



Summer Newsletter 2020

Prominent Polish-Jewish Intellectual Named First Center Fellow



First Senior Fellow Professor Kostek Gebert (Warsaw, Poland)

Last year, the Center for Judaic, Holocaust and Peace Studies introduced a new program that brings an established scholar and intellectual in JHPS to campus.

The recipient will be in residence at the Center for one semester, conduct research, teach a class, and participate in all programs. After an international search, the

committee is proud to announce that Prof. Kostek Gebert (Warsaw, Poland) has accepted our offer. Prof. Gebert is nothing short of a legend. He combines, as one of his recommenders from Italy described, the “role of a public intellectual of the highest class” with numerous scholarly and non-scholarly undertakings, including that of one of the leading journalists in Poland and Europe.

Gebert has taught psychology at the Medical Academy, Warsaw, under Communist rule, but soon came into conflict with the regime. He co-founded the

famed (unofficial) Jewish Flying University in the 1970s. In 1989, he joined the newly-founded Gazeta Wyborcza, now a leading Polish daily, and continues to contribute to many international media outlets, including the BBC. Gebert established the Midrasz magazine, which remains Poland’s most influential Jewish publication. He is the author of sixteen books and is one of the most prominent voices in the (re)building of the Jewish community in Poland. Despite the paused visa program, we hope to be able to welcome him on campus soon!

A Word From Our Director: Facing the COVID-19 Crisis

Like the university and the country, the Center for Judaic, Holocaust, and Peace Studies has been grappling with the massive COVID-19 crisis, always following the maxim to keep its staff, affiliated faculty, students, and the audiences of its programs safe. Like our peer institutions, we have postponed events, including our international March conference with the Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung in Berlin and the summer symposium in July. At the same time, the Center has experimented with new on-line formats, beginning with four events in April.

The ongoing global pandemic has impacted and redirected our work in many ways. The most extensive persecutions of European Jews prior to the Shoah unfolded during another pandemic. In the middle of

the fourteenth century, elites of Christendom along with ordinary Christians blamed Jews for the bubonic plague and slaughtered entire communities. In the US today, enough white supremacists have held “the Jews” responsible for the coronavirus and, drawing on classic anti-Semitic tropes, construed the virus as an instrument of an alleged Jewish conspiracy for global rule. Yet, the brunt of the discrimination and violence has been directed at men and women identified as “Chinese” or “Asian” along with refugees from other parts of the Global South.

As the rise of antisemitism has largely disappeared from the mainstream news, many extremists continue to use the current crises to escalate their antisemitic attacks. These dynamics are observable from

coast to coast. University campuses, for instance, are no longer simply short-time targets of a few traveling members of white supremacist groups. Instead, specific institutions have moved into the crosshairs of local white nationalists, who use popular podcasts to spread their hatred. These developments coincide with the growth of the “red-pill movement” that no longer simply preaches Holocaust denial, but targets any form of Holocaust remembrance and education. Like too many other places, even our Center and the Temple have come under attack.

The Center is meeting the new challenges as it has always done by stepping up its programming and co-operations regionally, nationally and internationally. Before

the lockdowns, I represented, for example, the Center at a Holocaust studies conference in Muenster, Germany, and participated in an initiative by the German Federal Agency for Civic Education to fight antisemitism.

The Center remains incredibly grateful to all of its supporters without whom we could not continue.



Center Director Dr. Pegelow Kaplan signing Muenster’s “Golden Book” in the historic town hall, where the Peace of Westphalia was concluded in 1648 that ended the Thirty Years War (left: Mayor Wendela-Beate Vilhjalmsson, behind: Prof. Dan Michman, Yad Vashem)

Expanded Cooperation with AppTV

This past academic year, the Center has again expanded its partnership with AppTV, Appalachian State’s student-staffed television channel that operates out of Boone. In late November, the station broadcasted the presentation of the recently-deceased Auschwitz-Birkenau survivor Dr. Susan Cernyak-Spatz z”l. A frequent guest of the Center, Cernyak-Spatz z”l educated thousands in the High Country alone, never tiring to fight the rising tide of antisemitism. In a cooperation with the USC Shoah Foundation,

LA, the broadcast also included footage from her 1990s interview for the Visual History Archive. In March, AppTV aired the Center-organized talk by the Rev. Dr. Bradford Lilley, a member of the Winston-Salem chapter of the Black Panther Party in the 1970s, on black political activism and police brutality. When aired on campus screens, it stopped not just a few passersby in their tracks who then watched the Reverend speak. The Center plans to continue this cooperation with AppTV in the future.

Forthcoming Center Events

All of the following Center

programs will be held on ZOOM to prevent community spread and keep everyone safe during the ongoing pandemic. They are free and open to the public. To obtain the access information, please contact the Center at holocaust@appstate.edu or 828.262.2311.

October 6. Lecture by **Dr. Hank Greenspan**, Lecturer Emeritus, Residential College, Social Theory and Practice Program, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. Greenspan spent some 45 years interviewing Holocaust survivors. The talk is entitled “**The Road not Taken with Holocaust Survivors: Deepening Conversation versus One-Time ‘Testimony.’**” An

acclaimed oral historian, psychologist and playwright, Greenspan will reflect on his life’s work and ponder the future of Holocaust testimonies at a time when the last remaining survivors will soon leave us.

October 19. Research Colloquium with **Dr. Amos Goldberg**, Associate Professor at the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry and a fellow at the Research Institute of Contemporary Jewry at **The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel.** The colloquium will center on his path-breaking work *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History* (co-edited with Dr. Bashir Bashir). Dr. Goldberg is a prominent scholar on the cultural and literary history of Jews

during the Holocaust, the study of trauma, and the historiography and memory of the Holocaust.

October 27. Lecture by **Dr. Yakov Ariel**, Professor of Religious Studies and Co-Director of the Carolina Center for Jewish Studies, UNC-Chapel Hill. Dr. Ariel will focus on the attitudes of Evangelical Christianity towards the Jewish people and the Holy Land.

November 9. Lecture by **Dr. Atina Grossmann**, Professor of History at the Cooper Union, New York City. The renowned scholar and member of the second generation will talk about her illuminating project on German Jewish refugees who managed to escape Nazi Germany via Persia and the Far East.

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Center and Partners Organized Program Against Police Brutality in NC



The Rev. Dr. Bradford Lilley speaking at Belk Library

Weeks before the killing of George Floyd, the Center for Judaic, Holocaust, and Peace Studies welcomed the Rev. Dr. Bradford Lilley to campus for conversations with students, faculty and staff as well as an

evening presentation on “The ‘High Point Four’ and Struggles Against Racism and Police Brutality in 1970s NC.” The visit was the Center’s contribution to the Black History Month events on campus and continued its

successful past co-operations with Intercultural Student Affairs, the Black Student Union, the Black Faculty and Staff Association and Appalachian State University’s Chief Diversity Officer Dr. Willie C. Fleming. The timeliness of the event - even before the national and global protests - was underscored by an overflowing lecture hall that had audience members standing in the hallway to listen to the speaker.

The Rev. Dr. Bradford Lilley serves as Senior Pastor at Shekinah Glory Church International. He has been in the pastoral ministry in NC for thirty years. In the early 1970s, he was a member of the Winston-Salem chapter of the Black Panther Party (BPP), the

BPP’s only chapter in the South. Founded by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale in Oakland, California, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense was an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist, and anti-racist party organization that began with initiatives to protect African American neighborhoods and prevent acts of police brutality. Lilley spoke at length about the work of the BPP, including the launch of Free Breakfast Programs in several NC cities and the frequent police violence in the state that the chapter sought to end. During the Q-and-A, participants discussed the collaboration and conflicts of the Panthers with the Jewish community and police brutality in the US today.

Training the Next Generation of Holocaust Scholars and Educators in Washington, DC



Dr. Juergen Matthaeus gives student presenters feed-back on their work, Mandel Center

In February before the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, eight students with a minor in Judaic, Holocaust, and Peace Studies had the opportunity to participate in a Center-supported research excursion to Washington, D.C. While many universities offer

trips to the US capital, this group research endeavor was as unique as academically rigorous. Jointly organized with the staff of the Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies of the USHMM, the series of programs included a seminar with Dr. Juergen Matthaeus, the Mandel Center’s Director of Applied Research, and rare opportunities for the students to present their research to Mandel Center staff and guests. The program also included a meeting with Zagreb-born Holocaust child survivor Theodora Klayman, but time was spent most on intensive research at the USHMM’s massive archive. The students worked on innovative projects that stretched from Jewish religious practices as a form of resistance to the Nazi occupation to a regional study of Jewish collaboration in Lyon in Vichy France. They also

learned about future research and internship opportunities at the Mandel Center and had the chance to consult other holdings at the Library of Congress and the National Archives.

After spring break with the campus already on lockdown, the students presented their findings to a broader public in a series of Center-organized ZOOM meetings. They received comments from prominent

experts on their topics such as Dr. Patricia Heberer-Rice, the senior historian of the Mandel Center, Prof. emeritus Geoffrey Giles, University of Florida-Gainesville, and Dr. Suzanne Brown-Fleming, the director of international academic programs of the Mandel Center. A huge thank-you to the Rosenblatt Family Foundation which generously funded the excursion.



Holocaust child survivor Theodora Klayman speaks about her family’s largely unsuccessful struggles for survival in fascist Croatia

Research by the Center Affiliated Faculty

Prof. Davis Hankins (REL/JHP) published a chapter on “Job” in Samuel L. Adams et al., eds., *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Wisdom Literature* (Malden, Mass.: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2020).

Prof. Rosemary Horowitz (English/JHP) completed an article tentatively entitled “Using Yizkor Books in Holocaust Education” that is currently under review. She used the concept of collective witnessing to analyze these books. Another article about the Jewish-French filmmaker Jean-Pierre Melville’s resistance movies is in process.

The creative writing program for Vietnam veterans with PTSD that **Prof. Joseph Bathanti (IDS/JHP)** co-founded at the Charles George VA Medical Center in Asheville was awarded “best practice” status by the VA and received a sizeable grant that allowed him and his

collaborators to generalize the program to several other VA Medical Centers in the region. At the NC Writers Network Annual Fall Conference last year, Bathanti also introduced a staged reading by Vietnam veterans. In December, he offered a day-long training session for writers and clinicians to be deployed to the VA medical centers that started the program. Strongly intersecting with his other work in Peace Studies, this initiative continues to garner attention on a statewide and national level. Bathanti also published several poems, including “Saint Francis’s Satyr Butterfly.”

In late 2019, **Prof. Thomas Pegelow Kaplan (JHP/History)** published a co-edited volume on Holocaust historiography with Dr. Juergen Matthaeus, the Director of Applied Research at the USHMM’s Mandel Center for

Advanced Holocaust Studies and the renowned Schoenigh Verlag in Germany. Entitled *Beyond Ordinary Men: Christopher R. Browning and Holocaust Historiography*, it brings together essays by prominent senior and upcoming junior Holocaust scholars in the U.S., Canada, Germany, and Israel that evaluate the oeuvre of Christopher R. Browning, one of the most influential scholars in the field.

More recently, in June 2020, Pegelow Kaplan published an edited collection on Jewish petitioning practices during the Shoah with Prof. Wolf Gruner, the Director of the USC Shoah Foundation Center for Advanced Genocide Research.

Appearing in a series by the important New York City-based publisher Berghahn Books, *Resisting Persecution: Jews and their Petitions during the Holocaust* already received praise from several scholars. Marion A. Kaplan, (New

York University) called it “a thought-provoking and entirely new approach to Holocaust Studies.” Pegelow Kaplan was also invited to present at conferences in Germany

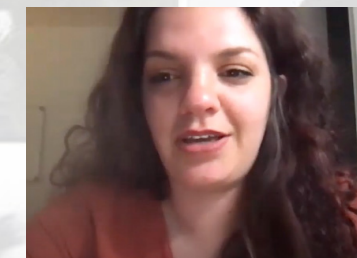


York University) called it “a thought-provoking and entirely new approach to Holocaust Studies.” Pegelow Kaplan was also invited to present at conferences in Germany and Omaha and received four external grants in support of a research conference here on campus.

Yom HaShoah Commemorations 2020/5780 on ZOOM

Like everywhere across the United States and even in Israel, the COVID-19 crisis profoundly reshaped the ways in which communities and organizations marked this year’s Yom HaShoah. Instead of large public gatherings, open-air readings of the names of the victims, and in-person testimonies by the last survivors, the commemorative practices went on-line. Together with the Temple of the High Country and Appalachian State University’s Hillel, Students Supporting Israel, and AEPI chapters, the Center held a commemoration in the form of a ZOOM meeting on the evening of April 20. Some two dozen members of the campus and Jewish communities in and

beyond North Carolina signed in. Participants read names of European Jews murdered by the Germans during the Shoah, recited the Mourner’s Kaddish, and sang the Hatikvah. In light of the growing antisemitism, the Center was committed to mark Holocaust Memorial Day in ways that are safe for everyone.



Outgoing Hillel President Annette Waters (’20) reads “Everyone Has a Name” during the ceremony.”

Center Participates in German Initiative to Fight Antisemitism and Strengthen Democracy

Late last fall, Center director Dr. Pegelow Kaplan traveled to Germany to participate in an international conference on the role of the police during the Holocaust as well as one of the many initiatives to counter the rise in antisemitism in the Berlin Republic. As part of its broader goals of strengthening democracy and supporting civil society, the German Federal Agency for Civic Education interviewed international experts in Holocaust and perpetrator studies on a range of key issues from the legal prosecution of perpetrators

to the role of language in Nazism. Participants included Prof. emeritus Christopher R. Browning (Tacoma, WA), Prof. Dan Michman, the director of Yad Vashem’s International Institute for Holocaust Studies (Jerusalem), senior public prosecutor Andreas Brendel (Dortmund), and Center director Prof. Thomas Pegelow Kaplan (Boone, NC). Excerpts of these interviews were recently made available. See <https://www.bpb.de/mediathek/305459/-zur-rolle-der-sprache-im-nationalsozialismus>.



To make a donation in support of the Center's work, please contact the CAS Director of Development Carey Fissel at (828) 262-7622 or fisselcm@appstate.edu.

