



# Yale Program for the Study of Antisemitism

NEWSLETTER • ACADEMIC YEAR 2020–2021

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## From the Director



Maurice Samuels

It is always a strange exercise to view a year through the lens of antisemitism, but this year it seems especially strange to do so. The pandemic was awful in so many ways that singling out the Jewish experience might strike some as wrong. And antisemitic acts did in fact drop during the pandemic. Or rather, they moved on line, where paranoid fantasies that Jews created the coronavirus joined the chorus of other crazy conspiracy theories. In May, however, the conflict in Gaza led to an uptick in antisemitism that has left many wondering whether attitudes toward Jews have undergone a major shift.

The Anti-Defamation League reported finding more than 17,000 tweets with variations of “Hitler was right” posted between May 7 and May 14, 2021. And the violence was not only virtual. A 29-year-old man wearing a kippa, on his way to a rally, was beaten by a gang yelling antisemitic slurs in the middle of Times Square. In Los Angeles, men drove through the streets of a Jewish neighborhood shouting “Israel kills children” from a megaphone before attacking diners at an outdoor restaurant. Dozens of other hate crimes against Jews were reported in the US and across the world.

On one level, this is nothing new. Antisemitism always surges after conflicts in the Middle East. Something this summer felt different, though, both globally and closer to home. Yale did not see any act of violence or vandalism like the defacement of the Hillel building that occurred at Harvard, but statements denouncing Israel’s policies issued by the Ethnicity, Race, and Migration Program and by the Yale College Council left many feeling profoundly uncomfortable. We may hope that the exit of Netanyahu will decrease the animosity felt on the left, but I think it is fair to say that expressing any kind of support for Israel is becoming increasingly difficult on college campuses, including at Yale.

This coming year, we hope to sponsor more talks that will try to shed light on the current situation on college campuses and in the US more generally. It is vitally important that Jews and antisemitism become part of the conversation on race that is taking place on campus. Toward that end, we were proud to sponsor a special Zoom lecture series last year that focused on the relationship between antisemitism and other forms of racism. We kicked things off with an event in September titled “Shifting Affinities: Cultural Investigation of the ‘Black-Jewish Relations’ Paradigm,” featuring Jeffrey Melnick, a Professor at the University of Massachusetts, and Anthony Mordechai Tzvi Russell, a vocalist, composer, and arranger. In October, I engaged Cathy Park Hong in a conversation about her book *Minor Feelings: An Asian-American Reckoning*, which went on to win the National Book Critics Circle Award and to be a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Also in October, Professor Cheryl Greenberg spoke about “American Jews and Racial Liberalism: Lessons for Our Time.” In December, Professor Terrence L. Johnson, of Georgetown University, delivered a talk entitled “Grounds for Hope: Blacks, Jews, and the Future of Democracy.”

(continues on page 2)

## From the Director (continued)

In addition to this special lecture series, we sponsored a number of talks that drew a connection between historical forms of fascism and current events. Yale's own Jason Stanley talked about "Antisemitism and White Supremacy," and Ruth Ben-Ghiat of NYU delivered a lecture on "Antisemitism and Fantasies of National Purity from Mussolini to the Present." Several other talks focused on the experience of Jews during WWII. These included Berkeley Professor Ethan Katz's lecture entitled "Rebel Alliance in Algiers: The Unlikely Band of Jews and Antisemites that Helped Turn the Tide in WWII"; Philip Nord of Princeton who gave a talk entitled "After the Deportation: Memory Battles in Post-War France"; and James McAuley, who gave a talk entitled "The House of Fragile Things: Jewish Art Collectors and the Fall of France." Rounding out the year were talks by Adam Stern, the former YPSA postdoc, who spoke about his new book, *Survival: A Theological-Political Genealogy*, and Alex Ross, music critic of *The New Yorker*, who delivered a lecture entitled, "The Unforgiven: Wagner, Jews, and Antisemitism."

One of the great advantages of the Zoom format is that all of these lectures were recorded and are available for viewing on the YPSA website. We were also able to draw a much larger audience for our Zoom talks than we normally get in person. As I write this, we are still not sure whether we will be allowed to host in-person events this coming year, but we hope to maintain a virtual format for at least some events. I urge you to check our website frequently for updates.

Let me conclude by thanking all of those who helped make this difficult year such a success. My thanks go first to Alice Kaplan, the director of the Whitney Humanities Center, and to Diane Berrett Brown, the associate director, who helped facilitate our shift to Zoom and who were invaluable interlocutors as I planned the lecture series. I also want to thank the colleagues who served on the YPSA Advisory Board. And as always, I'm deeply indebted to our administrator, Inessa Laskova, for helping to put everything together.

I hope that I will see you all soon in our new home at 320 York Street, in the beautifully refurbished Humanities Quadrangle!



Maurice Samuels  
*Director, Yale Program for the Study of Antisemitism*

*Through the generous support of the Salo W. and Jeannette M. Baron Foundation, YPSA was able to award six research grants this year.*

**Christopher Atkins**, graduate student in Religious Studies and Classics

*Jewish and Egyptian Polemic, Priesthood, and Philosophy at Rome in 41 CE*

This project seeks to illuminate the intersection of ethnicity, religious identity, and imperial philosophy during a formative episode of anti-Judaism in antiquity: the events surrounding the delegations of the Alexandrian Jewish community to the Roman emperors Gaius Caligula and Claudius in 39 and 41 CE. Ethnic violence and attacks against Jews raged in 38/39 CE during the tenure of the Roman governor Flaccus. Flaccus rescinded the Jews' rights of citizenship, thereby making them resident foreigners. This occasioned the formation and commission of a Jewish embassy in 39 CE to Gaius in Rome. Yet the Jewish delegation was by all accounts a failure: the Jews, who would not render worship to Gaius as a god, were accused of impiety and sedition. Soon after, however, Gaius was himself assassinated and Claudius took the throne (41 CE), resulting in a second Jewish embassy. Claudius restored some rights but not citizenship to Jews. While many scholars have explored these traumatic events' political ramifications, both immediate and on into the devastating Kitois War of 115–117 CE, this project refocuses the conversation on the roles, relationship, and common strategies between the Jewish philosopher and Torah commentator Philo and the Egyptian priest and Stoic philosopher Chaeremon. Both Alexandrians — one Jewish, one Egyptian — represented their communities on rival delegations to Rome and appear to have adopted similar strategies. I consider the ways in which Philo creatively appropriated the philosophical and religious values of imperial culture to counter polemical ethnic slanders and thereby to defend the Jewish community as a beacon of philosophical-religious excellence and social-political stability. More broadly, the project seeks to illuminate the embodied strategies of ancient Jewish communities for relating to and defining themselves within a dominant imperial culture in innovative ways. In this way, the project contributes to a larger conversation about historical circumstances of imperial expansion and ethnic violence that occasioned creative intellectual and cultural responses of Jewish self-fashioning.

**Clare Kemmerer**, graduate student in the Divinity School

The Deggendorfer Gnad was, until 1992, one of the longest-running Roman Catholic pilgrimages in Europe. Culminating in a visit to the Holy Sepulchre Church in Deggendorf, Bavaria, the pilgrimage commemorated the desecration of a host in the fourteenth century, a story associated with a massacre of the city's Jewish residents that occurred in this century. This project will examine both the Deggendorfer Gnad and other, less prominent host miracle stories in the context of the political and economic environments that produced them and the material culture that commemorated them. Culminat-

ing in site visits to host-miracle shrines in Germany and Austria, the project will attend particularly to the ways that host-miracle stories were commemorated and disseminated, examining the “long shadow” cast on the culture of this region by the pervasive presence of these sites, stories, and objects.

**Charlotte Kiechel**, graduate student in History

My dissertation, “The Politics of Comparison: Holocaust Memory and Vision of ‘Third World Suffering,’” charts a new history of Holocaust memory. It uncovers the critical role that visions of past Nazi crimes and mass Jewish death played in defining West Europeans’ confrontations with non-European suffering. And it reaffirms Holocaust memory’s import in shaping the global Cold War’s political vernacular. As part of this project, I look at how members of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) deployed the memory of the Holocaust in their mid-century campaigns against empire. Between 1954 and 1962 and in the context of the Algerian War of Independence, FLN members produced a canon of anti-atrocity literature. The chief ambitions of this canon were twofold. First, it aimed to document the extent of Algerians’ sufferings. Second, it aimed to incite moral and political outrage. In an effort to realize both ambitions, FLN members frequently drew upon a constellation of Nazi-inflected reference points and, as such, mentions of past Jewish suffering also filtered into their relevant discussions. With the generous support of the Salo W. and Jeannette M. Baron Student Research Grant, I will be able to consult this corpus of anti-atrocity literature. This summer, I will travel to archival collections in France and Algeria. And there, I will evaluate how visions of Jewish and “Third World” suffering became entwined.

**Linford Ranck and Basya Gartenstein**, graduate students in the Divinity School

*Linford Ranck and Basya Gartenstein are emerging religious leaders in their respective communities (Orthodox Jewish and Episcopalian Christian).*

This project serves as a testing ground for applying academic theories of religious pluralism to inter-religious education and friendship among members of the “Abrahamic faiths” – in this case, Christians and Jews. To do so, stereotypically informed narratives of the religious “other” are confronted by connecting lay members of religious communities at times absent from the tables of inter-religious exchange. Social media can fuel intergenerational mistrust, sectarian triumphalism, and uncontested images and stories that inform and generate anti-semitism in communities that lack exposure to one another. Such essentialism requires oversimplifications and reductionism; therefore, this project aims at expanding the narrow perspectives that drive problematic images that Jews and Christians harbor toward one another. We hope to leverage the power of social media to promote a more nuanced conversation by producing a video series that addresses issues of religious difference at the heart of anti-Judaism. Viewers

will have a platform for questions and responses to the video series via a two-hour Zoom forum. Through this educational project, viewers and respondents will learn to articulate how anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism are linked to one another and the role of inter-religious encounter and relationship in addressing these challenges between the Christian and Jewish communities. The approach of this project is guided by acknowledgment of difficult histories and religious differences to build toward a new shared understanding. Ultimately, we will model ways to forge an informed friendship between members of the two groups that can reach beyond tolerance.

**Adam Tucker**, undergraduate student in Molecular Biology

The main objective of my research is to shine light upon the differences between American and Israeli perspectives on antisemitism. In particular, my project will examine how differing Israeli and American notions of antisemitism may serve as an overlooked factor underlying a broader Israeli-American political divide. In addition to examining scholarly perspectives, I plan to conduct interviews with Jewish Americans and Israelis of diverse backgrounds in order to connect the historical evolution of distinct conceptions of antisemitism with contemporary differences in lived reality. With the hope of fostering greater mutual understanding, I aim to reconcile the unique American and Israeli points of view in the context of each Jewish community’s own historical and cultural narratives.

**Carolyn Dean**, Charles J. Stille Professor of History and French

Carolyn J. Dean is historian of modern Europe with a focus on the twentieth century whose work explores the intersection of ideas and culture, most recently in the context of genocide. Her latest book, *The Moral Witness: Trials and Testimony after Genocide* (Cornell, 2019), traces the history of the witness to genocide, tracking the changing representation of violence over the last hundred years and demonstrating how the cultural meaning of genocide was distinguished from war and imperial conquest. She is the author of five other books that focus on the historical and cultural representation of victims, most recently *Aversion and Erasure: The Fate of the Victim after the Holocaust* (Cornell, 2010) and *The Fragility of Empathy after the Holocaust* (Cornell, 2004). She has also written extensively about gender and sexuality in France and on the intellectual history of French theory. She held the John Hay Professor of International Studies at Brown University, where she taught before coming to Yale in 2013, and has been the recipient of several fellowships, including an ACLS and a Guggenheim, among others. In 1996 she was awarded Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Council for the Advancement of Support of Education.

## The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series

Wednesday, September 23

**Jeffrey Melnick**, Graduate Program Director, American Studies Department, University of Massachusetts

**Anthony Mordechai Tzvi Russell**, vocalist, composer, arranger

“Shifting Affinities: Cultural Investigation of the ‘Black-Jewish Relations’ Paradigm”

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Wednesday, October 7

**Cathy Park Hong** in conversation with **Maurice Samuels**

“Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning”

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Wednesday, October 21

**Cheryl Greenberg**, Paul E. Raether Distinguished Professor of History, Trinity College

“American Jews and Radical Liberalism: Lessons for Our Time”

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Wednesday, November 18

**Ethan Katz**, Associate Professor of History and Jewish Studies, University of California, Berkeley

“Rebel Alliance in Algiers: The Unlikely Band of Jews and Antisemites That Helped Turn the Tide in World War II”  
*Sponsored by the Yale Program for the Study of Antisemitism and the Center for Jewish Studies at the University of California, Berkeley*

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Wednesday, December 2

**Terrence L. Johnson**, Associate Professor of Religion and Politics, Georgetown University

“Grounds for Hope: Blacks, Jews, and the Future of Democracy”

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Thursday, February 11

**Jason Stanley**, Professor of Philosophy and Linguistics, Yale University

“Antisemitism and White Supremacy”

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Tuesday, February 23

**Ruth Ben-Ghiat**, Professor of History and Italian Studies, New York University

“Antisemitism and Fantasies of National Purity from Mussolini to the Present”

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Ruth Ben-Ghiat

Wednesday, March 10

**Philip G. Nord**, Professor of History, Princeton, in conversation with **Carolyn Dean** and **Maurice Samuels** about his new book, *After the Deportation: Memory Battles in Postwar France*

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Wednesday, March 31

**Adam Stern**, University of Wisconsin-Madison, in discussion with **Paul North**, Yale University  
“Survival: A Theological-Political Genealogy”

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Wednesday, April 28

**Alex Ross**, music critic, *The New Yorker*  
“The Unforgiven: Wagner, Jews, and Antisemitism”  
*Sponsored by Yale Program for the Study of Antisemitism, Whitney Humanities Center and Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures*

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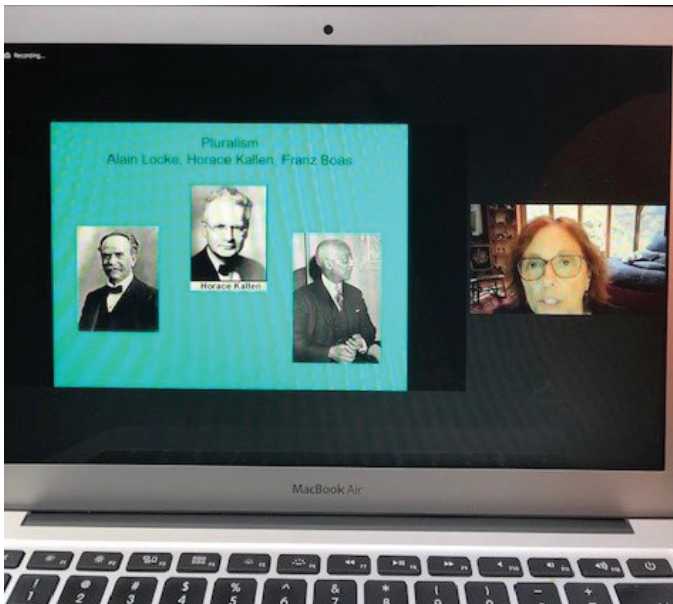
Maurice Samuels and Terrence L. Johnson

Wednesday, May 12

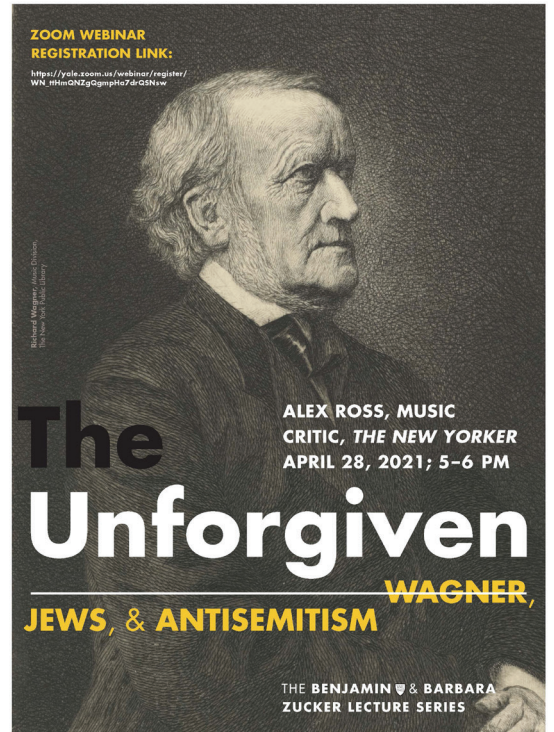
**James McAuley**, Global Opinions columnist, *The Washington Post*

“The House of Fragile Things: Jewish Art Collectors and the Fall of France”

Sponsored by Yale Program for the Study of Antisemitism and Whitney Humanities Center



Cheryl Greenberg

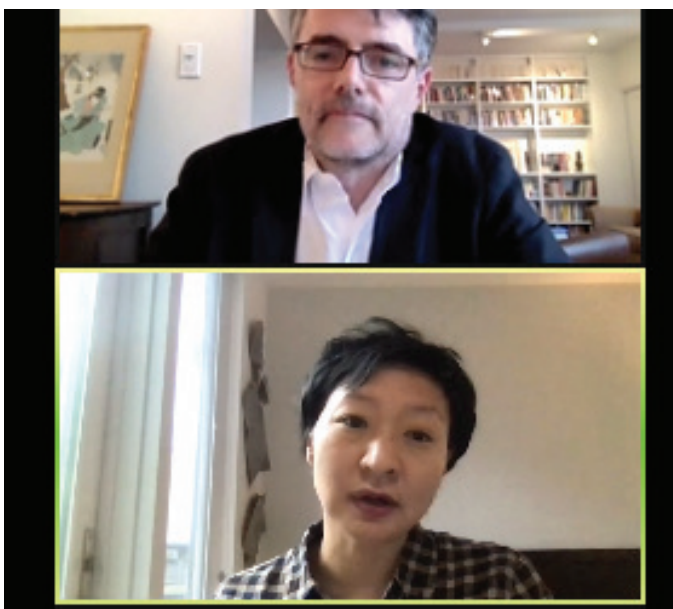


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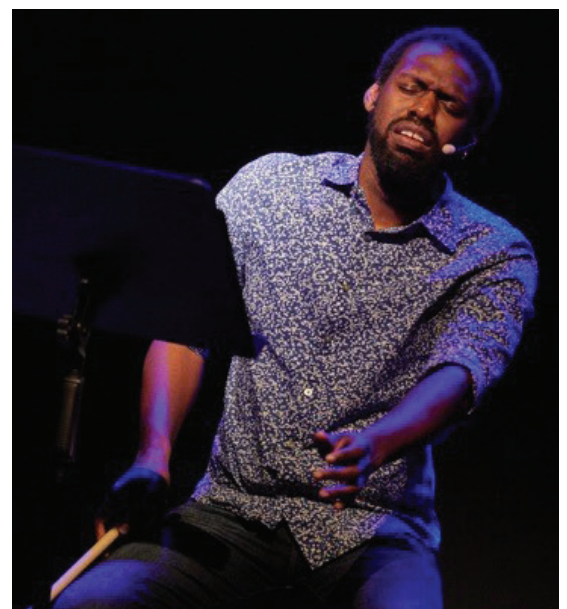
ALEX ROSS has been the music critic of *The New Yorker* since 1996. He is the author of *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (2007), *Listen to This* (2010), and *Wagnerism: Art and Politics in the Shadow of Music* (2020). In 2008 he was named a MacArthur Fellow.

**YALE PROGRAM FOR THE STUDY OF ANTISEMITISM**

Alex Ross, music critic, *The New Yorker*



Maurice Samuels and Cathy Park Hong



Anthony Mordechai Tzvi Russell