

Shalom

News from the

AZRIELI INSTITUTE OF ISRAEL STUDIES

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Message from the Co-Directors

We are pleased to present the inaugural issue of Azrieli Institute Newsletter.

The Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies is a multi-disciplinary research centre that brings together faculty, researchers and students who share a common passion and dedication to the study of Israel across many fields, including archaeology, history, religion, political science, economics, art, literature, anthropology and sociology.



As you will read in these pages, it has been an exciting year for the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies. In the short time since the Institute was born, we have welcomed our academic advisory group and affiliated scholars, moved into new facilities, launched a new website and will soon be reviewing applications for requests for faculty and graduate research funding for the 2012-2013 academic year.

At present, we are working on a new Minor in Israel Studies at the undergraduate level and developing an exciting schedule of lectures, conferences and events by recognized scholars and world renowned experts which we will announce at a later date.

We are proud to serve as the first Co-Directors of the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies which exemplifies Concordia University's commitment to excellence in teaching and to enhancing the University's research capacity to ensure a strong and solid foundation for life-long learning. We invite you to visit the pages of our website or call us to learn more about the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies.

Norma Joseph
Co-Director
Associate Professor, Religion

Csaba Nikolenyi
Co-Director
Professor and Chair, Political Science

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What has the Institute been up to?

Since the announcement of the creation of the Institute, the Co-Directors have focused on five major areas during the past year: physical location; staffing; web presence; establishing a transparent and solid organizational structure; and community outreach.

New facilities for the Institute

The Institute is housed in the Bronfman building on Docteur Penfield. The Faculty of Arts and Science provided infrastructural support by supplying the Institute with furniture, phone equipment and phone lines, computers for the Co-Directors and the assistant; a photocopying machine and bookcases for the reading room. Over the next few months, the Institute will be moving to a permanent office on the 4th floor, which formally housed the Canadian Jewish Congress. This will provide a welcoming environment with freshly painted walls, artwork, a small resourceful library and of course the staff.

The Institute started the development of its in-house reading room collection. We have subscribed to the three leading academic journals in Israel Studies, which will be available for our researchers and students on site. In addition, we started building a reference collection which includes the *Israeli Statistical Abstracts* and several volumes from the *Israel Studies* series of Brandeis University Press. We have already received a number of visitors at our temporary offices including Joel Lion, the Consul-General of the State of Israel, Iris Felix from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and David Tal, Kahanoff Chair of Israel Studies at the University of Calgary.

Meet Jennifer Solomon Assistant to the Co-Directors

On February 8, 2012, Jennifer Solomon started as the Assistant to the Directors at the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies. She graduated from Concordia University with an undergraduate in Judaic Studies and continued her studies in management and public administration. Ms. Solomon comes to us from the Jewish Public Library, where she spent over 7 years as the Financial Development Officer. As a volunteer, she is currently the Vice-President of Na'amat-Canada Montreal and a member of its National board of directors.



Ms. Solomon's main responsibility is overseeing the day to day logistical affairs of the Institute. Once students begin to enrol in the minor, she will advise students on the Institute's procedures and requirements, responds to their inquiries regarding eligibility for fellowships, and inform the internal and external communities of Institute events.

We are now online

On April 30th, the Institute launched its website located at <http://azrieli-institute.concordia.ca>. We owe gratitude to Lynn Roy and Laurie Laforest at the Faculty of Arts and Science, whose incessant support and dedication made the timely completion of this project possible. The website plays a crucial role in our communications strategy as we position the Institute in the national and global academic community. The website allows researchers and students to learn about funding opportunities; it showcases the scholarly and professional achievements of our faculty; in general, it promotes the visibility of the Institute as the leading centre of its kind in Canada. The creation of the website has allowed us to be included in the global list of Israel Studies centres and institutes maintained by the Association of Israel Studies.



Institute business

We have made strides in developing the organizational and governance structure of the Institute. On March 2nd we held our first major meeting that brought together all the affiliated members of the Institute from the University. The meeting allowed the Co-Directors to brief their colleagues about past developments as well as discuss new directions of research and teaching. Following the meeting the Co-Directors convened the meeting of the Institute's Academic Advisory Group that developed the content of the undergraduate minor which will be submitted to the Faculty of Arts and Science for further consideration and input. The Co-Directors are pleased to note that according to the progress made the minor is on track to be launched on time in the Fall of 2013. The Academic Advisory Group also started the development of a non-academic External Advisory Board that will consist of community members and stakeholders. The group agreed that the Institute will hold a conference next year which will be devoted to a specific theme in Israel Studies; the proceeding of the conference will be published in an academic outlet.

Minor in Israel Studies

The Academic Advisory Group is in the process of developing a program intended for undergraduate students in the Faculty of Arts and Science who wish to complement their core area of study with a selection of courses on Israel. The minor will comprise of a maximum of 6 credits in language courses, with a focus on Hebrew. The disciplines offered within this minor are Art History, Classics, Modern Languages and Linguistics, English, History, Political Science, and Religion.

Association for Israel Studies (AIS)

The AIS is an international scholarly society devoted to the academic and professional study of Israel. Several of our members are already active in the Association whose membership is composed of scholars from all disciplines in the social sciences and many in the humanities. This year, the AIS will hold its annual meeting at the University of Haifa where a number of Concordia faculty will be present to deliver papers and engage in the scholarly discussions. The Co-Directors have initiated conversations with the AIS Executive about the possibility of holding a future conference in Montreal at Concordia University. The proposal was met with enthusiasm; discussions are underway towards submitting a formal application to host the conference.

Co-Director Awarded Fellowship

We are proud to report that Csaba Nikolenyi was awarded a prestigious Summer Institute Fellowship at the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies in 2012. As a Fellow, Professor Nikolenyi will participate in an intensive workshop on Israel Studies that will take place both at Brandeis University and in Israel. Professor Nikolenyi's nomination was supported by the Faculty of Arts and Science. Upon his return he will offer a course on the Politics and Government of Israel. The Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, founded in 2007, is dedicated to promoting exemplary teaching and scholarship in Israeli history, politics, culture, and society at Brandeis University and beyond. The Center is committed to advancing knowledge and understanding of the modern State of Israel by training a new generation of scholars and teachers, building a vibrant academic community, and supporting research, publications, and conferences. It seeks to make Brandeis a hub for nurturing and catalyzing Israel Studies. Professor Nikolenyi's fellowship positions the Institute extremely well to become a major player on the international scene of Israel Studies.

Institute Events

While much of the past year was spent on organizational business to set the Institute on firm and solid footing, we also organized two events in the month of March. On March 19th, David Tal gave a presentation about "The Origins and Development of Israel's National Security Conception". In his talk, Tal argued that the premises that were in the heart of Israel's security conception in the first years of statehood are still powerful, even with the great changes that reshaped Israel's strategic environment and scope.

On March 29th, Csaba Nikolenyi gave a lecture to undergraduate students about the Israeli electoral system. He argued that in terms of its political institutions and the consequences that they generate, Israel is firmly rooted in the Western political tradition; as a result the country's democratic system of government remains a unique phenomenon in the region of the Middle East.

Funding Opportunities

In an effort to promote faculty-based projects, stimulate research and teaching, and contribute to the study of the state of Israel, locally, nationally and internationally, the Institute is offering financial support in the form of grants and scholarships in the following categories:

Graduate fellowships:

Current Concordia graduate students can apply for one of two graduate fellowships, valued at \$7,000 each.

Post-doctoral fellowships:

Applicants with a completed, or nearly completed, PhD can apply for a \$24,000 post-doctoral fellowship.

Support for faculty research:

Full-time faculty members can apply for research funds to carry out their research in Israel Studies.

The deadline to apply for these grants is Tuesday, July 31, 2012. For details please visit: <http://azrieli-institute.concordia.ca/funding/>

Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies Book Award

We are pleased to inform you that we have entered into an agreement with the Jewish Public Library of Montreal to sponsor an Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies Book Award as part of the biennial J.I. Segal Book Awards.

Professor Nikolenyi will be chairing the jury committee that will award this prize for the best book published in the field of Israel Studies in either English or French.

What's coming up at the Institute?

We are planning a colloquium series to be held during each semester of the 2012-13 academic year. We will announce the series on our website once finalized.

Stay tuned!

Academic Advisory Group

An Academic Advisory Group who are actively engaged in cutting edge academic research about Israeli political institutions; the peace process; media and communications; religious, gender and diaspora identity; as well as the Holocaust, coordinates all activities of the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies.



Some of the members of the Academic Advisory Group (from left to right): Csaba Nikolenyi, Bina Freiwald, Norrin Ripsman, Norma Joseph, Michael Oppenheim, Loren Lerner, and Lorenzo DiTommaso.

Norma Joseph, Co-Director Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies Department of Religion

Norma Baumel Joseph is a member of the Department of Religion, Director of the Women and Religion specialization, and an Associate of the Concordia Institute for Canadian Jewish Studies. Her teaching and research areas include women and Judaism, Jewish law and ethics, and women and religion. Norma appeared in and was consultant to the films *Half the Kingdom* and *Untying the Bonds...Jewish Divorce*. While continuing to work on Jewish law and gender, Norma Joseph applies an anthropological approach to the study of food, identity and gender. In 2002, she edited a collection on gender, food and survival in Judaism. Over the years she has held numerous grants supporting this research. She currently is studying the effects of food and gender on the identity and adaptation of an Iraqi Jewish community living in Montreal. This research is directly linked to collaboration with colleagues in Israel.

Csaba Nikolenyi, Co-Director Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies Department of Political Science

Csaba Nikolenyi received his PhD from The University of British Columbia in 2000 and joined the Department of Political Science at Concordia University the same year. His research focuses on electoral and party politics in new and non-Western democracies. He has recently published a single-authored book on *Minority Governments in India*; he has also published extensively in leading national and international comparative politics journals such as *Party Politics*, *West European Politics*, *Political Studies*, *Journal of Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, *the Japanese Journal of Political Science*, and *Europe-Asia Studies*. Csaba has received a number of research grants, all of them as principal investigator, from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. His current project looks at the politics of party switching and party cohesion in Israel and India. Between 2006 and 2011 he was English Co-Editor of the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, the flagship publication of the political science profession in Canada. In 2007-2008 he held a Forschheimer Visiting Professorship at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. From 2009 to

2011 he was Administrator of the Academic Code of Conduct in the Faculty of Arts and Science; since June 2011 he has been Chair of the Department of Political Science. In July 2011 he co-convened a workshop on Canadian and Israeli political parties at the Hebrew University's Halbert Centre of Canadian Studies.

Grant Brown **Department of Biology**

Grant Brown was hired as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biology in 2001. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 2004 and Professor in 2012. Prior to joining Concordia University, Brown was an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, Union College (Schenectady, New York) from 1997-2001. Professor Brown received his PhD (1993) from Memorial University of Newfoundland, followed by an NSERC Postdoctoral Fellowship (University of Saskatchewan, 1993-1996) and a McCain Postdoctoral Fellowship (Mount Allison University, 1996-1997). Continuously funded through NSERC, he has published extensively (more than 110 peer-reviewed papers and invited book chapters) in the fields of behavioural and chemical ecology of fishes. His work addresses both fundamental and applied ecological questions and combines controlled laboratory experiments and natural field studies. Professor Brown maintains active collaborations with colleagues at the University of Saskatchewan, Carleton University, Algoma University and the University of the West Indies.

Lorenzo DiTommaso **Department of Religion**

Lorenzo DiTommaso is currently the Chair and an Associate Professor of the Department of Religion. He specializes in the study of apocalypticism, historical and global. His next book, *The Architecture of Apocalypticism*, the first volume of a trilogy, will be published by Oxford University Press. He is also at work on the second volume of the trilogy, *Apocalypticism and Modern Culture*, and a critical part of his research focuses on fundamentalism in Israel, particularly in its new manifestations, such as popular culture and the Internet.

Bina Freiwald **Department of English**

Bina Toledo Freiwald earned a BA from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and an MA and PhD in English Literature from McGill University. She held a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship at Stanford University and a SSHRC Canada Research Fellowship. She is currently Professor of English Literature at Concordia University. She is Director of the Humanities PhD program and a member of Concordia's Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Society and Culture. Her areas of teaching and research include critical theory, contemporary women writing across genres and national literatures, autobiographical practices, and identity discourses.

Bina's current research is "The Construction of National and Diasporic Identities in Jewish Women's Life Narratives in Palestine/Eretz Israel and Canada 1880-1948." Her publications in the field of Israel studies include the following chapters in scholarly books: "Gender, Nation, and Self-Narration: Three Generations of Dayan Women in Palestine/Israel" in *Tracing the Autobiographical* (2005); "The Subject and the Nation: Canadian and Israeli Women's Autobiographical Writing" in *Precarious Present/Promising Future? Ethnicity and Identities in Canadian Literature* (1996).

Loren Lerner **Department of Art History**

Loren Lerner brings to the Department of Art History a cross-disciplinary formation in art history (MA, University of Michigan), library science (MLS, McGill University), and communication studies (PhD, Université de Montréal). Nineteenth and twentieth-century European and North American art are the main areas of her undergraduate teaching with an emphasis on avant-gardism and topics ranging from identity development, gender and class to the modern experience of otherness, nature and sexuality. In her graduate teaching she has concentrated on ethnic, diasporic and ethical consciousness in North American art-making and the curatorial practices relating to Canadian art.

Dominique McCaughey **Advancement and Alumni Relations**

Me. Dominique McCaughey served as Acting Vice-President, Advancement and Alumni Affairs from September 2010 to January 2012. In January 2012, she was appointed to the newly created position of Associate Vice-President, Advancement and Alumni Relations. In her new role, Me. McCaughey executes strategies for the next phase of University campaigns and continues to build partnerships with individual donors, alumni and the corporate sector. She is a development, fundraising and community-organizing professional with extensive experience, having been associated with a number of well-respected community and social service agencies such as Jewish Family Services of the Baron de Hirsch Institute (now Agence Ometz) and Project Genesis. She is also an attorney with specialization in charity law, family, successions, commercial and corporate law. From 2003 to 2006, she was at the Montreal firm of Robinson Sheppard Shapiro, and in 2003 at Borden Ladner Gervais. Me. McCaughey is a member of the Montreal, Quebec and Canadian Bar Associations, where she has been named to the Charity and Not-for-Profit Law Section. She is actively involved with a number of Montreal based philanthropic organizations, currently as a board member of the Greater Montreal Community Foundation and Agence Ometz.

Michael Oppenheim **Department of Religion**

Michael Oppenheim's research and publications have predominantly been in modern Jewish philosophy, but also include the areas of Comparative Philosophy of Religion, Psychology of Religion, and Feminism. He recently published *Encounters of Consequence: Jewish Philosophy in the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (Academic Studies Press, 2009), which provides an introduction and deeper analysis of the situation of Jewish philosophy in the last century and beyond. It charts Jewish philosophy's engagement with modernity and post-modernity along two overlapping axes - issues and persons – which

often intersect. Key issues in modern Jewish philosophy are raised, including: the nature of Judaism and Jewish identity, the quests for meaning and continuity, the value of remaining a Jew, the relevance of Jewish law, as well as the challenges of secularism, modern history (including the Holocaust), and feminism and religious pluralism. Earlier, he published the book *Jewish Philosophy and Psychoanalysis: Narrating the Interhuman* (Lexington Books, 2006), that examines the correlation between modern Jewish philosophical narratives of the inter-human and contemporary models of the self and others offered by psychoanalytic theorists. The Jewish thinkers are those philosophers of dialogue, Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas. The post-Freudian psychoanalysts include Erikson, Klein, Winnicott and Fairbairn. The next step in this dialogue between Jewish philosophy and post-Freudian psychoanalysis will explore late twentieth century psychoanalysts including Hans Loewald, Stephen Mitchell, and Jessica Benjamin.

Norrin Ripsman **Department of Political Science**

Norrin Ripsman's research focuses on foreign policy and international security. His primary research interests include: the domestic sources of foreign security policy, postwar peacemaking, constructing regional stability, the political economy of national security, the utility of economic sanctions and incentives as foreign policy tools, the impact of globalization on national security, the nature of appeasement in the 1930s and the role of the state in neoclassical realism. In examining these issues, Professor Ripsman has engaged in a number of collaborative studies. He is currently collaborating with Michael Lipson (Concordia) on a project studying member independence within international institutions. Outside of Concordia he is working closely with a number of scholars, including T.V. Paul (McGill University), Jack Levy (Rutgers), Jean-Marc Blanchard (San Francisco State University), Jeff Taliaferro (Tufts University), Steven Lobell (University of Utah), and Christopher Way (Cornell University).