and the Evolution of SoHo*, published by the Jonas Mekas Foundation. Author's website: roslynbernstein.com

Spring 2025

Date: **February 11, 4-5:15pm**. Location: Zoom: Dr. Devin Naar, “A Curious and Exotic Land: The United States as Reflected in Ladino Newspapers from the Ottoman Empire.” Event type: Distinguished Speakers Series: Sephardic Voices: Jewish Experiences in the Middle East, North Africa and Beyond

- Talk Overview: The United States gained fame in the imagination of Yiddish-speaking Jews from Eastern Europe as the “Goldene Medina,” the golden land, the land of opportunity where hopeful migrants escaping violence and economic hardship could fulfill the American Dream. What did Sephardic Jews from the Ottoman Empire think of America? Close study of Ladino newspapers from the Ottoman Empire reveals a different perception of the country— a “curious,” “strange,” even “exotic” land. America emerged as a land of questionable opportunity, one marred by economic extravagance, racial tensions, and a sense that Jews went there to lose their Judaism. Yet many Ottoman Jews nonetheless ventured the trip. Find out how Sephardic Jews imagined the US and why, despite the warnings, many eventually settled here.
- Speaker Bio: **Dr. Devin E. Naar** is the Isaac Alhadeff Professor in Sephardic Studies, Associate Professor of History, and faculty at the Stroum Center for Jewish Studies in the Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington. A former Fulbright scholar to Greece with a PhD in History from Stanford University, Naar’s first book, *Jewish Salonica: Between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece*, won a 2016 National Jewish Book Award and the 2017 prize for best book from the Modern Greek Studies Association. As founder and chair of the Sephardic Studies Program, Naar has established a major center for the study of Sephardic history and created a vast digital digital library and archive. His new book manuscript focuses on the history of Sephardic Jews in the United States.

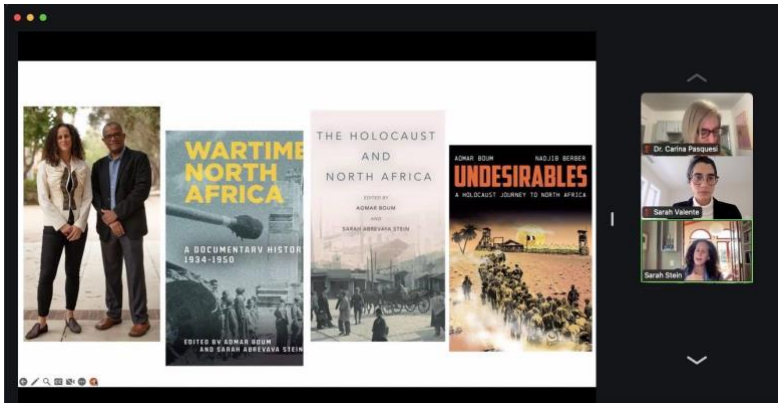


Date: **February 19, 5:30pm**. Location: NVC 14-220: Pulitzer Prize winning author Thomas Friedman. Event type: talk, co-sponsorship with the Weissman Dean's Office, the Department of Journalism, and the Harman Writer in Residence Program.

- Talk: "The Future of America and the World," discussed the big trends shaping the world today, including economics, technology and geopolitics.
- Speaker Bio: Three-time Pulitzer Winner, author of seven bestselling books including *From Beirut to Jerusalem* and *The World is Flat*.

Date: **February 25, 4-5:15pm**. Location: Zoom: Dr. Sarah Abrevaya Stein, “Wartime North Africa: Jews, Muslims and Refugees Under Fascist Occupation.” Event type: Distinguished Speakers Series: Sephardic Voices: Jewish Experiences in the Middle East, North Africa and Beyond

- Talk Overview: **Sarah Abrevaya Stein**, with **Aomar Boum**, has spent a decade seeking out the voices of those who experienced fascist rule in Vichy-controlled Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, Nazi-controlled Tunisia, and Italian fascist Libya. The diversity and eloquence of their accounts is staggering. Theirs are the voices of oracles, critics, resistance fighters, soldiers, narrators, translators, philanthropists, and religious leaders; Jews, Muslims, and Christians; women, men, and children; people of all races, classes, and regions; local North Africans, the displaced, and refugees from Europe. In this talk, Prof. Stein surveys the historical landscape of World War Two Era North Africa, exploring histories of race laws, internment, forced labor, deportation, and the everyday experiences of the region's Jewish children, women, and men.
- Speaker Bio: **Sarah Abrevaya Stein** is the Sady and Ludwig Kahn Director of the Alan D. Leve Center for Jewish Studies, as well as Professor of History and the Viterbi Family Chair in Mediterranean Jewish Studies at UCLA. She is the author or editor of ten books, including, most recently, *Wartime North Africa: a Documentary History, 1934-1950* (Stanford University Press, co-authored with Aomar Boum, granted the Best Historical Materials award by the American Library Association (2023) and AJL Judaica Reference Award by the Association for Jewish Libraries (2023), and *Family Papers, a Sephardic Journey Through the Twentieth Century* (Farrar, Straus, & Giroux 2019), named a Best Book of 2019 by The Economist and an Editor’s Choice Book by the New York Times Book Review. The recipient of the Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature, two National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowships, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and multiple National Jewish Book Awards, Stein lives and surfs in Santa Monica, CA.



Date: **March 18, 4-5:15pm**. Location: Zoom: Dr. Aomar Boum, "Gatekeepers of Memory: Jewish Memory History and Culture in Moroccan Public Narratives." Event type: Distinguished Speakers Series: Sephardic Voices: Jewish Experiences in the Middle East, North Africa and Beyond

- Talk Overview: This talk examines how Moroccan Jews' historical memory is currently being reconciled with the state and society, particularly as it is portrayed in historical writings, media, and personal accounts. It looks at how journalists, historians, the public, and political figures shaped this memory, why they did it, and what factors led to the public's increased interest in Moroccan Jewish history in spite of the community's declining numbers. It also places this discussion in the context of a larger change in the state's stance on historical memory and national reconciliation with its post-colonial past. These contentious debates center on the mass exodus of Jews and the conflicts over whether or not they should be included in Morocco's national story.
- Speaker Bio: **Aomar Boum** is a Resident Member of the Academy of the Kingdom of Morocco, holder of the Maurice Amado Endowed Chair in Sephardic Studies at UCLA, and Professor in the Department of Anthropology, the Department of History and the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at the University of California, Los Angeles. A historical anthropologist, Boum is interested in the place of religious and ethnic minorities such as Jews, Baha'is, Shias and Christian in post-independence Middle Eastern and North African nation states. Boum is the co-founder of the Moroccan Jewish studies Program at UCLA, co-founder of the Amazigh studies initiative at UCLA. Boum has served as a board member of UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies, UCLA Center for Jewish Studies, UCLA Center of African Studies and UCLA Program of Islamic Studies. Boum is a member of the Academic Committee of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. In addition to *Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco* (2013) and *The Holocaust and North Africa* (2019), he has co-authored five books and more than 160 articles and essays among many other works. Boum is co-editor of *Wartime North Africa: A Documentary history, 1934-1950* (Stanford University Press, 2022), author with artist Nadjib Berber of the graphic history: *Undesirables*: *A Holocaust Journey to North Africa* (Stanford University Press, 2023) and co-author with his daughter Majdouline Boum-Mendoza of *The Last Rekkas: Chronicles of a Foot Courier in Southern Morocco* (2024). He is also currently completing *Morocco and the Holocaust: The Story of Mohammed V Saving Jews during WWII, 1940-2020* (co-authored with Daniel Schroeter) and a book project provisionally entitled *Moroccan Frames, Jewish Portraits: Diasporic Histories from Los Angeles*.

Date: **March 30, 11am-5pm**. Location: B'nai Jeshurun Synagogue: Smol Emuni NYC Conference, "What Does God Ask Of Us At This Time?" Event type: co-sponsorship; conference.

- Conference Overview: The last two years have challenged our American Jewish communities with pressing questions about democracy and justice both here and in Israel. In this conference we will explore our responsibility in the present moment as observant Jews in North America. Recent events have raised questions about Jewish power, Messianism, the occupation, U.S. support for Israel and the conduct of war. We watch in dismay as our Orthodox and observant communities have avoided these discussions and remained indifferent to the staggering Palestinian civilian death toll in Gaza and the ongoing occupation of 5 million people. This conference will explore our Jewish tradition's values and teachings about peace, equality, dignity, co-existence and self-determination for Israelis, Palestinians and all people. Program included: Opening Address by Rabbi Yosef Blau; Welcome by Jessica Lang; Morning Plenary on "Am Segula and B'Tzelem Elokim – Observant Jewish Identities in an Unjust World"; Breakout Sessions included: 1. "No Other Land" Film Clip and Conversation, 2. Halachic and Hashkafic Perspectives on Navigating the Israel Identities in Orthodox Comunities, 3. "Now, more than ever, it is our duty to stand with Israel!" Or is it?, 4. Middle East Sholem-Sallam: Yiddish and Arabic Political Legacies, 5. On the Ethics and Exercise of Jewish Power: Reading Leibowitz's 'After Kibiyeh' Seventy Years Later; Afternoon Plenary on "Nationalism, Religion, and Social Democracy – Religious Identity in Relation to Israel."
- All Speakers Bios are Available here: https://www.smolemunius.com/conference

Date: **March 31, 5:30pm-6:45pm**. Location: BPAC: "The Future of Yiddish: A Roundtable Discussion" with distinguished scholars. Event type: roundtable discussion

- Event overview: It seems that Yiddish, long thought a "dying language," is now enjoying an upsurge of interest. This panel will discuss the reasons for this upsurge, both among college students and the broader Jewish, and sometimes even non-Jewish, community. Our speakers will explore why people are attracted to the language and what they hope to gain by studying it. Perhaps it is a connection to one's heritage, a desire to read the literature, or a metaphor for a particular world view. The panel will also discuss Yiddish in the Hasidic community where it is an everyday vernacular. As Nobel Laureate, writer Isaac Bashevis Singer said, "Yiddish has not yet said its last word."
- Speakers Bios: **Dr. Justin Cammy** is professor of Jewish Studies and of Comparative Literature at Smith College. His critical edition of Abraham Sutzkever's *From the Vilna Ghetto to Nuremberg* was recipient of the 2021 Leviant Prize in Yiddish Studies from the Modern Language Association. **Dr. Debra Caplan** is an Associate Professor of Theatre at Baruch College and The Graduate Center, CUNY. Her first book, *Yiddish Empire: The Vilna Troupe, Jewish Theatre, and the Art of Itinerancy* (University of Michigan Press, 2018), was the recipient of awards from the Theatre Library Association and the Modern Language Association. Her second book,*The Dybbuk Century: The Jewish Play That Possessed the World* (ed. Debra Caplan and Rachel Merrill Moss), was published in 2023. Debra is currently working on a biography of Yiddish theater legend Molly Picon and a new musical inspired by the history of the Paper Brigade. **Dr. Chaya Nove** is a Postdoctoral Research Associate in Linguistics at Brown University. Her research focuses on variation and change in New York Hasidic Yiddish and its prewar ancestral dialects. Prior to her current position, she was a postdoc at the University of California, Berkeley, where she managed the Corpus of Spoken Yiddish in Europe (CSYE). Chaya holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the Graduate Center at CUNY and has received funding from the Association for Jewish Studies and the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. **Dr. Alyssa Quint** is a cultural historian, an editor at *Tablet Magazine*, and the host of *Tablet*'s new podcast *Jewish Studies Unscrolled*. She is the author of *The Rise of the Modern Yiddish Theater* (2019), a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award and the Jordan Schnitzer Award. She is also the editor of three volumes on the Yiddish theater: *Women on the Yiddish Stage, Three Yiddish Plays by Women*, and *Mississippi*. She is a contributing editor of the online Digital Yiddish Theater Project and the series editor of the YIVO Institute's*Yiddish Voices* series published by Bloomsbury UK. **Dr. Miriam Udel** is Associate Professor of German Studies and

Judith London Evans Director of the Tam Institute of Jewish Studies at Emory University, where her teaching focuses on Yiddish language, literature, and culture. She was ordained in 2019 as part of the first cohort of the Executive Ordination Track at Yeshivat Maharat, a program designed to bring qualified mid-career women into the Orthodox Jewish rabbinate. Udel is the author of *Never Better!: The Modern Jewish Picaresque* (University of Michigan Press), winner of the 2017 National Jewish Book Award in Modern Jewish Thought and Experience. She is the editor and translator of *Honey on the Page: A Treasury of Yiddish Children's Literature* (NYU Press, 2020), winner of the Judaica Reference Award from the Association of Jewish Libraries.

- Moderator Bio: **Dr. Sheva Zucker** has taught and lectured on Yiddish language, literature and culture on five continents. She has taught in YIVO's Uriel Weinreich Summer Program in Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture for over two decades and most recently in summer programs inTel Aviv, Berlin and Brussels. She is the author of the textbooks *Yiddish: An Introduction to the Language, Literature & Culture*, Vols. I & II published by the Workmen's Circle and is currently working on a third textbook for advanced students. From 2005 until 2020 she served as the executive director of the League for Yiddish as well as the editor-in-chief of its all-Yiddish magazine *Afn Shvel* (On the Threshold). She currently teaches for the YIVO and the Workers Circle. Her research and translation work have focus mainly on women in Yiddish literature. She grew up in a Yiddish-speaking home in Winnipeg, Canada and raised two Yiddish-speaking daughters in Durham, North Carolina.

Date: **March 31, 7pm-8pm.** Location BPAC: Alex Parke's NYC Kapelye. Event type: klezmer performance

- Music program overview: They will interpret klezmer music from different origins: 1. *Titunshnayder repertoire*: recently discovered klezmer tunes in 2015, 2. *Klezmer and Tango tunes from the Honigsberg archives*: repertoire composed by Maestro Honigsberg, the grandfather of a very good friend of Parke's in São Paulo, Brazil. It is a musical selection that Parke has been developing, 3. *Original/contemporary klezmer compositions*.
- Musicians' bios: **Alex Parke** is a clarinetist, ethnomusicologist, and composer based in New York City and São Paulo. Known for his Klezmer and Brazilian music, he has performed alongside notable musicians such as Frank London, Michael Winograd, Jake Shulman-Ment, Christina Crowder, Ilya Shneyveys, and Pete Rushefsky, and more. **Sebastian Rio**, born in Rimouski, began studying music at the age of three. During his adolescence, he explored various instruments and dedicated himself to composition. He studied at conservatories in Canada and Belgium. He traveled through Europe and Canada playing flamenco on the guitar and found the accordion to be an ideal companion for his travels. Currently, he performs with various groups in Quebec, Brazil, and Mexico. **Rebecca Mac** is Boston-based violinist and violist, regularly performing in various ensembles including Mamaliga, a contemporary quartet performing original Klezmer and Eastern-European folk inspired compositions and Zunroyz , a trio un-earthing string repertoire from the Jewish music archives. Mac has performed nationally and internationally at renowned music festivals including KlezKanada, Yiddish Summer Weimar and Yiddish New York. Mac is a 2022-24 grant recipient of the Massachusetts Cultural Council's Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program, through which she is exploring the connections between Greek, Turkish and Jewish music with Beth Bahia Cohen. In addition to performing regularly in the Jewish music scene, Mac runs a regular, and inclusive Klezmer jam in downtown Boston. Mac has a degree in violin performance from Berklee College of Music.

Date: **April 8, 4-5:15pm**. Location: 14-285: Dr. Mattias J. Becker, “Decoding Antisemitism.” Event type: talk

- Talk Overview: This lecture will introduce one of the key resources developed as part of the international and multidisciplinary research project *Decoding Antisemitism* (DA): an open-access lexicon of over forty chapters aimed at detecting both overt and covert antisemitism on social media. Each chapter focuses on a specific antisemitic concept, including classic stereotypes such as Jewish immorality and greed, modern forms of racist antisemitism, conspiracy myths, post-1945 notions such as the alleged Jewish exploitation of the Holocaust, and various forms of Israel-related antisemitism. The volume offers an accessible overview of each concept, structured as follows: a) a historical background of the concept, b) a clear definition, and c) an analysis of the empirically grounded diversity in which web users communicate the concept—either overtly or subtly—and how we can avoid false positives in classification by acknowledging grey areas. The DA project's objective is to identify antisemitism, particularly in politically moderate online contexts. To accomplish this, the project team analyzed user comments from British, German, and French online media qualitatively and quantitatively over five years and using the annotated data to train AI-driven classification models.
- Speaker Bio: **Dr. Matthias J. Becker** is a linguist and researcher specializing in antisemitism and social media studies. Since 2020, he has led the international and interdisciplinary research project *Decoding Antisemitism* at the Center for Research on Antisemitism at TU Berlin. The project focuses on qualitative and quantitative, AI-supported analysis of antisemitic hate speech in politically moderate online environments. Since the summer of 2024, he has also been a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Cambridge and Reichman University in Herzliya. His dissertation, *Antisemitism in Reader Comments*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan (Springer Nature) in 2021. As part of the Decoding Antisemitism project, he co-edited six Discourse Reports and three open-access anthologies, including a forty-chapter Lexicon that provides systematic guidance on deconstructing explicit and implicit antisemitism in social media. In his research, Dr. Becker combines applied linguistics with studies on discourse, hate and social media. For over twelve years, he has examined how coded hate speech is communicated in mainstream political settings and analyzed the cross-national dynamics that appear in online debates. He is also actively involved in transferring academic insights into politics, education, social media platforms, and the legal arena.

Date: **April 22, 4pm**. Location: BPAC: Yom HaShoah Commemoration Performance, "Banned Music" with internationally acclaimed pianist Itay Goren. Event type: lecture recital

- About the Program: This lecture/recital features five composers of different nationalities whose music was banned by the Nazis: Pavel Haas, Erich Korngold, Luigi Dallapiccola, Darius Milhaud and Paul Hindemith. Mr. Goren will speak about the lives of the composers and perform selections from their works, demonstrating the wealth of ideas and variety of styles that existed in Europe of the early twentieth century, before the tragic events that followed the Nazi rise to power.
- "Banned Music" Program:
    - Pavel Haas's *Suite für Klavier Op. 13* (1935), I. Praeludium and II. Con molta espressione;
    - Erich Wolfgang Korngold's *Don Quixote, 6 Charekterstücke* (1909), I. Don Quixote über den Ritterbüchern und seine Sehnsucht nach Waffentaten, III. Don Quixotes Auszug, and IV. Dolcinea von Toboso;
    - Luigi Dallapiccola's *Sonatina Canonica* (1943) (Su "Capricci" di Niccolò Paganini), I. Allegretto comodo - Allegro molto misurato, II. Largo – vivacissimo, III. Andante sostenuto, and IV. Alla marcia ; moderato;
    - Darius Milhaud's *Quatre Romances sans Paroles, Op. 129* (1933), I. Modéré, II. Vif, III. Modéré, and IV. Modéré; and Paul Hindemith's *1922 Suite für Klavier, Op. 26*, I. Marsch, III. Nachtstück, and V. Ragtime.
- Musician's Bio: Pianist Itay Goren's playing is described as "an evocative journey from shimmering excitement to calm contemplation" (Classical New Jersey) and "especially emotional" (Fundacion Orfeo, Spain). Itay Goren has performed in Europe, Asia, the Pacific and the United States. In addition to highly acclaimed solo recitals in Madrid, Prague, Paris, and New York City, his festival appearances include the Festival de Cámera in Villaviciosa de Odon in Spain, the Pacific Summer Music Festival in Guam, Rencontres musicales de Jaugette and the American Music Festival in France, the Hindemithon Festival in New Jersey and the Festival Settimane Musicali Internazionali in Alessandria, Festival di Musica Classica in San Giavanni Valdarno and Musica in San Lanfranco in Pavia, Italy. Studying music from an early age, Itay continued his education at William Paterson University in New Jersey. Under the guidance of pianist Elka Kirkpatrick, Itay graduated with degrees in both classical and jazz performance and received the highest university awards. Upon graduation he joined the faculty of the music program at Ramapo College of New Jersey where he taught for 11 years. As a soloist with orchestras Itay performed Concerti by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Liszt and Rachmaninoff. Following

his concerts in Germany of Brahms' 2nd Piano Concerto with the Tübingen Academic Orchestra, a reviewer from the Schwäbisches Tagblatt wrote: "beautiful, brilliantly glittering figurations…750 listeners spellbound…thunderous applause". Upcoming performances include return concerts with the Tübingen Academic Orchestra in Germany of a new Piano Concerto by Randall Svane which was written especially for Itay, performances in the NYC area of Schubert's Trout Quintet and a performance of Rachmaninoff's 2nd Piano Concerto with the Plainfield Symphony.

Date: **April 29, 12:30-1:30pm**. Location: Zoom: Yom HaShoah Poetry Reading. Event type: commemorative, collective participation

- Event overview: Baruch students took part in the nationwide effort to honor the victims of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution. Our ceremony featured over forty Baruch student readings poems written by individuals who witnessed the Holocaust, both survivors and those who perished. Just as the Holocaust spanned a huge geographical scope and impacted millions of Jews who spoke multiple languages, the poems read by our students highlighted poems written originally in German (Paul Celan, Nelly Sachs), Italian (Primo Levi), French (Henriette Asseo, Charlotte Delbo, Marcel Chalom, Elie Wiesel), Hebrew (Abraham Sutzkever, Dan Pagis, Hannah Senesh, David Vogel), Hungarian (Ágnes Gergely, András Mezei, Miklos Radnóti), Russian (Yevgeny Yevtushenko), Czech (Pavel Friedmann, Eva Picková, Miroslav Kosek, Hanus Lowy, Alena Synkova), and others. In a time when we know there is much concern about declining knowledge of the Holocaust among the younger generation, these students give us great hope that the younger generation is very much concerned and willing to engaged with difficult topics, history, and literature. Through our Holocaust Remembrance event, the Wasserman Jewish Studies Center seeks to commemorate the tragic history of the Holocaust and to reflect on the lessons it holds for our lives today.

"Flowering meadow with butterflies" by Dorit Weiserová (1932-1944).
Copyright: The Jewish Museum in Prague

Special Considerations

We are deeply grateful to the WJSC's founding Newman Director Jessica Lang. This past year was her last at Baruch College, as she transitioned to another institution on July 1, 2025. Without her sage guidance and enthusiastic support, none of the programming herewith mentioned would have been possible. We are grateful for her example of bold leadership, forward-thinking initiatives, and ability to secure philanthropic support.

During AY24-25, Jessica Lang served as Newman Director, Sarah Valente served as co-director, and Carina Pasquesi as managing director. Jessica Lang was responsible for WJSC Advisory Board relations; fundraising; faculty recruitment and classes; programming oversight; organizing the staffing of classes; working with chairs of different departments to arrange disciplinary cross-listing; reviewing transfer credit requests; supporting student queries regarding the minor and other academic challenge; Sarah Valente was responsible for student engagement and programming; Carina Pasquesi was responsible for marketing and communications; tech support; financial processes; guest and program support. This past year, Professor Eric Mandelbaum was named the Ruth Printz O'Hara '52 Endowed Prof in Holocaust Studies and will play a key role in the WJSC leadership team. Current plans include hiring a Newman Director to lead the WJSC, a co-director to assistant the director with student engagement and programming responsibilities, as well as the coordination of the new Antisemitism Studies Lab.

Advisory Board

The WJSC Advisory Board is comprised of energetic, thoughtful, and committed individuals who have helped make the Wasserman Jewish Studies Center a dynamic and impactful center of learning and community at Baruch and beyond. The WJSC director reports to the WJSC Advisory Board, currently chaired by Charlie Dreifus. The WJSC Advisory Board meets once per semester. Members of the WJSC Advisory Board include: Charlie Dreifus (Chair), Abby Anderton, Esme Berg, Roz Bernstein, Ilya Bratman, Debra Caplan, Andrew Gold, Jeffrey Goodman, Idelle Goodman, Mindy Jerome, Patti Askwith Kenner, Jonathan Nachmani, Rebecca Neuwirth, Dov Schlein, Alyssa Shams, David Sitt, Andrew Sloin, and Debra Wasserman. This past year, we welcomed Joshua P. Laterman as a new member of the Board.

We also want to express our gratitude to President S. David Wu, Provost Essig, Daniel Jacobson, Boo Choi, Amanda Becker, Katherine Lypides for their support of the WJSC during this past year.

Strategic Collaborations and Financial Support

Funding for the WJSC is raised through donations and grants. The WJSC is an endowed center and all expenses are covered through the endowment funds and other gifts. We continue to solicit and receive private funding to cover specific classes and events. While tax-levy funds do cover the salaries of full-time faculty, these faculty are hired through their departments. Faculty research and teaching interests with the WJSC historically have been supported and organized only after the departmental hiring process is completed. This has placed the WJSC under considerable pressure, particularly when faculty are on leave or retire. The WJSC benefits from its location in New York City and its ability to hire highly qualified adjunct faculty to teach JWS courses.

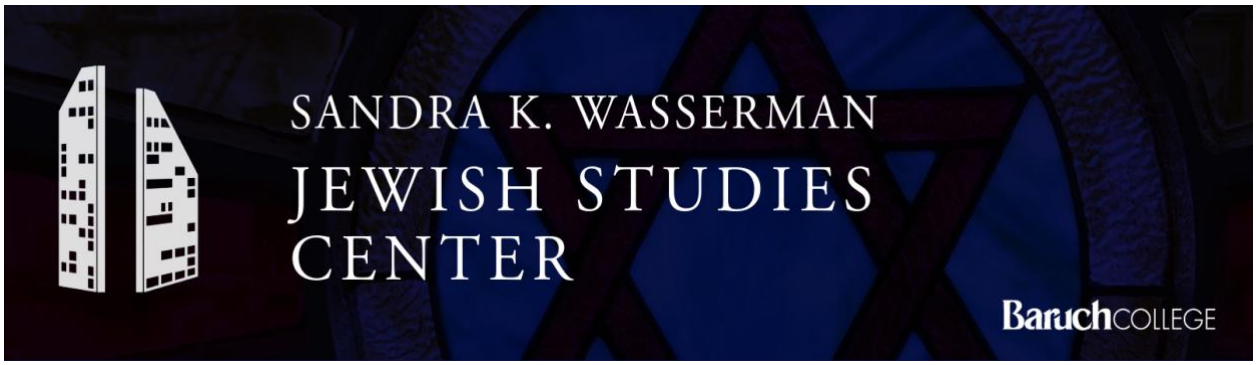
Financial Report AY 24-25

Baruch College Fund

Fund Balance, Revenue and Expense Report - WJSC

July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025

	Budget	Budget Bal Avail
35840 - Israel Course	$10,000.00	$10,000.00
35850 - Sarah Laterman and Sara Ivri Schlein Jewish Studies Seminar	$17,890.48	$17,890.48
35860 - Sandra K Wasserman Jewish Studies donor restricted fund	$40,000.00	($18,431.65)
35870 - WJSC Israel Micro-Study Course	$21,000.00	$21,000.00
35880 - William M. Newman Director of the Jewish Studies Center	$75,000.00	($18,471.84)
75150 - Jewish Resources Center	$5,000.00	$5,000.00
83250 - Sandra K. Wasserman Jewish Studies Cntr endowment fund	$172,987.17	$145,171.72
83260 - Ruth Printz O'Hara '52 Endowed Prof in Holocaust Studies	$46,846.35	($6,594.24)
83280 - Andrew Gold and Dori Katz Endowment	$2,177.30	$2,177.30
Total	**$390,901.29**	**$157,741.76**



Contact Us

Dr. Sarah Valente, Interim Director (sarah.valente@baruch.cuny.edu)
Dr. Carina Pasquesi, Managing Diretor (carina.pasquesi@baruch.cuny.edu)

Sandra Kahn Wasserman Jewish Studies Center

Baruch College
One Bernard Baruch Way, Box B 8-250
New York, NY 10010-5585
jewish.studies.center@baruch.cuny.edu

Website
https://weissman.baruch.cuny.edu/arts-and-culture-at-weissman/sandra-kahn-wasserman-jewish-studies-center/