The Scholems: A Story of the German-Jewish Bourgeoisie from Emancipation to Destruction, is a biography of one family over four generations, and a social history of the Jews in Germany, authored by Prof. Jay Howard Geller, director of the Program in Judaic Studies (JDST) at CWRU. According to Professor Geller, his interest in the Scholem family began while doing earlier research for his first book, which examined German-Jewish relations after the Holocaust. “In the course of that research,” he says, “I learned that a Zionist pamphlet had been printed in Berlin in the 1920s, by the firm of Seigfried Scholem. I knew the name Scholem in connection with Gershom Scholem, the great scholar of Jewish mysticism, but I had never heard of Siegfried Scholem. After additional exploration I learned that Siegfried was Gershom’s grandfather, and a publisher of some renown in Berlin. Later, while doing research on the former West German opposition leader, Kurt Schumacher, I came across an encyclopedia entry for Werner Scholem, Gershom’s brother, who was a leading Communist politician in the 1920s.” By then, Prof. Geller says, Gershom Scholem and his family had captured his interest, and he turned to Gershom’s memoir, From Berlin to Jerusalem. There, he learned of two more brothers, one characterized as a liberal centrist, the other as a German nationalist. “I realized,” he says, “that this one family of four brothers represented four different paths that German Jews saw open to them in the early twentieth century.”

Focusing on the family of the famous Jewish philosopher and historian, Gershom Scholem, the book illuminates the transformation of traditional Jews into modern Germans, the challenges they faced, and the ways they responded between Prussia’s emancipation of the Jews in 1812, through their disenfranchisement and exclusion by the Nazis. The story culminates in a tale of four brothers in the 1920s and 1930s—Gershom the Zionist, Werner the Communist, Reinhold the nationalist, and Erich the liberal—presenting an exceptional lens through which to view the experience of the Jewish middle class in Germany.

Released in spring of 2019, the book has been celebrated by all reviewers. If no longer on the bookshelf, it can be ordered at bookstores, online, or at one’s local library. The book is also available at Kelvin Smith Library (KSL), on the CWRU campus.
Student Awards and Honors

The Ira and Ruth Bressler Prize
To a student who has done outstanding work in the area of Jewish Studies.

- **Hometown**: Navarre, Ohio
- **Academic Interests**: I am majoring in English and Environmental Studies, and minoring in Ethics.
- **Extracurricular Activities**: I am a member of the CWRU Academic Integrity Board; am the Risk Manager for Sigma Tau Delta (the International English Honor Society); am a UHCS Wellness Ambassador, and am the Vice President of the CWRU Tea Club.

- **Hometown**: Harrington Park, New Jersey
- **Academic Interests**: Religious Studies, Classics, and Mechanical Engineering
- **Extracurricular Activities**: I am a leader of Case’s Humans vs Zombies game and the Case Medieval Combat Club. I am also a member of CWRU’s Undergraduate Student Government and the Radical Student Union.

The Eudese and Elmer Paull Prizes
To one or several undergraduate or graduate students who demonstrate an interest in Jewish Studies or Jewish contemporary life.

- **Hometown**: Portland, Oregon
- **Academic Interests**: Political Science, International Studies (Middle East focus)
- **Extracurricular Activities**: In my short time at CWRU I have found a home at Hillel first serving as the First-Year representative and now as Chief Judicial Officer. I also play clarinet in the Case/University Circle Symphony Orchestra and write as a student reporter for The Observer. In my free time, I enjoy going to hear the Cleveland Orchestra, exploring new restaurants, and relaxing at Hillel with my friends.

- **Hometown**: Suffern, New York
- **Academic Interests**: Political Science and Judaic Studies
- **Extracurricular Activities**: I am the former President and current Treasurer of Case for Israel, a Representative to the Undergraduate Student Government Finance Committee for the College of Arts and Sciences, Treasurer of Case College Democrats and a New York State EMT when I am home.

- **Hometown**: Bethesda, Maryland
- **Academic Interests**: Biology and Political Science
- **Extracurricular Activities**: I am the VP of Outreach on HULC (Hillel Undergraduate Leadership Council), a Grinspoon Fellow for Israel on Campus Coalition, Vice President of Case for Israel, Secretary of College Republicans, and Chief Financial Officer of Kappa Alpha Theta.

- **Hometown**: Chagrin Falls, Ohio
- **Academic Interests**: Labor and Employment Law and Estate Planning
- **Extracurricular Activities**: I am affiliated with the Health Matrix: Journal of Law-Medicine, and the Jewish Law Students Association.
In the 1930s, when Hitler became ruler of Germany, he took over the local Christian church and modified it to conform to his political views. Thereafter, the conventional German pulpit was governed by Nazi ideology, insisting that Jews were a subspecies of humanity, and a threat to the “superior race” of German Christians. On this pseudoscientific basis, Germany excluded any convert of “Jewish blood” from the ministry, and undertook the murder of six million European Jews from 1941-1945.

The first and only voice raised in church resistance was that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran pastor who insisted that Christ, not the Führer, was the head of the Christian Church. Following the Protestant “supersessionist” tradition, Bonhoeffer believed that Christianity had superseded Judaism, and the solution for subsequent Jewish suffering was conversion to Christianity. But at the same time, he vehemently opposed all forms of religious persecution, including Nazi persecution of Jews. In this connection, he became one of the founders of a counter-cultural movement known as the Confessing Church. As a small community of dissent, defying the dominant Church, and maintaining an illegal school for educating its own pastors, Bonhoeffer’s faith community was arguably a “cult”; a label historically associated with deviance, deceptiveness and exploitation (Jenkins 2000: 10). Yet, under Bonhoeffer’s influence, the tiny “cult” would carry greater theological and moral weight than the official German Church.

According to the Holocaust Encyclopedia, Bonhoeffer was born on February 4, 1906, in Breslau, Germany. Although his decision to become a theologian and pastor was not initially supported by his parents, he earned a degree in theology at a very young age and attended a congregation in Barcelona, Spain from 1928 - 1930. One of the highlights of Bonhoeffer’s travels was his journey to the United States, the land of freedom of religion. He arrived at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, in 1930. There, he was introduced to the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, inspiring him to work against racial injustice. These influences undoubtedly contributed to the later formation of the Confessing Church.

Bonhoeffer helped found the counter-cultural movement in Nazi Germany, but as soon as other Confessing Church leaders came under Gestapo pressure, they abandoned condemnation of the Nazi party. Bonhoeffer, however, continued to run the illegal school for pastoral leadership, despite Gestapo surveillance. In addition, from 1938-1940 he engaged in a variety of resistance activities, traveling around Europe to inform ecumenical parties in Geneva, and at the Vatican, of alarming conditions in Germany.

Bonhoeffer was eventually detained, and incarcerated at Tegel, a military prison in Berlin. While there, he continued to successfully proselytize, gaining followers among guards and other prisoners. When this was discovered he was transferred to the Gestapo’s high security prison, and from there to Buchenwald and Flossenberg concentration camps. On April 8, 1945 the SS sentenced him to death without a trial, and he was hanged along with other conspirators on the morning of April 9, 1945, just 23 days before Hitler and Nazi Germany were defeated by the Soviet Union and the United States (Holocaust Encyclopedia).

To speak of a religious community outside the mainstream is to speak of a fringe religion, or what is commonly called a “cult.” But Judaism itself was originally considered a cult, and as Jenkins notes “Few groups have epitomized the cult image better than the Christians of the first two centuries” (2000: 10). Bonhoeffer’s tiny Confessing Church, on the fringe of the German mainstream, set aside the question of supersession to address the immediate issue; the ethical and moral stance that Christian churches should take against atrocities like those perpetrated against Jews by the Third Reich. As
Barnett writes of Bonhoeffer, “his defense of the Jews was marked by supersessionism . . . But Bonhoeffer also realized that Nazism posed a very different challenge for the churches, and it was here that he broke new ground” (2019). Clearly, a counter-cultural faith community—what we call a cult—can, and under Bonhoeffer, did carry greater theological and moral weight than the dominant, mainstream church.

References Cited


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On/Off Campus

KELVIN SMITH LIBRARY WINS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD

The Association of College and Research Libraries has named Kelvin Smith Library (KSL) the university recipient of the 2019 Excellence in Academic Libraries Award.

The Award recognizes the staff of a university library for exemplary services to further the educational mission of the institution.

Important recognition was given to programs supported through KSL’s Freedman Fellowship for Digital Scholarship. The Program in Judaic Studies would like to extend that recognition to KSL’s Creative New Media Officer, Jared Bendis, for technical support of JDST faculty (and occasional frantic calls from the eJournal!).

CWRU NAMED TO THE PRINCETON REVIEW’S TOP 50 GREEN COLLEGES

There are countless sustainability champions across campus to make and keep the university green. These efforts were most recently recognized by The Princeton Review’s Top 50 Green Colleges list, placing CWRU at No. 35. Each year schools across the country apply for recognition from The Princeton Review, with the top 50 earning additional commendations.

CWRU NAMED A VOTER FRIENDLY CAMPUS

The National Association of Student Personnel Administration and the Campus Vote Project have once again named CWRU a “Voter Friendly Campus”.

The designation recognizes CWRU’s efforts to break down barriers and empower students with the information they need to participate in the political process.

CWRU is one of 123 institutions across the country to earn the distinction.

LET’S HEAR FROM YOU!

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Case Western Reserve University 5
Courses of Interest for Fall 2019

JDST/RLGN/WGST 268
Women in the Bible: Ethnographic Approaches to Rite and Ritual, Story, Song, and Art
Judith Neulander

From Ishtar to Esther, the Christian Marys to the Muslim Mary, we will examine interpretations of several women in the sacred texts of western religions. We will explore the strategic and creative ways that women in the Bible were influenced by, and came to influence changing values through rite, ritual, story, song and art. Students will come to understand how these traditions have shaped images of, and attitudes towards women in western civilization.

JDST/RLGN/HSTY 371
Jews under Islam and Christianity
Jay Geller

This course examines the social and political status of Jews under Muslim and Christian rule since the Middle Ages. Themes include interfaith relations, Islamic and Christian beliefs regarding the Jews, Muslim and Christian regulation of Jewry, and the Jewish response.

RLGN 312
The Mythical Trickster
Judith Neulander

Few literary figures have as wide a distribution, and as long a history, as the mythical Trickster. He is at once sacred and profane, creator and destroyer; an incorrigible duper who is always duped. Free of social and moral restraints he is ruled instead by passions and appetites, yet it is through his unprincipled behavior that morals and values come into being. How are we to interpret this amazing creature? Using folkloristic theories and ethnographic methods, we will come to understand the social functions and symbolic meanings of the cross-cultural Trickster, over time and across space.

ANEE/320/RLGN 320/420
Gods and Demons in the Ancient Near East and Egypt
Meghan Strong

The roots of many modern religious, literary, social, and political notions reach deep into the fertile soil of Ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian cultures, which developed as early as the fourth millennium BCE, and flourished until the Hellenistic period. In this course we will examine various components of the religious, divinatory and magical systems of these cultures, and reflect upon their relationship with the stories that are found in the Hebrew Bible.

For courses in Hebrew and Arabic visit the Modern Languages and Literatures website: http://www.case.edu/artscl/dmll/
Sampling of Final Paper Titles

A sampling of titles for final research papers in Alternative Altars: Folk Religion in America—RLGN 238 and Mythologies of the Afterlife—RLGN/JDST 314 reflects the diversity of interests in a typical RLGN/JDST classroom.

ALTERNATIVE ALTARS: FOLK RELIGION IN AMERICA - RLGN 238

Unidentified Flying Racists: The Tight Link between Bigotry and UFOlogy
Maxwell Speil

Spirituality among the “Nones”: Those Who Mark “None” on Religious Questionnaires
Roston Shore

Solomon’s Template: The Masonic Temple and its Impact on American History
Akwasi Duah

Televangelism: Ministry or Marketing?
Allison Jordan

MYTHOLOGIES OF THE AFTERLIFE - RLGN/JDST 314

Gehenna by Any Other Name: The Evolution of Diverse Purgatories
Roston Shore

How Perceptions of God Shape Expectations of the Afterlife
Tim Fry

American Transhumanism: New Technologies, Enduring Ideas
Sam Seider

Evolving Perspectives on Angels
Karen Lee

Vanitas and Danse Macabre: Artistic Expressions of Post-Mortem Equality
Lauren Dostal
By bringing a variety of fields and disciplines to bear on its subject, the Judaic Studies Program at Case Western Reserve University conveys to students the complex interaction of forces that create Jewish ethnic identity. Students completing the program will have a broad knowledge of the field along with the tools necessary for continued academic study of Jewish civilization in all its manifestations.

Support the Program in Judaic Studies

Please consider supporting the Program in Judaic Studies as we continue building on our achievements. You can contribute to our success by making a gift to the College of Arts and Sciences. Your gift allows us to continue to offer opportunities for our students to excel academically and to conduct important research. You can give online at:

giving.case.edu

Chuck Behrens, M. Div., Spiritual Care Coordinator, Hospice of the Western Reserve, spoke with students in Mythologies of the Afterlife in March 2019.