

SCHUSTERMAN CENTER FOR ISRAEL STUDIES



MEETING THE MOMENT

*As tensions rise on campuses nationwide,
the Schusterman Center leans into its mission of
pursuing rigorous academic inquiry, fostering
dialogue, and lifting diverse voices*
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ALSO INSIDE:
Summer Institute, Upcoming Events, & more

2024/2025

Brandeis University



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Letter from the Director

Facing a Challenging Year with Dialogue, Compassion—and Hope

Teaching and research about Israel is never straightforward. Since October 7, 2023, it has been particularly challenging. Witnessing the scale of trauma and suffering of Israelis and Palestinians is overwhelming; as is the depth of pain and grief felt by those in our Brandeis community, whose family and friends have been personally affected by the violence. The intensity of emotions around these events makes engaging in constructive learning, conversations, and action difficult.

Difficult, but not impossible.

Our mission at the Schusterman Center is to advance knowledge and understanding about all aspects of Israeli history, politics, society, and culture. We jealously guard the integrity of our field from those who would subordinate it to “us vs. them” politics, and we take great pride in our commitment to providing reliable, deeply researched information and resources to students, scholars, and members of the general public throughout the world, to help them develop sophisticated, informed positions in this crucial area.

In the months since October 7, we have intensified our efforts in this solemn responsibility. We have assembled expert panels, brought Israeli and Palestinian scholars, thinkers, and artists to campus, provided online resources, and hosted lunch-and-learns. Our faculty has been quoted in countless publications and media outlets, from local Boston TV news, to *The Economist* and *The Wall Street Journal*, to Israeli radio, to Finnish broadcasts, to provide their expert perspectives.

The Schusterman Center also remains the most important address for scholars worldwide developing courses and syllabi, and pursuing their own research in Israel studies. Our **Summer Institute for Israel Studies** trains university professors from around the world to teach about Israel at the highest levels, through a fully funded course here at Brandeis, followed by experiential learning in Israel and ongoing professional education. To date, we have hosted hundreds of fellows from Azerbaijan to Zimbabwe, including representatives from every continent except Antarctica. Our fellows have now taught tens of thousands of students worldwide, and the number continues to grow.

Our newest initiative, the **Institute for Advanced Israel Studies**, launched this past academic year. This annual fellowship, the first of its kind in the world, brings together a cohort of leading scholars to delve into a particular theme. For 2023-24, the theme was Israeli Democracy and its Alternatives. We chose the theme before Israel’s

controversial judicial reform began and long before October 7—but these conversations became even more pressing as the year wore on.

It is a rare and special pleasure to be part of an intellectual community committed to studying Israel that values sustained, collaborative, honest, constructive, and compassionate research.

Our critical work would be impossible without the vision and commitment of our faculty, our fellows, our students, and the members of the Brandeis community. I am especially thankful to the Schusterman Center staff, whose fierce dedication, understanding, and humor make ours a welcoming academic community: **Shayna Weiss, Mai Dewees, Rise Singer, Keren Goodblatt, Mengqi Tian, and Wendy Schwartz**. I also extend my deep appreciation to **Jonathan D. Sarna**, former director of the Schusterman Center, whose leadership has laid the foundation for us to embark on this next chapter.

As ever, we owe gratitude to Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies and our many other supporters whose material contributions are matched by their passion for our work. Your commitment to scholarly learning and intellectual openness gives me hope as we go forward.

We’ve produced this publication to share highlights from the past academic year, to give you a taste of our impact on the global scholarly community, our support of students and professors, the wide array of events and publications that we generate, and the resources we offer to anyone interested in learning about Israel in a sophisticated but accessible way.

If our mission resonates with you, please consider supporting the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies so that we can continue our crucial work. Please feel free to be in touch with me to discuss giving possibilities, including named sponsorship opportunities.

With warmest regards,



Alexander Kaye

Alexander Kaye, PhD
*Director, Schusterman Center for
Israel Studies at Brandeis University
Karl, Harry, and Helen Stoll
Chair in Israel Studies*

Media Roundup

SCHUSTERMAN CENTER FACULTY OFFER PERSPECTIVE ON ISRAEL IN THE GLOBAL MEDIA

Our faculty and alumni are the experts in Israel Studies. Whether publishing cutting-edge research or appearing in prominent news outlets across the globe, their work has provided invaluable knowledge and context regarding current events and culture in Israel.

Here are a few notable highlights from the 2023-24 academic year:



Yehudah Mirsky has been featured in multiple global media outlets. His article in **UnHerd.com** gave a poignant analysis of the flaws in the genocide case against Israel in the Hague. Prof. Mirsky has also been interviewed regarding the October 7 attacks and the ensuing war on **FOX Television** twice, Roifield Brown's "**Mid-Atlantic**" podcast, **Estonian Public Television**, and **Sky News**. He also spoke to **la Repubblica**, a major Italian newspaper, about revived hatred against Jews, and in January, was quoted in **The New York Times** article, "Critics Protest Harvard's Choice to Lead Antisemitism Task Force." **Al Jazeera** also tapped his expertise to explain the meaning of "From the river to the sea."



Alexander Kaye facilitated multiple insightful discussions on Israel's current events, including participating in a panel examining the secular and religious divide in Israel at a conference at American University in September. In October, Prof. Kaye was interviewed by Brandeis University's Jarret Bencks about the Hamas attacks and what the future may hold for Israel. Immediately after October 7, Prof. Kaye was interviewed on the **NBC Boston News** and **Boston 25 News** programs. **The Wall Street Journal** interviewed him about the role of universities in response to the Israel-Hamas war, and he participated in the October 12 program, "Teach-in: War in Israel - Reflections from Brandeis Faculty," co-hosted with the Crown Center for Middle East Studies.

View more on our website at brandeis.edu/israel-center/news



Shayna Weiss offered perspective on Israeli culture, commenting on music, satire, and the war's impact. In September, she spoke with **The Wall Street Journal** for "Orthodox Jews are Finally Having Their Pop Culture Moment." In the music realm, she was interviewed by **The Forward** regarding the song "Harbu Darbu" and how it represented a radical shift in Israeli pop music, and spoke to **JTA** regarding Israel's controversial Eurovision entry. She was also interviewed by **The Economist**, **Kveller**, and **J., The Jewish News of Northern California**, about Israeli satire about antisemitism on American campuses.



Jonathan D. Sarna, a frequent media commentator, has been quoted internationally in leading publications, including **The New York Times**, **The Jerusalem Report**, **The Times of Israel**, and more. He was quoted in **The Jerusalem Post** about the surge in Jewish identity among American Jews after October 7th. Sarna explains: "We might see this as a turning point, a revival sparked by the events of October 7. Many Jews [feel] a need for solidarity and a deeper understanding of Judaism and Israel in response to the hostility."



Yuval Evri's essay "**Dad Works in Gaza**" was recognized as one of the "most striking" entries "Gaza: Place and Image in Israeli Space," published in July 2023 in Hebrew. Prof. Evri's father, Nisim Evri, was a native Arabic speaker, born in Iraq, and worked in Gaza for the Israeli civil administration from 1973 to 1983. Another reviewer praised the essay for how it "delicately encapsulates the Israeli complexity and the tragic role played by Mizrahi identity in the Israel-Palestine conflict."



Summer Institute 2023 fellows at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. Photo by Anat Vekin.

Schusterman Center Snapshots

26 PhD graduates
since 2007

38 books published
since the Center's inception

2,842
event attendees
in academic year 2023-2024 (in person and via Zoom)

60
students awarded the
Frances Taylor Eizenstat '65
Israel Travel Grant *over 11 years*

Schusterman Doctoral Fellowships

Our **Schusterman Doctoral Fellowships** support **Brandeis doctoral students** focusing on Israel studies in departments including Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, Anthropology, and Politics. We have graduated **26 PhDs** and look forward to welcoming two new doctoral students this fall. *Read more about our doctoral fellowships on page 17.*

Events

We hosted or co-hosted **20 public events** in academic year 2023-24 alone, drawing an audience of **2,842 people**. These programs - among them lectures, panel discussions, performances, and an international conference - featured world-class scholars and presenters, including our own faculty experts, visitors, artists, public intellectuals, and changemakers. *Check out our upcoming events on page 24.*

Frances Taylor Eizenstat '65 Israel Travel Grant

Over the past 11 years, through our **Frances Taylor Eizenstat '65 Israel Travel Grant** program, we have helped **60 Brandeis students** pursue academic or career interests in Israel. Students have used the grant to intern in social justice projects, NGOs, startups, and research laboratories; volunteer with non-profit organizations; participate in research projects from archaeology to contemporary issues; gain professional training; conduct a senior thesis project; study Hebrew; and join academic programs such as Brandeis study abroad.

Experts in residence

We have hosted **49 visiting scholars, faculty, post-doctoral fellows, and artists and writers in residence** over the past 17 years.



Reuven Abergel, co-founder of Black Panthers in Israel, addresses SIIS in Jerusalem. Photo by Anat Vekin.

Publications

Journals

Our publications present the latest research on all aspects of Israeli history, society, politics, and culture. We support the **two leading English-language journals in the field**:

Israel Studies, with over **3,200 university library and individual subscribers**

Journal of Israeli History, with over **25,000 annual downloads/views**

Books

We have published **38 books** over the past 17 years, through our “Schusterman Series in Israel Studies” (Brandeis University Press, 2007-2016) and our “Perspectives on Israel Studies” series (Indiana University Press, 2017-present). A 39th book is due to be published in October. Stay tuned!

Institute for Advanced Israel Studies

The **Institute for Advanced Israel Studies**, launched last fall, hosted **13 fellows** in 2023-24, all working on the theme, “Democracy and its Alternatives: Genealogies of Israeli Political Thought.” The theme for 2024-25 is “Digital Humanities in Israel Studies.” We are focusing on scholarship that makes use of digital tools and artificial intelligence to study Zionist, Israeli, or Palestinian history, society and culture from the late 19th century to the present. *Read more on page 12.*

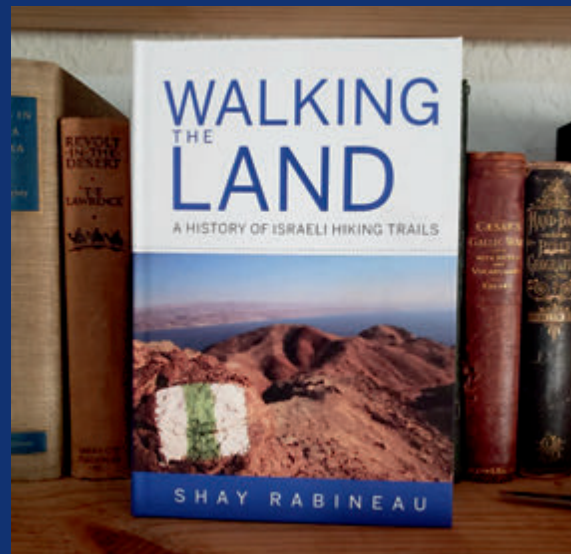
Summer Institute for Israel Studies

To date, we have prepared nearly **400 professors** from **275 institutions** in **35 countries** on **6 continents** to teach about Israel. Summer Institute alumni have taught more than **1,800 courses** to nearly **35,000 students** worldwide. *Read more on page 14.*

Snapshots (Cont.)

Alumni Accomplishments

Shay Rabineau, PhD '13, Associate Professor of Israel Studies and Associate Director of Binghamton's Center for Israel Studies and Schusterman Center alum, was a co-recipient of the **2024 Shapiro Award for Best Book in Israel Studies** for "Walking the Land: A History of Israeli Hiking Trails" (Indiana University Press). Professor Rabineau's book on the history of Israel's 6,000-mile hiking trail system draws on the dissertation he wrote as a Schusterman Doctoral Fellow.



Shay Rabineau on a hike in the Sinai Peninsula. Photos courtesy of Shay Rabineau.



Gangzheng She, PhD '18, has been promoted to Associate Professor with tenure in the Department of International Relations at Tsinghua University in Beijing and Director of its Center for Overseas Security in the School of Social Sciences. He teaches multiple undergraduate and graduate level courses, including War and Evolution in the Middle East, Study of Conflict Resolution, and Contemporary History of International Relations. Dr. She has published extensively on the Middle East with a special interest in China's involvement in the region. Tsinghua University is one of the top public universities in China. It is ranked #20 in QS World University Rankings 2025 and has been called China's Harvard.

Israel Stamp Collection

The Robert D. Farber University Archives & Special Collections Department houses Brandeis University's unique and rare primary sources, like the **Caroline Goldbach Israeli Stamp Collection**, which features commemorative stamps highlighting specific historical moments in Israel, including previous Independence Days and the 1979 signing of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty. Stamps also represent additional aspects of Israeli society, culture, and scientific achievements.



Above and left: Stamps from the Caroline Goldbach Israeli Stamp Collection.

Mazal Tov to Professor Jonathan D. Sarna!

The Schusterman Center congratulates University Professor **Jonathan D. Sarna** on his upcoming retirement from Brandeis University. Professor Sarna is one of the most important historians of American Jewish history. He has been teaching in the field for 45 years, the last 35 of them at Brandeis, where he also did his undergraduate degree. Professor Sarna was the director of the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies from 2018 until 2022. During his time as director, he guided the center through the Covid pandemic, overseeing a shift to online programming that brought our cutting-edge Israel Studies programming to a global audience.



Photo courtesy of Brandeis University.

Jonathan Sarna is the Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History. He is also the past president of the Association for Jewish Studies and Chief Historian of the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia. In 2024, he received the American Jewish Historical Society's Emma Lazarus Statue of Liberty Award, given to those "whose contribution reflects the highest values of the American Jewish community." Author or editor of some 40 books on American Jewish history and life, Sarna's *American Judaism: A History* (Yale 2004), recently published in a second edition, won six awards including the 2004 "Everett Jewish Book of the Year Award" from the Jewish Book Council. A frequent presence in the Jewish and wider media, his scholarship has been translated into multiple languages for a global audience. Jonathan Sarna is the only American Jewish historian ever elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Sarna is an expert on the ever-changing relationship between American and Israeli Jewry. Many of his major works appear in Hebrew, including *American Judaism* and *Lincoln and the Jews: A History*, making him the central authority for Israelis to learn about American Judaism. Sarna's scholarship finds creative angles to consider how the United States, and its Jewish community, think about Zionism and Israel. Recently, for example, he published an article titled "The Transformation of 'Next Year in Jerusalem' in the Postwar American Haggadah." The phrase, which did not appear in American haggadot before 1942, has gained new meaning after the founding of the state of Israel and the 1967 Six Day War. Sarna demonstrates how the concluding phrase of the Passover seder has taken on different meanings in changing contexts, such as the plight of Soviet Jewry or the Arab-Israeli conflict, becoming a bellwether for how American Jewry conceives of itself in political, cultural, and religious contexts.

In 2024, he received the American Jewish Historical Society's Emma Lazarus Statue of Liberty Award, given to those "whose contribution reflects the highest values of the American Jewish community."

Although he is retiring from formal teaching duties, his research is proceeding apace. Sarna is currently working on a book about Mark Twain, and particularly his role in creating a new tourist industry in Holy Land travel, through his evocative and irreverent accounts in *Innocents Abroad* and other works. Sarna places this story into a larger picture of technological advances, particularly in the development of steamships, to show how literature, theology, tourism and technology helped to create our modern world, and particularly the relationship between America and the Land of Israel.

A woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a vibrant floral shirt with red, orange, and green patterns, stands in profile looking out of a large window. The background shows a modern interior space with other people and architectural details.

Meeting the Moment

TIME STOPPED FOR MANY OF US the day after October 7, 2023.

Time stopped here at the Schusterman Center, too. Many of us have close personal connections to Israel and the Palestinian Territories. We watched the news in shock and made frantic calls and texts to loved ones.

Then, we got back to work. Within days, we assembled experts for a thought-provoking panel discussion and created comprehensive online resources. Our faculty spoke to countless media outlets the world over, providing expert analysis to a world in need of guidance.

At the Schusterman Center, we have always devoted our energies to promoting new scholarship and reliable information about Israeli history, politics, culture, and society at Brandeis University and beyond. Since our inception in 2007, we have fostered a precious academic environment which advances open, honest, non-judgmental conversations, where

“Emotions run high, opinions are polarized, but I think we do need to take a look into our own crystallized opinions if we want to be humane and shape a better world where all of us have a place in it. Why do we do the work we do otherwise? That is the question I have been asking myself lately, with all the effort it entails.”

- Aimé Olguin, Summer Institute for Israel Studies 2023 fellow, Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Argentina

As tensions rise on campuses nationwide, the Schusterman Center leans into its mission of pursuing rigorous academic inquiry, fostering dialogue, and lifting diverse voices

we welcome all experiences and perspectives, and cultivate dialogue that is committed to deepening genuine understanding and empathy. Our faculty, partners, guest speakers, staff, and students represent myriad backgrounds, interests, and perspectives.

This kind of outlook requires us to be vulnerable, to respectfully hear opinions and questions that may make us feel uncomfortable, and to approach others not out of a desire to convince or to silence—but with an attitude of compassion and curiosity.

IT'S NOT EASY AND IT MOST CERTAINLY ISN'T SIMPLE. BUT IT IS CRUCIAL.

With this in mind, we responded immediately and thoroughly to the challenges of October 7, because the kind of rigorous debate, introspection, and questioning that this moment demands is core to what we do as scholars, educators, and human beings.



Here are a few of the ways the Schusterman Center has responded to the ongoing crisis in Israel and Gaza:

Within days of October 7, we assembled faculty experts from both the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies and the Crown Center for Middle East Studies for an in-person and online panel discussion about the Hamas attacks, the background, context, and implications. While it may seem unusual for an Israel Studies center to collaborate with a Middle East Studies center on something like this, collaboration and partnership are a hallmark of our work here at the Schusterman Center.

“These events are still unfolding by the minute,” said Schusterman Center Director **Alexander Kaye**, who opened the panel. “We cannot reach for our customary scholarly distance from these events, nor should we. Many of us are personally affected by these events. But despite the emotions, and the overwhelm—and perhaps because of those things—we also feel a responsibility to begin to analyze what is going on from the perspective of our own experiences and expertise.”

We quickly provided an online resource sheet for people seeking balanced information and context about the emerging situation. This was in addition to our pre-existing, heavily used Israel Studies Research Guide, which can be found at guides.library.brandeis.edu/schusterman.

We held a three-part online series highlighting the ways that Israeli civil society has come together after October 7, looking into massive volunteering efforts, religious leadership, and the challenges to “shared society” work and Palestinian-Israeli leadership.

We presented a three-part series led by **Romy Neumark**, one of Israel’s most prominent newscasters, about the role of the media in Israel after October 7. She gave our audience an overview of the Israeli media landscape, interviewing significant figures in Israeli investigative journalism and the world of satire. You can watch the recordings, along with those of many of our other events, at <https://tinyurl.com/36atfnae>.

We carried on with regularly scheduled events and lectures, including a conversation with **Aleeza Chanowitz**, acclaimed filmmaker and creator of the TV series “Chanshi,” as part of our ongoing commitment to supporting the arts and engaging in academic inquiry, even in difficult times.

On March 7, we hosted representatives of Standing Together, a grassroots peace movement mobilizing Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel for a moderated conversation with our campus community. Highlighting the power of working across differences, the packed room was filled with students, staff, and faculty, including our dean, the head of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and many other campus leaders. Afterward, faculty held informal conversations with students to continue exploring the important and tough topics raised by Standing Together.

Schusterman faculty sensed that students needed a judgment-free space to ask questions, without formal events or big speakers. So we went to the dining hall and held several “lunch and learn” sessions, sitting with our students in the cafeteria answering questions and holding conversations about what was on their minds.

Schusterman faculty have been interviewed and quoted countless times in TV, print, podcast, and other media, in many languages. (See “Media Roundup” on page 2 for more.)

Courses like “Cultural Contact Zones in Israel-Palestine” and “Middle Eastern Cities” became hubs for curious, compassionate, and respectful student dialogue in a time of rising divisions outside the classroom walls.

“Students from diverse backgrounds told me this course became one of the only safe places where they could feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, asking questions, and knowing that it was okay to disagree with each other,” said **Yuval Evri**, Assistant Professor of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies on the Marash and Ocuin Chair in Ottoman, Mizrahi, and Sephardic Jewish Studies, of his “Cultural Contact Zones” course.

In Professor Evri’s “Middle Eastern Cities” course, the Schusterman Center also sponsored visits by **Neta Weiner** and **Stav Marin**, internationally acclaimed musicians and independent artists based in Jaffa. Weiner is the founder of System Ali, a multilingual Jewish-Arab Hip-Hop project, while Marin has served as the Artistic Director of the Intimadance Festival.

“Speaking about Jaffa—a mixed city, one of the only places where Jews and Palestinians truly live side by side in Israel—and collaborating with multiple cultures and featuring multiple languages and religions in our music...in this moment, it’s radical,” said Weiner. “But to us, it’s what we’ve been working on for the past 20 years.”



A panel of Institute for Advanced Israel Studies fellows at the “Democracy and its Alternatives” conference. Photo by Ashley McCabe.

“We as faculty have different opinions, but it’s not about us. It’s about making sure our students understand Israeli culture and history in the deepest way possible. We’re having difficult conversations, yes, but they’re always academic conversations. And while no, it’s not new for our Center—it’s always very new for a lot of our students. Sometimes it’s hard to expose yourself to new information. But our students are really brave and curious, and here to learn—not to affirm what they already know.”

- Ilana Szobel, Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Professor of Modern Hebrew Literature

The Institute for Advanced Israel Studies

Inaugural cohort of the new Institute for Advanced Israel Studies examines the nature of Israeli democracy

This year marked the inaugural year of the Schusterman Center's new **Institute for Advanced Israel Studies** (IAIS). Each year, the Institute convenes an international cohort of scholars to work on a theme in the field of Israel Studies through scholarly workshops, public presentations, and an annual conference.

The 2023-2024 theme was "Democracy and its Alternatives: Genealogies of Israeli Political Thought," co-hosted with the Center for Jewish History in New York City. The fellows researched histories and philosophies of Israeli politics and political thought beginning decades before the establishment of the state. Throughout their research, they unearthed many strands of Israeli political ideologies, tracing their genealogies and global contexts, and demonstrating how historical thought influences contemporary debates.

Thirteen distinguished scholars participated in the program from their home institutions in the United States, the Netherlands, and Israel. While teaching and researching, these fellows also participated in virtual workshops and discussed the progress of their research. The fellowship culminated in the Schusterman Center's annual two-day conference where the scholars met in person to present their conclusions.

Fellows examined topics such as Israeli Palestinian perspectives, the influence of constitutionalism on Zionist thought, the recent debate on Israel's judicial reforms, and how the October 7 Hamas attacks have affected the nature of democracy in the region.

Fellows also wrote essays about their research. In one, **Julie E. Cooper**, a senior lecturer in Tel Aviv University's Political Science Department, wrote: "In the weeks following October 7, there was a pervasive sense among Israeli Jews that the state had simply vanished. The failure of the army, intelligence services, and government to anticipate the attack exposed the weakness of the state and the fragility of sovereignty... Could this crisis of



Summer Institute for Israel Studies alumni in the audience at the "Democracy and its Alternatives" conference. Photo by Ashley McCabe.

confidence in the state signal an inchoate transformation of Jewish historical consciousness?"

Ahmad Agbaria, in his essay on the invisibility of Palestinian citizens of Israel, asked, "What does it mean to be a Palestinian, Arabic-speaking citizen in a state that defines itself solely as Jewish and celebrates Zionist values?" Agbaria is a scholar of political violence, social order after empire, and decolonization in the Arab world at the University of Texas at Austin.

In 2024-2025, the Institute for Advanced Israel Studies will focus on "Digital Humanities in Israel Studies." Scholars will explore the use of digital tools and artificial intelligence to study Zionist, Israeli, or Palestinian history, society, and culture from the late 19th century to the present.

Read the essays from this year's scholars on our website.

Scholars examine the historical context of Israel's current crises at annual conference

Held in conjunction with the Center for Jewish History in New York City, the conference “Democracy and its Alternatives: The Origins of Israel’s Current Crises” held April 7-8, 2024, explored the origins of Israel’s current crises based on the country’s tumultuous last year. Panels and discussions at the conference placed the pivotal events of 2023 in their larger historical, regional, and political contexts.

The conference’s keynote event, titled “Religion, Democracy, and Peacebuilding: Reflections from the Field,” featured a lively discussion on the resurgence of religion as a local political force. Speakers discussed whether religion is purely an impediment to peacemaking or whether other approaches are possible.

“I really do wish that when people close their eyes and imagine religious people in our region they would imagine people of peace and humility, compassion and mercy, but I am also aware that religious communities are susceptible to radicalism and to perceiving themselves as better than others,” said speaker **Mikhael Manekin**. Manekin is a co-founder and the director of the Alliance Fellowship program, an Arab-Jewish political network in Israel devoted to promoting civic equality, and a co-founder of the Faithful Left, a movement of religious Jews promoting equality through the language of Jewish faith and tradition.

Another speaker, **Pnina Pfeuffer**, said, “When I first started, I didn’t want to include my religious affiliations in my line of work because it makes things much more complicated. I’ll be honest, if we could remove the religious aspect of this conflict, it would be a lot simpler. It would just be a matter of where to put the lines. But this conflict is deeply religious and trying to solve it by liberal secular tools has not proved to be successful.” Pfeuffer is a Haredi feminist and human rights activist who founded Haredim Hahadashim (“The New Haredim”), a grassroots organization focused on strengthening democratic and progressive values.

The third keynote speaker was **Khaled Abu Awwad**, one of the foremost figures in the Palestinian community working toward peace and reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis. He is the co-director and a founder of Roots, a grassroots movement focusing on

understanding, nonviolence, and transformation among Israelis and Palestinians.

“In the Holy Quran, God says I will not leave one single village without destroying it or punishing it. But this is not exactly what he means. He means he will destroy the place where we don’t accept each other. God says our happiness in this life is by accepting each other,” Awwad said.

The second day included several panels on the current crises in Israel. Panelists included prominent scholars of Israel as well as fellows from the inaugural cohort of the Schusterman Center’s new fellowship program, the **Institute for Advanced Israel Studies**.

Director of the Schusterman Center **Alexander Kaye** introduced the panels, noting that the topics had been conceived before the October 7 Hamas attacks.

“There are many places you can go for a hot take on October 7,” Kaye said. “What is often missing from public discourse is deeper, historically rooted, research-based discussions. That is something we can supply here. Our goal was to go forward with these panels with the understanding that context is essential for understanding what is unfolding in Israel and Palestine at this moment.”



Left to right: Alexander Kaye and conference keynote speakers Khaled Abu Awwad, Mikhael Manekin, and Pnina Pfeuffer. Photo by Ashley McCabe.

Kaye concluded, “If there is one cause for optimism for me, it’s these kinds of communities and these kinds of conversations. It gives me great pride and happiness, and my hope is that whatever all of us are doing will reduce the suffering in the world and increase peace.”

The Schusterman Center for Israel Studies partnered with the premier podcast, Tel Aviv Review, to share the insights from the conference with a larger audience in a special series. We encourage you to tune in wherever you listen to podcasts.

Summer Institute for Israel Studies

Schusterman Center's Summer Institute for Israel Studies Marks its 20th Anniversary

The **Schusterman Center's Summer Institute for Israel Studies (SIIS)** is a one-of-a-kind faculty fellowship dedicated to expanding the field of Israel studies on a global scale. The program consists of a ten-day Israel Studies seminar at Brandeis followed by a ten-day study tour of Israel and the Palestinian territories.

During the program, Summer Institute fellows develop syllabi for courses they will teach upon returning to their home institutions. Participants may design a new course or create a substantive Israel component to integrate into an existing course.

For two decades, SIIS has been expanding Israel studies around the world. Since SIIS's inception, we have prepared close to **400 professors at 275 institutions in 35 countries** to teach about Israel in their respective disciplines. Summer Institute alumni have taught over **1,800 courses about Israel to almost 35,000 students worldwide**. The program now runs biennially, with the next Institute scheduled for Summer 2025.

Aimé Olguin, professor at Universidad Nacional de San Martín (UNSAM, Argentine State University), attended in 2023 after her friend—SIIS alumna from the U.S.—recommended that she apply.

Olguin's research focuses on minorities in North American literature, with a particular interest in postcolonial writing, the development of national works of literature, and an understanding of texts from specific national and/or ethnic-based traditions.

"We tend to take for granted that Jewish American literature has become one of the most important branches of literary fiction in the past century," she said. "We tend to forgo the sociohistorical, mythological, philosophical, and religious input to that literature... The relationship with Israel is something we cannot bypass if we want to do some honest literary criticism."

SIIS 2023 fellows in Israel. Photo by Laura Delano.

“The breadth and depth of the content, the diversity of the visiting fellows, and the diversity and prestige of the lecturers...the amount of ground we covered was staggering. We met so many groups, organizations, and people. We were exposed to so many issues. The program was ideologically balanced. It was world-class.”

- Trevan Hatch, Brigham Young University, USA (SIIS 2023)

This was another reason Olguin applied to the program: her role as an educator in Argentina. “Our country holds one of the largest Jewish communities in the world. In the last 20 years, we experienced two major attacks against Jewish institutions which have scarred us as a nation, for good,” she said.

Identifying herself as a secular Catholic, she said, “Unless you are Jewish or have a foothold in the Jewish community, you know practically nothing about it...We need to understand these landscapes to form nuanced critical readings and eradicate prejudice from our communities. That was a very important reason for applying.”

Fellows have come from more than 275 universities in the United States and around the world, representing institutions that include small liberal arts colleges, faith-based academic institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), U.S. military academies, large research universities, and the Ivy League.

“The program forced me to assess my own personal, somewhat crystallized opinions on different topics. I understood I needed to dig deeper into geopolitical and social-historical aspects that have not been a part of my educational background so far,” Olguin said.

These ideas affected her in an unanticipated way this past year. “I think the work at the Schusterman Center has helped me understand more about issues of democracy in Israel, geopolitical alliances, Zionism, and diversity, before and after October 7,” she said.

Olguin incorporated her Institute experience into her American literature course for aspiring teachers, which includes a unit on Israeli and Jewish American literature.

Among her course objectives is that students understand the influence of Israeli culture and the Jewish tradition in the development of Jewish American literature and its motifs. Students assess Jewish-American fiction while engaging in a parallel read with Israeli literature of first-and second-generation writers.



SIIS 2023 Fellows at Brandeis. Photo by Keren Goodblatt.

“The program was both professionally inspiring and intellectually challenging. The Summer Institute not only provided a systematically designed knowledge base for further studies and research, but the Israel part was able to present the amazingly diverse viewpoints embedded in Israel society.”

– Márton Gero

Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), Hungary

After completing the program, SIIS alumni continue their relationships with the Schusterman Center, returning for conferences and workshops, and with each other, through the friendships and academic collaborations that the SIIS experience tends to foster, and through membership in an ever-growing network of peers that spans the globe.

Olguin attended the Schusterman Center’s spring conference this past April, “Democracy and its Alternatives: The Origins of Israel’s Current Crises.” She said she appreciated the work it took to assemble panelists, particularly the speakers at the opening discussion about peace and tolerance. It made her think about her responsibility as an instructor and as an individual.

“Emotions run high, and opinions are polarized, but I think we do need to take a look into our own crystallized opinions if we want to be humane and shape a better world where all of us have a place in it. Why do we do the work we do otherwise? That is the question I have been asking myself lately, with all the effort it entails.”

Olguin recommends SIIS to anyone who has the opportunity to apply. “I don’t think any candidate will ever regret embarking on this experience,” she said. “I have become a better critical thinker and a more empathetic human being...If I have to pick a learning to share, that would be it.”

Interested in applying to join the SIIS 2025 cohort? Do you know someone who would be a great fit for the program? Find out more at brandeis.edu/israel-center/siis.



Summer Institute 2023 fellows in Haifa. Photo by Mengqi Tian.



Summer Institute 2023 fellows in Israel. Courtesy of Trevan Hatch.



SIIS 2021 visit in East Jerusalem. Photo by Anna Simpson.

Schusterman Center Doctoral Fellowships:

Creating the next generation of scholars through transformational learning

Schusterman Scholar Rima Farah, PhD '22: ***Personal experience inspires her academic vision and voice***

Pursuing knowledge without prejudice and exploring new ideas, cultural perspectives and context are key to the Schusterman Center's work. These core concepts are also the foundation of a mission to cultivate the next generation of Israel Studies scholars like **Dr. Rima Farah**, an Israel Institute postdoctoral teaching fellow at Northeastern University. She is fluent in Hebrew and Arabic, teaching courses and classes about Israeli history and society and the Arab Israeli conflict.

Dr. Farah is just one example of why the Schusterman Center Doctoral Fellowship is recognized for its graduates obtaining highly competitive positions in leading academic and governmental institutions. Our alumni can be found across the globe in world-renowned universities such as the University of Michigan and Penn State, Tsinghua University in Beijing, and the University of Haifa.

Dr. Farah's specialty is the political and cultural histories of modern Israel and the contemporary Middle East, emphasizing the ethnic and national identities of minorities and their political thought.

While a Schusterman Scholar, Dr. Farah completed her dissertation, "The Predicament of the National Identity of the Arabic-speaking Christians in Israel: 1980-2014," covering how Christians coped with and responded to the empowerment of Islamic nationalism in the region and in Arab society in Israel following the Islamic Revolution in 1979, and to the strengthening of the Jewish religious identity of the state.

As a scholar from Israel, the topic is close to her heart.

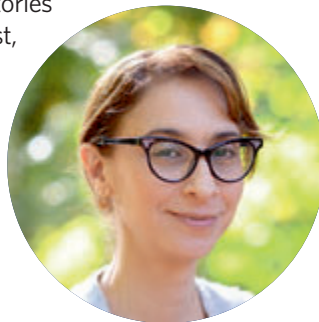
The Schusterman Center is "a place where you are encouraged to develop your own vision and your own voice," she says. "You don't just look at specific phenomena— (you) investigate how those phenomena work in the wider, global, modern-day context."

Dr. Farah appreciated that graduate fellows weren't limited in focus. While reading the existing scholarship, she was encouraged to engage with new ideas and preconceptions representing Israel's changing political and cultural realities.

"While much of the criticism and literature regarded Israel's policy of divide and rule as the cause of divisions within Arab society in general, and among the Christians specifically, (my) research reveals that the responses of the Christians to Islam and Islamic Arab society were framed in a larger historical context of the development of the ethnic and national identities of Christians in the Middle East, which predated the establishment of Israel," Dr. Farah explains.

***"Research is only a part of the fellowship.
At the Schusterman Center, I expanded
my network and learned from the world's
leading experts on Israel studies."***

- Dr. Rima Farah



Peer learning is also an important piece of the Schusterman Doctoral Fellowship experience. "The scholars educated each other through intellectual discourse, seminars, and friendships. Our intellectual dialogue ranged from history and anthropology to political science and philosophy," she says.

"You didn't just go to classes and get a fellowship. It was a thriving academic community where you lived the scholar's life. The interdisciplinary program brings people from all over the globe together to share different cultures and different perspectives," she says.

Apply for a Schusterman Doctoral Fellowship!

The Schusterman Center funds full and partial fellowships for Brandeis doctoral students focusing on Israel Studies in fields such as history, sociology, politics, and Middle East studies, as well as Israeli art, literature, and culture. The fellowships—granted through individual departments—are renewable after review, for up to five years. Students apply by noting their interest in their departmental application.

For details, please visit brandeis.edu/gsas/programs



Faculty in Focus

From disability justice to arts activism, environmental philosophy to Israeli pop culture, and more—Schusterman Center faculty bring cutting-edge topics to campus

We're proud to share how our preeminent **Schusterman Center faculty members** are exploring the complexities of Israel through history, politics, culture, society, art, and more in their scholarship and teaching. Their diverse backgrounds, areas of expertise, and inclusive approach provide a framework for creating safe, open spaces where students can discuss, research, learn, and process some of Israel's most challenging issues.

Here are a few highlights:

Ilana Szobel

Moving from disability culture to disability justice

As a world-renowned scholar in gender studies, **Ilana Szobel**, Professor of Modern Hebrew Literature on the Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Chair, sees Israeli society from the perspective of marginalized people. Recently, she spent her sabbatical challenging assumptions and reframing Israeli disability culture with a focus on disability justice.

"My research is right in line with the core of what we do here at the Schusterman Center, in the sense that it confronts aspects of Israeli society that are not straightforward. Ones that are problematic. How we raise ethical dilemmas and geographical dilemmas and gaps," notes Szobel.

Disability justice is a part of that. "Usually

when people think about disability and justice together, they think it's people with disabilities fighting for the rights of other people with disabilities. It's not. I am not talking about accessibility to elevators. I mean accessibility to culture, to conversations, and to sexuality. Disability justice addresses the intersectionality aspect of our lives. It's a movement of people that feel unsatisfied by the narrow definition of disability studies and are not just fighting for themselves but fighting for humanity in general."

The issue is one that she believes will only become more urgent in the aftermath of October 7. "We have a situation in Israel now where there are more

people with physical disabilities because of injuries from the attacks and the war, as well as more recognition of emotional disabilities—and of course more people with trauma—but that will not necessarily mean more services for these people. In fact, we often see in wartime it means the opposite."



"Disability justice addresses the intersectionality aspect of our lives."

- Ilana Szobel

Teaching students to think critically

Prof. Szobel says she will also need to revise the syllabi for her upcoming courses, such as one that she teaches (fully in Hebrew) called “Trauma and Violence in Israeli Literature and Film.”

“Of course, I will need to rework the syllabus for that class to add in new works of art that have been created since and in response to October 7 and reflect the ongoing trauma of war and the hostages. But ultimately, it’s an academic course. The foundation of the class is not about what specific pieces we look at; it’s about teaching students a framework and context within which to think critically and analyze what they are looking at.”

Yuval Evri

Always in the middle: Exploring the unique history and role of Arab Jews

“The crux of all of my research is on Arab Jews and their position as the ‘in-between.’ When you look at the conversation in Israel-Palestine, divided into Jews who are European settlers versus Arab Muslims who are indigenous, it’s a paradigm that is problematic. There’s a group of Middle Eastern Jews, Sephardic Jews, who don’t fit comfortably into this narrative,” says **Yuval Evri**, Assistant Professor of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies on the Marash and Ocuin Chair in Ottoman, Mizrahi, and Sephardic Jewish Studies.

Evri’s research concentrates on the cultural and political history of Palestine/Israel focusing on Sephardi and Arab-Jewish thought.

His recent article, “Dad Works in Gaza,” describes how his father, an Arab Jew, worked in Gaza after 1967. Evri’s father, like many chosen to work for the Israeli civil administration in Gaza, were Mizrahi Jews who spoke native Arabic. Prof. Evri is exploring how Arab Jews are often used as mediators—another reference to their “in-between” position.

Sephardic and Mizrahi history has been overlooked for many years in the academy. Evri’s work is a crucial part of the Schusterman Center, which aims to highlight marginalized populations and perspectives. With Evri’s leadership, the Schusterman Center is now a hub for this research, producing the annual Sephardi Modernities Seminar Series, a collaboration with the Calgary Institute for the Humanities at the University of Calgary, with the support of the Belzberg Program in Israel Studies.

Fostering dialogue at the intersection of art and activism

Evri’s “Middle Eastern Cities” course, which he co-taught with Brandeis Art Historian **Muna Güvenç**, explored Israeli cities such as Jaffa, Haifa, and Jerusalem, together

with other locales like Baghdad and Alexandria, as a constellation of cities and residents representing diverse geographic, religious, and political backgrounds.

The course featured talks and performances from Israeli artists **Neta Weiner** and **Stav Marin**, speaking to more than 40 students about the multilingual cultural scene in Jaffa. Weiner, a musician, actor, and director, is the founder, lead singer, and accordionist of System Ali, the multilingual Jewish-Arab hip-hop collective that was founded in Jaffa. He is also the artistic director of the Beit System Ali social educational movement. Marin is a choreographer, dancer, and performer, and has served as the Artistic Director of the Intimadance Festival.

“Jaffa has been at the center of my life and creative work for most of my life,” Weiner says. “Speaking to the students was also an enriching experience and gave me hope during these quite dark days.”

“For me, Yuval’s perspective always sheds light on and clarifies the essentials when speaking about identity, language, and politics. Through Yuval’s ideas and thoughts, I deeply understand things I’ve been engaged with for more than twenty years.”

Art and activism are intricately intertwined, says Weiner. “Your art should be what you wish to change in the world. Yes, we’re writing the songs that we (like), it’s the music we want to make—but it’s a constant insisting on a different reality and a different future.”

“Your art should be what you wish to change in the world.”

- Neta Weiner



Stav Marin, left, and Neta Weiner, right. Photo by Ascaf Avraham.

Shayna Weiss

Transforming the way students think about Israel through Israeli pop culture—from television to music to art

For **Shayna Weiss**, Senior Associate Director of the Schusterman Center, pop culture provides extraordinary opportunities to explore and understand the experiences, beliefs, and passions of ordinary people within a particular society. Her “Israeli Pop Culture” course emerged from her lifetime passion for American pop culture. When she studied abroad in Jerusalem during her undergraduate degree, she applied that same passion to Israeli pop culture as well.

“I discovered that a lot of the same conversations that were happening in pop culture from America were happening in Israel’s pop culture as well,” she says. She explored new voices like the Palestinian rap group DAM, famous for their song, “Mama, I Fell in Love with a Jew”—with all of its edgy and often fraught political and social messaging.

“(The song is) the first thing I play for students when we start discussing the culture of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Conflicts are about relationships, and the song and video engage students and allow them to have really interesting conversations,” she says.

Dr. Weiss has hosted Israeli creators in her classroom as well. In Fall 2023, the Schusterman Center sponsored a visit by **Aleeza Chanowitz**, writer and star of the irreverent comedy series, “Chanshi.” Chanowitz was scheduled to travel from Israel to speak with students on October 15. “After October 7, I called her to ask if she still wanted to come—and she did. It was a really special experience to talk about culture in war.”

Meaning can be found even in common objects such as postage stamps. Weiss has taken her classes to view the Caroline Goldbach Israeli Stamp Collection housed at Brandeis. “Stamps allow us to analyze society in a small package,” she says. “Who decides the stamp designs? What do those designs represent?” (See more about these stamps on page 6.)

Her current research focuses on Israeli television representations of Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) Jews. Until recently, there was little interest in studying Haredi Jews. “I found that the way people were talking about Haredi Jews was often very black and white, and often focused on what rabbinical leaders said rather than what everyday people do,” she says. “The story being told wasn’t sophisticated, and was always analyzed separately from Israeli society, rather than as part of it. My research aims for a more nuanced portrayal.”

Exploring pop culture by considering its representation of people’s daily lives, values, and political and social structures is key to gaining a broader understanding of Israeli society. “It’s transformative how you think of the region,” she says. “These are interesting ways to think about the big issues in Israeli society.”



Shayna Weiss, left, and Aleeza Chanowitz, right. Photo by Jen Mabray.



Brandeis Students in Weiss’s “Israeli Popular Culture” class dance with 2023-2024 Schusterman Artist in Residence Hadar Ahuvia as part of an interactive guest lecture on Israeli folk dance. Photo by Shayna Weiss.

“These are interesting ways to think about the big issues in Israeli society.”

- Shayna Weiss



Yehudah Mirsky. Photo by Ashley McCabe.

Yehudah Mirsky

Exploring the philosophical ethics of early Zionist thought, through a modern lens

When people talk about “Zionism” today, they aren’t usually referring to the earliest Zionist thinkers. But these foundations are critical to understanding the movement today, says **Yehudah Mirsky**, Professor of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies.

“What people lose sight of is that so much of early Zionist thought was as much philosophical as it was political,” Prof. Mirsky says. “They were dealing with fundamental questions around what it means to be a human being, a member of a tribe, a member of humanity writ large. What does it mean to belong to a place and care deeply about that place, including its climate and ecology? How do I affirm my own identity without, as we’d say today, ‘canceling’ other people’s? These questions still very much apply today.”

“A lot of what I do is looking at things related to current events but trying to get at the more tectonic, underlying, longer-term historical dramas of ideas and religious experiences and places where social and religious currents meet in shaping current events.”

- Yehudah Mirsky



Yuval Evri in the audience at the Democracy and its Alternatives conference. Photo by Ashley McCabe.

To explore these questions further in the coming year, Mirsky has been awarded a fellowship at the Israel Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to look at a new project titled, “Sacred Persons, Ethical Nations, and Nature’s Human World.” Since October 7, he has also written several essays on the discourse of human rights and genocide, examining campus protests in America, religious nationalism in Israel, responses to the war, and ideas of Jews and power.

“A lot of what I do is looking at things related to current events but trying to get at the more tectonic, underlying, longer-term historical dramas of ideas and religious experiences and places where social and religious currents meet in shaping current events,” he says.

Professor Mirsky is also working with his wife, **Dr. Tamar Biala**, on the next volume of the book, “Dirshuni: Contemporary Women’s Midrash,” which will include religious writings by women who survived the violence of October 7. His wife is the primary editor but he has been helping with translation.

In addition, he has ongoing research projects in Jewish and intellectual history, rabbinic literature, and classic texts.

Alexander Kaye

Students explore complex social issues using the lens of Israeli law

"Legal controversies are an excellent way to train students to deal with complicated issues while keeping an open mind," says Schusterman Center Director Alexander Kaye, the Karl, Harry, and Helen Stoll Chair in Israel Studies and Associate Professor in the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies.

In Prof. Kaye's "Legal Controversies in Israeli History" course, students explored the long view of Israeli culture and politics, from a legal perspective. Students employed research, historical evidence, and careful reasoning to present perspectives on sensitive topics of politics, identity, and power. "All opinions are welcome in my classroom. The only thing I ask of students is that their arguments are based on sound evidence, and presented thoughtfully," he says. "It's key to everything I teach. Whether or not they change their opinion, they should approach the opinions of others with openness and curiosity, and hopefully leave my class with a more informed, deeper, sophisticated, and more compassionate view."

Early in the semester, the course coincided with a massive push for judicial reform, which would have changed the trajectory of Israeli society. "Hundreds of thousands of people were protesting. This was an incredibly complex situation and students could recognize and process what was happening," he says. "The protests represented deep philosophical and ideological positions about the very nature of Israeli democracy," he explains.

"The legal and historical material of the course gave students a background to understand the big questions being asked in Israeli society," Kaye says. "This enabled them to have a more sophisticated analysis of what they were hearing and reading in the news and social media, especially after October 7."

Kaye also taught a graduate-level course about Jewish and Israeli historiography, focused on reading and analyzing some of the most important scholarly themes and debates about Jewish and Israeli history from the past 200 years. He is inspired to teach this new generation of scholars, who will take this new knowledge to their own students in the years to come.

In addition to his roles as an instructor and director of the Schusterman Center, Kaye has been advancing his own research in the history of religious Zionism, which has become all the more important as theocratic elements are becoming more prominent in Israel politics. His work particularly focuses on lesser-known avenues of religious Zionist thought, alternatives to the more extreme versions of religious Zionism typically seen

in the news today. One recent article discusses the socialist revolutionary Orthodox Jews who began the religious kibbutz movement. (It appeared in *Diné Israel*, the journal of Jewish Law published jointly by Tel Aviv University Law School and the Cardozo Law School.)

Along similar lines, he was the editor of the very first comprehensive translation of the collected writings of Rabbi Dr. Yitzhak Halevi Herzog, Israel's first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi. The 2-volume edition was recently launched during a special event at the official residence of the President of Israel, Isaac Herzog, who is the grandson of Rabbi Herzog.

Kaye's current research engages with the themes of Jewish exile and diaspora, and the way they have emerged in art, literature, philosophy and politics over the past 150 years. He believes an intellectual history of these key ideas can unlock the way that people today grapple with questions about Jewish sovereignty and its place in the modern world—a project even more pressing given recent events.



Alexander Kaye. Photo by Keren Goodblatt.

"It's key to everything I teach. Whether or not they change their opinion, [students] should approach the opinions of others with openness and curiosity, and hopefully leave my class with a more informed, deeper, sophisticated, and more compassionate view."

- Alexander Kaye

In Memoriam

May the memory of Deborah Mathias, Shlomi Mathias, and David Ellenson be for a blessing.

The Schusterman Center mourns the loss of life in Israel and Gaza. Our thoughts are with all who are suffering and we remain committed to fostering dialogue, understanding, and empathy as we hope for a more peaceful future.

We stand together with members of our own community, including faculty, staff, students, and colleagues around the world, who have been directly affected by the current war. This year our community is also mourning the loss of a beloved former director, as well as close family members of our founding director.

We recognize and remember them here.

Deborah and Shlomi Mathias



Photo courtesy of the Troen family.

Deborah Shahr Troen Mathias and **Shlomi Mathias**, the daughter and son-in-law of the Schusterman Center's founding director, **Professor Ilan Troen**, were killed on October 7, 2023.

Deborah and Shlomi Mathias were musicians who believed in the possibility of peace with their neighbors across the border in Gaza. Deborah was a singer and Shlomi taught music at a bilingual Hebrew and Arabic school where the couple also sent their children.

Troen has spoken about his family's legacy, and the wider context of the conflict, with many news organizations.

"These are people that were committed to the good life for everybody, and yet it is they who paid the price for hatred," Troen said in an article published in The Times of Israel about his daughter and son-in-law's deaths.

David Ellenson



Photo courtesy of Brandeis University.

Rabbi Dr. David Ellenson directed the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies and was a visiting professor in the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis University from the Fall of 2015 through the Spring of 2018. He was President, and later Chancellor, of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, where he also taught for decades.

Dr. Ellenson passed on Dec. 7, 2023, and will be sorely missed by the numerous lives he touched on our campus and worldwide. His passing was noted in a New York Times obituary that described him as a "scholar who wrestled with the interplay of tradition and modernity in Judaism and who shaped a generation of Reform rabbis."

He was a prolific and internationally admired scholar, who wrote and edited numerous books and over 300 articles and reviews. His research covered many fields within modern Jewish history and thought, including the history of the development of modern Jewish religious denominations, and the dynamic relationship between Jewish tradition and modernity. He was a visiting scholar at very many universities in the USA, Israel, and Europe. At Brandeis, David taught students from the undergraduate to the doctoral level, championed the expansion of important areas of Israel Studies such as the study of Sephardi and Mizrahi history and halacha, and presided over a wide range of programs.

While he was admired as a scholar of the highest caliber, he is remembered even more for his endless kindness, generosity of spirit, emotional openness, and good humor. We miss him deeply.

Upcoming Events

We're looking forward to a packed calendar of events for the 2024-2025 year. Here are some highlights:

Book Launch for Holy Rebellion: Religious Feminism and the Transformation of Judaism and Women's Rights in Israel

Monday, March 3, 2025
4:00 PM

The Schusterman Center and The Hadassah-Brandeis Institute will host a panel discussion with authors **Ronit Irshai** and **Tanya Zion-Waldoks** about their new book, "Holy Rebellion: Religious Feminism and the Transformation of Judaism and Women's Rights in Israel," published by Brandeis University Press in May 2024.

"Holy Rebellion" examines the progress of religious feminism in Israel, as well as the accompanying conservative backlash. Irshai and Zion-Waldoks propose a "narrative ripeness test," to evaluate the relationship between culture and law to assess how and when change within a minority cultural community may be accelerated or hindered by state intervention.

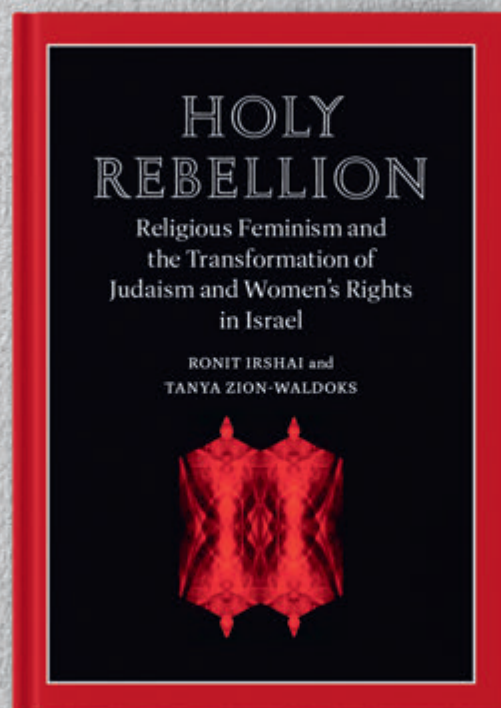
Irshai is an Associate Professor and the head of the gender studies department at Bar Ilan University. Zion-Waldoks is an Assistant Professor at the Seymour Fox School of Education at Hebrew University. During their visit to Brandeis University, the authors will also speak in classes and meet with student groups.

Israeli Media During Times of Crisis: Featuring Romy Neumark

Friday, September 27, 2024
1:15 PM - 2:30 PM

During Alumni Weekend 2024, join us in person for an exciting talk featuring **Romy Neumark**, veteran Israeli journalist and Harvard visiting lecturer, in conversation with Schusterman Center Director **Alexander Kaye**.

For more events, programs and updates, please visit brandeis.edu/israel-center/events-and-conferences/upcoming-events.html





Romy Neumark. Photo courtesy of Romy Neumark.



Alexander Kaye conversing with students following an event. Photo by Keren Goodblatt.



Institute for Advanced Israel Studies fellow Ahmad Agbaria, center, at the "Democracy and its Alternatives" conference. Photo by Ashley McCabe.

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Summer Institute for Israel Studies 2023 fellows at the Naharayim Power Plant. Photo by Anat Vakin.

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