

# JEWISH STUDIES IN NORTH AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW

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## ABSTRACT

The establishment of academic Jewish Studies positions and programs at a significant number of public and private North American institutions of higher education during the final third of the twentieth century is an interesting and complex phenomenon. In these remarks, the author provides a brief historical overview of academic Jewish Studies in North America and reflects on the present state of Jewish Studies programs in secular higher education settings and their ongoing challenges and future prospects. Her conclusions are neither comprehensive nor data-driven nor do they focus on the vibrant and excellent scholarship that characterizes Jewish Studies in 2013. Rather, the paper is based on the research of other scholars and the author's experiences as a professor and administrator in Jewish Studies programs and departments at three public universities and one private university over the past four decades and as President of the Association for Jewish Studies between 2004 and 2006. The author also draws on her larger administrative perspective as an academic dean, since 2009, for seventeen Humanities departments and programs at the University of Oregon. The essay focuses on undergraduate Jewish Studies; the topics discussed are: Jewish Studies in North America: An Overview; Women and Academic Jewish Studies; Jewish Studies Instruction; Connections with Jewish Students and Jewish Organizations; Links with Israel; Other International Relationships; Donors and Endowments; Present Realities and Future Challenges.

Academic Jewish Studies refers to the systematic and analytical study of the Jewish experience using modern research tools and methodologies.<sup>1</sup> Scholars of academic Jewish Studies use a range of disciplinary approaches from the humanities and social studies to investigate and teach aspects of Jewish religion, history, thought, and culture, as well as associated languages and literatures. Academic Jewish Studies research and teaching at their best are nondoctrinal, nonparochial, and nondenominational; they take place in secular public and private institutions of higher education and in some seminaries, both Jewish and Christian. Some of these institutions offer only undergraduate courses, sometimes with a major or minor in Jewish Studies; others have graduate programs at the M.A. or doctoral levels. Scholars

specializing in academic Jewish Studies are not necessarily Jews and their students do not fit a particular profile. Academic Jewish Studies instruction offers access to a body of knowledge and potential for intellectual growth to all interested students, regardless of their religious or ethnic backgrounds. There are no absolute data on the number of positions, programs, and departments in Jewish Studies in the United States and Canada. In 2013, the website of the Association of Jewish Studies ([www.ajsnet.org](http://www.ajsnet.org)) listed more than 200 Jewish Studies programs or departments and 230 endowed positions at North American colleges and universities.

### JEWISH STUDIES IN NORTH AMERICA

The substantial expansion of Jewish Studies in North American universities is a relatively recent phenomenon. Although Hebrew language and literature was included in the curriculum of several of the earliest colleges to be established on the North American continent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was taught as part of a theologically oriented curriculum designed to assist potential Christian clergymen in understanding their religious heritage. Some instructors of Hebrew, such as Judah Monis, who taught at Harvard University between 1722 and 1760, were Jews or of Jewish background.<sup>2</sup>

Jewish Studies at American universities were truly established in the 1890s under the influence of German Jewish scholarship, specifically the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (scientific study of Judaism) movement. In the late-nineteenth-century United States, some positions in academic Jewish learning were established at secular universities, most often with the active communal and financial support of members of the American Jewish community. In the early twentieth century, Jewish scholars held at least sixteen subsidized positions in Semitic Studies at major universities. Many of the donors for these positions hoped that this recognition of the centrality of Judaism and Jewish literary, philosophical, and cultural achievements in the development of western civilization would also hasten acceptance and appreciation of Jews in the United States. Certainly, the establishment of positions in Semitic languages and literatures legitimized the Jewish and Judaic presence in the American university at a time when being a Jew could disqualify a candidate for an academic post. Most of the courses in Semitics that these scholars offered appealed to advanced students in biblical and related subjects, both Jewish and non-Jewish; they were generally beyond the interests and ability levels of most undergraduates. Still, their very existence

delivered the message that the Jewish intellectual heritage belonged in the university curriculum and this was reinforced by the establishment of the American Academy for Jewish Research (AAJR) by a small group of Jewish Studies scholars in 1920. By the end of the second decade of the twentieth century, however, communal support for university positions diminished as Jewish philanthropists focused on the multiple needs of the large hosts of immigrants arriving from Eastern Europe.<sup>3</sup>

American academic Jewish Studies took a new direction in the interwar era when several elite institutions, again with generous financial support from American Jews and Jewish communities, established positions in areas such as Jewish history and Modern Hebrew language and literature. This emphasis on the breadth and diversity of the Jewish experience expanded Jewish Studies beyond Semitics. Faculty members holding these newly established positions were integrated into appropriate university departments, whether History, English or Near Eastern Languages, where their courses became part of the mainstream undergraduate academic curriculum.<sup>4</sup>

A third phase in the development of academic Jewish Studies in North American colleges and universities began in the last third of the twentieth century. The impact of Israel's Six Day War in 1967 and the Yom Kippur War of 1973, as well as increasing discussion and research of the Holocaust, inspired many Jewish young people to learn more about their identities and heritage on the university level. The unprecedented number of Jewish "baby boomers" at college campuses by the mid-1960s, particularly in the Northeast, played a role in this expansion, as well, as did the increasing number of Jews in the professoriate. The emphasis in the 1960s and 1970s on concentrating Jewish learning in one academic program that transcended disciplinary agendas was a decisive move away from earlier approaches that had encouraged the location of endowed positions, whose occupants focused on aspects of the Jewish experience, within larger departments. The arguments for establishing separate Jewish Studies units were similar to those for other particularistic area studies, such as African American Studies and Women's Studies. For one thing, such academic endeavors were intrinsically interdisciplinary. For another, without dedicated programmatic funding it was unlikely that traditional discipline-based departments would direct limited and highly contested resources to what many faculty members regarded as marginal and intellectually problematic areas of discourse.<sup>5</sup>

The 1969 establishment of the Association for Jewish Studies (AJS) was a signal indication of the growth of academic Jewish Studies. The scholars who worked together to found the AJS initially faced opposition from both senior figures in North American academic Jewish Studies, who preferred the protected precincts of the invitation-only AAJR, and from the leadership of the Israel-based World Union for Jewish Studies (WUJS), who believed that Israel was the only proper location for a professional organization for academic Jewish scholars.<sup>6</sup> The forty-seven scholars who attended the first meeting of what would become the AJS at Brandeis University in October, 1969, wished to “resituate Jewish Studies at a new crossroads,” retaining its “goal of achieving recognition as a legitimate field within the Western academy,” yet also realizing “the uniqueness of the Jewish experience as a field worthy of study from its own perspective.”<sup>7</sup>

In 1985, the AJS became a constituent member of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS). This acceptance, after several unsuccessful applications, served as final validation that the larger academic world recognized Jewish Studies as “an important and well-populated field of study” with a “unique intellectual focus and interdisciplinary concerns.” Membership in the ACLS was crucial in legitimizing the AJS and its members in the larger scholarly arena, and it was also highly significant for the organization’s continued professionalization.<sup>8</sup> By 2013 the AJS had more than 1,800 members, most of whom were university faculty, graduate students, independent scholars, and library and museum professionals who represented the breadth of Jewish Studies scholarship.

## WOMEN AND ACADEMIC JEWISH STUDIES

The contemporaneous growth of the field of Women’s Studies in the last third of the twentieth century played an important role in legitimizing the study of marginalized social groups, including the Jews. The conflation of both concerns led to increased interest in the roles and experience of Jewish women. Prior to the 1970s most scholars and teachers of Jewish Studies were men; many had moved into the academic world after completing rabbinic training. Jewish historical and textual studies were long seen as male endeavors and women’s lives and contributions were rarely addressed in substantive ways in historical, literary, and cultural analyses of the Jewish experience.

Beginning slowly in the mid-1970s and growing rapidly into the twenty-first century, significant numbers of women have entered the field of Jewish

Studies, climbing the academic ladder from graduate students to professors in every area of Jewish Studies scholarship. This sudden appearance of females in the world of academic Jewish scholarship resulted in great part from the overwhelming changes in the domestic, religious, and communal roles of Jewish women in recent decades. Many of these pioneering female Jewish Studies scholars made women the focus of their research. The presence of women as researchers and as the objects of research has transformed the content and methodological approaches of Jewish Studies teaching and research.<sup>9</sup> At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, virtually all female and male academics involved in Jewish Studies teaching and scholarship take for granted the importance of gender as a category of analysis and understand that consideration of the constructions and consequences of gender is essential in explicating the many facets of the Jewish experience.<sup>10</sup> The Women's Caucus of the AJS was founded in 1986. The Caucus, which is now affiliated with AJS and open to all AJS members, sponsors a breakfast meeting and cosponsors an academic session at the annual conference, and has prepared various syllabus collections and directories of members to further academic and professional networking. In 2013, at least half of AJS members are women, as compared to just over 10% in the late 1970s.<sup>11</sup>

### JEWISH STUDIES INSTRUCTION

As Jewish Studies positions, programs, and departments began to be established across the United States and Canada in the last three decades of the twentieth century, established scholars raised central disciplinary queries about instructional goals and essential content. In the 1970s, few universities specifically trained Ph.D.s in Jewish Studies. Many scholars who accepted Jewish Studies positions were trained in fields such as Classics, History, Literature, and Philosophy, as well as some of the Social Sciences. Nor was it uncommon for some colleges to hire local rabbis, often with Jewish communal support, to teach an annual course or two on a Jewish Studies topic. Thus, there was no consensus on the appropriate qualifications for faculty members in Jewish Studies or on the necessary components of Jewish Studies courses and curricula for undergraduate education or graduate training.<sup>12</sup> Discussion about these topics grew with the field, often under the auspices of the Association for Jewish Studies. Among the central issues was whether Hebrew language should be required for an undergraduate Jewish Studies degree and, if so, at what level of proficiency, and should the

focus be on Modern or Classical Hebrew? A noncurricular issue, but one that was of great concern, was the extent to which university-based Jewish Studies could or should be expected to address and strengthen the Jewish identity of students.<sup>13</sup> These and similar topics continue to be debated by those involved in academic Jewish Studies in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

The ongoing discussion on whether expertise in Hebrew should be a requirement for a degree in Jewish Studies is particularly interesting. In 2013, many but not all Jewish Studies programs require several years of Hebrew language and literature study for undergraduate majors and for graduate students. In some colleges and universities, students majoring in Jewish Studies must study Classical Hebrew language and texts; in others Modern Hebrew is required; some institutions offer a choice. The result has been a proliferation of Hebrew language study across North American institutions of higher education to a degree that would certainly not have occurred without the linkage of Hebrew to Jewish Studies. Several Jewish Studies programs also offer instruction in Yiddish language and literature, while those with graduate programs may teach Aramaic, Judaeo-Arabic, and Ladino, among other languages important for access to Jewish texts from various places and eras. Some programs and departments allow students to complete degree requirements by substituting Yiddish or another “Jewish” language for Hebrew.

The diversity of organizational and structural approaches, as well as academic emphases and requirements, remains a characteristic and somewhat problematic aspect of academic Jewish Studies. However, given the broad range of institutions of higher education that offer Jewish Studies, the diverse audiences they are serving, and the varying qualifications and interests of the faculty who identify themselves with the field, this lack of agreement on the essential components necessary for a degree in Jewish Studies is likely to remain the status quo. Continuing interest in defining the parameters of Jewish Studies is evident in the ongoing production of textbooks, edited collections, and anthologies of primary texts intended for college and university courses. Also helpful to practitioners are reflections on pedagogical approaches to certain subjects and assemblages of course syllabi that offer models on a range of topics including survey courses on Jewish history and civilization, Judaism as a religious tradition, Jewish thought, Jewish mysticism, the Holocaust, Israel, women and gender in Judaism and Jewish life, Jewish creativity and representation in literature, art, and film,

aspects of Jewish popular culture, and many more. Larger academic disciplinary shifts towards social history, early modern and modern studies, American Studies, queer and sexuality studies, as well as interest in popular culture in all of its manifestations are central areas of inquiry in Jewish Studies teaching, conference presentations, and scholarship in the second decade of the twenty-first century, another significant transformation in what was once a highly conservative field.<sup>14</sup>

### CONNECTIONS WITH JEWISH STUDENTS AND JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

Most contemporary Jewish Studies academics would agree that teaching Jewish subject matter in secular universities should not be considered “Jewish education” in any traditional sense. Their courses are not intended to persuade students of the truth of Jewish beliefs and values nor do they provide guidance on how to practice Judaism or perform Jewish rituals. There is no assumption in any academic Jewish Studies course at a secular institution that enrolled students are Jews. At the 1969 Brandeis University colloquium Irving Greenberg argued that if the field and the AJS wished to achieve academic respectability, they should not attain “too close an identification with the concerns of the Jewish community and the Jewish civilization.” He went on to say that “The teacher cannot serve in good conscience as a spokesman for any one version of the entire tradition or for the Jewish community as it sees itself.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, rabbi and educator Alfred Jospe wrote, “the purpose of Jewish Studies in the university is the study of Judaism and the Jewish people and not the Judaization of young Jews, the stimulation of their Jewish commitment, or the strengthening of their Jewish identification.”<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, when Jewish Studies programs of various kinds were undergoing significant expansion in the 1960s and 1970s, data indicates that a large proportion of undergraduates taking these courses were Jews. In fact, the presence of Jewish Studies courses on any given campus, and the enrollments in these courses, were strongly associated with the number of Jewish students in the institution as a whole.<sup>17</sup> Despite efforts by many faculty members to dissociate themselves from modeling Jewishness, it is clear that many students were looking for personal affirmation and a strengthening of their Jewish identities when they enrolled in Jewish Studies courses.

In the present, this personal expectation is less frequent, although Jewish Studies faculty report that they often teach students of Jewish background who have had no previous Jewish education.<sup>18</sup> Many Jewish Studies courses and programs have been established at institutions that do not have

significant numbers of Jews in the student body, including Roman Catholic institutions. Moreover, as a 2004 article in *The New York Times* reported, a large number of students enrolled in Jewish Studies courses are not Jews. Of 250 students enrolled in Jewish Studies classes at City College in New York City, including 26 majors and over 150 minors, some 95 percent were not Jewish.<sup>19</sup> The reasons for this phenomenon are complex but there is no doubt that in an era when Jewish demographics are shrinking, the diversity of students and faculty in Jewish Studies will be an increasing reality and desideratum that will also further distance academic Jewish Studies from other forms of Jewish education.

Nevertheless, academic Jewish Studies continue to be perceived as having special ties with the Jewish community, in part because of communal funding support. Most Jewish Studies academics are aware of the need to maintain boundaries between their programs and Jewish campus and community advocacy and religious groups. However, they must frequently deal with inappropriate expectations. These can come from some Jewish students, who don't always understand the distinction between academic Jewish Studies and their previous Jewish educations; from student leaders and adult professionals associated with campus Jewish organizations who believe Jewish Studies should share their parochial missions; and from members of local Jewish communities who suppose that Jewish Studies academics will support Jewish causes and concerns, especially when the community or individuals are providing financial resources.

The dilemmas caused by such misunderstandings can be difficult but most Jewish Studies academics learn to negotiate working relationships with the different Jewish advocacy constituencies on their campuses and in their larger communities while maintaining appropriate boundaries. Positive collaborations may include cosponsoring events with academic content with Jewish student groups; working with community professionals to construct credit-earning internships in local Jewish schools and agencies for motivated students; and being available to speak to Jewish student and community groups about new developments in Jewish Studies research. Many Jewish Studies programs on college and university campuses schedule a range of interesting speakers and events that are open to the general public without charge. In these and other valuable ways, academic Jewish Studies programs have provided a significant nondenominational source of education about Judaism and the Jewish experience for the larger community, both Jewish and Gentile.

Some Jewish Studies professors believe that an involved communal role is not only desirable but imperative for the Jewish Studies academic. Hal M. Lewis of the Spertus Institute of Learning and Leadership suggests that “Scholarship has much to contribute to the Jewish world outside the portals of the academy as well as inside. The congregations, federations, and Jewish organizations in our communities ought to look upon Jewish Studies professors as communal leaders—not merely programmatic opportunities . . . no Jewish community should deliberate its significant issues, absent the leadership of credible scholars working side-by-side influential rabbis and respected communal executives.”<sup>20</sup>

### LINKS WITH ISRAEL

Jewish Studies programs and departments in North America have consistently encouraged their students, undergraduate and graduate, to study in Israel. On the professional level, many programs have also welcomed academic colleagues from Israel into their midst as speakers and visiting scholars, while North American professors frequently spend summers and sabbaticals at conferences and libraries in Israel. These international ties have been strengthened for many North American scholars by participation in the World Union of Jewish Studies, which holds conferences every four years in Jerusalem. Data gathered by the Association for Jewish Studies indicates that one-third of AJS members have spent time in Israel in recent years. However, since the Second Intifada of 2000, a significant number of North American colleges and universities have placed limitations on Israel study and research options for students and faculty due to security fears and insurance implications. In a number of cases, longstanding programs with various universities in Israel have been suspended. Some institutions permit students to petition to attend study abroad programs in Israel on the condition that students and their parents sign waivers absolving the college or university from responsibility in case of injury or death. However, students who choose to study at Israeli universities often lose financial aid while they are abroad and have to negotiate with their institutions for acceptance of credits earned in Israel when they return.

### OTHER INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Increasingly, the world of academic Jewish Studies is global, encompassing students and scholars who meet at conferences and collaborate on scholarly projects internationally. Unlike North America and Israel, where the

preponderance of Jewish Studies academics are of Jewish background, this is not necessarily the case in Europe, where graduate-level Jewish Studies attracts many serious students of diverse backgrounds. Recent decades have seen the growth of academic Jewish Studies and of Jewish Studies professional organizations in Western Europe, in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, as well as in Latin America and in China. Among these are the European Association for Jewish Studies (EAJS), founded in 1981, with offices in Oxford, UK, which encourages and supports the teaching of Jewish Studies at the university level in Europe and furthers an understanding of the importance of Jewish culture and civilization and of the impact it has had on European cultures over many centuries. In Russia, SEFER, housed at the Moscow Center for the University Teaching of Jewish Civilization, is an umbrella organization for university Jewish Studies in the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) and the Baltic States.

#### DONORS AND ENDOWMENTS

Jewish individual and communal philanthropy have always been essential components of academic Jewish Studies in North America at both private and public institutions; this support has waxed and waned over the decades. Since the 1980s, donors have funded, in great part, the establishment and expansion of Jewish/Judaic Studies positions and programs at a variety of North American institutions, although it is important to point out that there are positions and programs at institutions, both private and public, where external funding has not played a role. The growth of personal wealth in this era, along with increasing communal concern about strengthening Jewish identity at a formative period in young people's lives and a deep commitment by many donors to providing academic support for Holocaust and Israel Studies, have led to a proliferation of endowed faculty positions, programs, and Jewish/Judaic Studies centers, both at public and private research universities offering graduate degrees and at institutions with a primary focus on undergraduate education. Data from the 2000-2001 National Jewish Population Survey indicating that as many as 41% of Jewish students in North America take at least one course in Jewish Studies during their undergraduate or graduate careers has added further impetus to such initiatives.

There is no doubt that the investment of philanthropic resources to fund Jewish Studies has been a wonderful boon for North American colleges and universities and for the field itself. However, given the economic

downturn at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, it is unclear if such philanthropy will continue to be forthcoming. The future of programs that are wholly or even significantly donor-dependent may be threatened in times of declining portfolios and shrinking endowments. In some cases, the positions founded by philanthropy were under-endowed by current standards or were established with expectations of future gifts that have not been fulfilled. Dependence on donor generosity has also raised challenging issues of academic objectivity versus parochial communal agendas; questions of undue emphasis placed on donors' particular interests and propensities; and concern over the increasing amount of faculty time and effort devoted to fundraising activities. Communal funding of positions in Israel Studies is one area that has proved particularly contentious when scholars who are supported by endowment funds voice views that do not accord with communal and/or donor opinions about Israeli history, society, and politics.<sup>21</sup>

Donor-driven funding for lecture series, visiting scholars, student scholarships, etc., has often placed Jewish Studies programs in a privileged position in relation to other older and larger academic departments, as well as to newer and still struggling academic entities, particularly those with a focus on gender and ethnic studies.<sup>22</sup> In the best circumstances, Jewish Studies program directors have found ways to create intellectual and interdisciplinary partnerships with less well-endowed academic departments and programs in endeavors of mutual interest.

While many donors to Jewish Studies programs at colleges and universities with significant Jewish student bodies have expressed particularistic concerns about educating Jewish students as a way to strengthen Jewish identity formation and communal continuity, others have chosen to endow Jewish Studies positions and programs at institutions, both public and private, that do not have a critical mass of Jewish students, including colleges and universities in parts of North America with small Jewish populations and at institutions linked to the Roman Catholic Church and various Protestant denominations. These donors, some of whom are strongly committed to supporting local institutions, argue that Jewish Studies should be integrated into the academic curriculum of all institutions of higher education; they hope, as well, that exposing diverse groups of students to academic study of aspects of the Jewish experience will increase understanding and tolerance in the larger North American society.

It is difficult to predict the role of external fundraising in supporting academic Jewish Studies in the decades ahead. In the second decade

of the twenty-first century, development officers at numerous institutions are under significant pressure to raise large endowments in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), since investment and success in these areas enhances an institution's national and international research status. Thus, development officers, often committed to billion dollar campaigns, are increasingly unlikely to invest significant energies in encouraging potential donors to invest in Jewish Studies support when such individuals may be capable of making large gifts in areas that the university values far more and that may garner far more public attention and university esteem for the donor. Jewish donors, in 2013, are likely to have very different interests and goals that are not as committed to Jewish concerns as those of philanthropists of previous generations. Nor are Jewish communal organizations, themselves beset by a cacophony of competing needs, likely to continue significant investment in academic Jewish Studies. For one thing, now that local rabbis are rarely involved in Jewish Studies pedagogy at most academic institutions, connections between venerated leaders of large congregations and academic instruction in Jewish Studies—often a source of endowment funding from wealthy members of the Jewish community—have been severed. Moreover, community priorities directed at young people, such as ensuring Jewish identity enhancement and continued communal involvement, have found other funding alternatives. Taglit-Birthright Israel, for example, which is directed only at a Jewish constituency between the ages of 18 and 26, has had significant success in achieving its stated goals of “discovery of Israel and its people, discovery of one's own personal connection to Jewish values and tradition, and discovery of the ways in which one can be a part of the larger Jewish community” in Israel and worldwide ([www.birthrightisrael.com](http://www.birthrightisrael.com)), can make convincing claims to be a more meaningful investment of resources for Jewish continuity than support of academic Jewish Studies.<sup>23</sup> In coming years, positions and programs in academic Jewish Studies that have solid capital endowments, particularly those at colleges and universities that attract a significant Jewish undergraduate enrollment, will probably continue to flourish; others that rest on shakier financial foundations and are located in regions with small Jewish populations may have far more difficulty in garnering ongoing support.

## FUTURE CHALLENGES

Many Jewish Studies academics who earned their degrees in the 1960s and 1970s, and who benefited from the burgeoning of Jewish Studies programmatic support in the last decades of the twentieth century, have already retired or will leave fulltime employment soon. It is not clear how many of their positions will continue to be supported institutionally, particularly in instances where external support is lacking or diminishing. A strong threat to the continued funding of many of these tenure-track lines is a larger general decline in student interest, as indicated by numbers of majors and course enrollees in the Humanities, the academic division in which Jewish Studies programs most commonly reside. This phenomenon has been much discussed and is often attributed to the economic anxieties of students and their parents that the sizeable investment required for a university education should yield a degree that will lead to well-remunerated employment. While such concerns are less likely to affect the numbers of students who choose to major in Jewish Studies, always a small group even in the best of circumstances, they also have an impact on the selection of elective courses by non-majors. More and more Humanities units, as their numbers of majors and minors decline, must focus on offering “service courses” that fulfill distributional categories required for graduation. In such an environment, where administrators look carefully at “metrics,” including the numbers of majors and course enrollments, in making decisions about how to allocate scarce resources, Jewish Studies programs and faculty positions are significantly at risk.

Similarly, at many colleges and universities that do not have second language requirements for the B.A. degree, separate departments devoted to a particular family of languages and literatures (such as Romance Languages, German and Scandinavian, East Asian, Comparative Literature, etc.) are being dissolved and merged into large language and culture units. Jewish Studies programs that offer Hebrew or other languages can find themselves swept into these larger heterogeneous conglomerations that have no special commitment to a Jewish Studies agenda. Classics departments, which sometimes house Jewish Studies faculty members, are also at significant risk almost everywhere. Again, this is especially the case if external funding is diminishing or absent.

Another concern is a decline in Jewish students. Changing demographics in the early twenty-first century indicate clearly that the absolute numbers of Jews in the larger populations of the United States and

Canada, including student populations, is steadily falling. The future of Jewish Studies in North American universities will depend, at least in part, on the field's continuing appeal to a larger constituency. Most Jewish Studies programs design their undergraduate curriculum and courses to appeal and to be accessible to the broadest possible student audiences; in part this is accomplished by ensuring that courses fulfill university "general education" and "diversity" requirements. Increasingly in the twenty-first century, more and more students who take courses and choose undergraduate majors and graduate training in Jewish Studies are non-Jews who have come to the field out of intellectual curiosity, not out of interest in their own religious or ethnic heritage. Similarly, many scholars and faculty members who work in Jewish Studies in North America and abroad are not themselves Jews. This phenomenon is indicative of an apparent integration of Jewish Studies into higher education as the field has moved beyond being an academic venture "about Jews, by Jews, and for Jews."<sup>24</sup> However, this apparent "normalization" of Jewish Studies within the university also points to potential future conflicts in several areas. One is the dissonance that sometimes develops between academic Jewish Studies programs and the concerns of the Jewish communities, an issue discussed above. It is also evident that the seeming incorporation of faculty members with Jewish Studies research specialties into regular academic department may prove short-lived in an atmosphere of shrinking resources and increasing funding competition within and among academic units. Administrators, beset by serious budget shortfalls, will tend to privilege investments that meet demonstrated student demand (course enrollments, numbers of majors) and fulfill larger institutional goals.

And finally, the rapid growth of online learning alternatives, including MOOCs (massive open online courses), present exciting pedagogic opportunities, but they also may have detrimental effects on employment opportunities for academics in research areas that are considered marginal to the mainstream. At this time, it is impossible to predict the impact of these new approaches and technologies on the traditional structures of higher education in general, or on Jewish Studies in particular. It is, however, ironic and disturbing that these significant challenges to the field should arise at a time when the training of excellent young researchers and the quality, creativity, and expansive diversity of scholarly production in North American Jewish Studies are at historic high points.

## NOTES

1. This essay is based on a keynote address delivered by the author in Toronto, Ontario, on October 14, 2012, at the annual conference of the Midwestern Judaic Studies Association; the talk was cosponsored by the Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies of York University.

2. Ritterband and Wechsler, *Jewish Learning in American Universities: The First Century*, 10. This book provides a comprehensive and detailed account of the establishment of Jewish Studies positions and programs in the United States from the late nineteenth century through the 1960s. The authors' well-documented narrative delineates the roles and contributions of individual communal leaders and major scholars, particular Jewish communities, and specific institutions of higher education, and also discusses the evolving content of Jewish Studies university-level courses and the makeup of their audiences over the decades.

3. On the *Wissenschaft* movement and its impact on the establishment of positions in Semitics in certain North American universities, see Ritterband and Wechsler, 1-44. For the history of the American Academy for Jewish Research, see <http://www.aaajr.org/>.

4. Ritterband and Wechsler, 124-49.

5. Ritterband and Wechsler, 233-36. For a contemporaneous expression of opposition to the establishment of autonomous Jewish Studies programs from those who preferred the integration of Jewish Studies specialists into mainstream departments, see Lou H. Silberman, "The University and Jewish Studies," 15.

6. On the founding of the AJS, see Kristen Loveland, 2; and Ritterband and Wechsler, 214-15. A major stimulus in the establishment of the AJS was an article by Arnold J. Band, 1-30, in which the author described, 3, the significant growth in new positions in Jewish Studies as an indication of "a spread of Jewish Studies as an accepted academic discipline in the American liberal-arts colleges and universities." For the initial negative reaction of the WUJS to the establishment of the AJS, see Loveland, 10.

7. Loveland, 2. The proceedings of this initial meeting were published as *The Teaching of Judaica in American Universities: The Proceedings of a Colloquium*, ed. Leon Jick (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1970). On the debate about whether the organization should use the nomenclature "Jewish Studies" or "Judaic Studies," see Loveland, 5. In the 1970s and 1980s Jacob Neusner wrote and edited several books about the place of Jewish Studies in the university; these include *The Academic Study of Judaism: Essays and Reflections* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1975); and *idem*, ed., *New Humanities and Academic Disciplines: The Case of Jewish Studies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

8. Loveland, 11-12.

9. For a survey of some of the major contributors and contributions, see Judith R. Baskin and Marsha Rozenblit.

10. On the initial impact of women's studies on various fields within Jewish Studies, see Lynn Davidman and Shelly Tenenbaum.

11. On the formation and growth of the AJS Women's Caucus, see Loveland, 14.
12. See Loveland, 3-4, on these and similar conversations that took place at early meetings of the AJS. She writes, 4, "Despite these initial, extended discussions, the AJS never took more than an informal role in advising the creation and evolution of Jewish studies programs and departments in North America. Two problems confronted a potentially more active role. First, AJS members were as yet undecided as to what exactly constituted a general Jewish studies education, whether Hebrew should be a requirement, what curricula should be included in survey courses, and whether Jewish studies had a specific methodology. Further, it was in practice difficult to mandate a 'one size fits all' program to universities, each unique in its structure, history, and rationale for Jewish studies" (Loveland cites Gerson D. Cohen here, "An Embarrassment of Riches: On the Condition of American Jewish Scholarship in 1969," in Jick, ed., *The Teaching of Judaica*, 141, 147.)
13. For perspectives on this debate in 1969, see Sandmel, "Scholar or Apologist?" and Branscomb, "A Note on Establishing Chairs of Jewish Studies."
14. Such collections include Zev Garber, ed and Judith R. Baskin and Shelly Tenenbaum. The AJS maintains a syllabus archive with access restricted to active members.
15. Greenberg, "Scholarship and Continuity: Dilemma and Dialectic," 116.
16. Alfred Jospe, "Academic Jewish Studies: Objectivity or Advocacy," 78.
17. Ritterband and Wechsler, *Jewish Learning*, 219-20.
18. Cattán, "Judaic Studies Classes See Enrollment Boom."
19. Freedman, "Classes in Judaic Studies, Drawing a Non-Jewish Class."
20. Lewis, "The Jewish Studies Professor as Communal Leader"; see also, Meyer, "The Persistent Tensions Within *Wissenschaft des Judentums*."
21. For an account of conflict between a professor and program donors, see Jonathan Mahler, "Howard's End: Why A Leading Jewish Studies Scholar Gave Up His Academic Career."
22. See essays in David Biale, Michael Galchinsky, and Susanna Heschel, *Insider/Outsider: American Jews and Multiculturalism*.
23. On the impressive results of this program see, for example, Saxe, Shain, Wright, Hecht, Fishman, and Sasson, "The Impact of Taglit-Birthright Israel: 2012 Update."
24. Freedman.

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