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# Jewish Studies at West Chester University: Programs and Potentials

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# Jewish Studies at West Chester University

Programs and Potentials

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Gratz College  
Spring 2015

Ann Lieberman Colgan

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## ABSTRACT

What forms of academic Jewish Studies are available in public, comprehensive higher education, like West Chester University of Pennsylvania (WCU)? This research is a case study examining the origins, form, and robustness of the Jewish American concentration of the Ethnic Studies minor and the Holocaust and Genocide Program at WCU. Since most American Jewish students attend higher education, understanding the types of Jewish education available to them in a public university type of setting is important to Jewish educators, parents, and others. Limited research about Jewish education has taken place in a public university type of setting. Using a contextual framework to take participants' perspectives into account, this research used 17 interviews and voluminous archival examination to generate a portrait of programs with Jewish content at WCU. The Jewish American concentration emerged out of WCU's commitment to diversity and has always been small and marginally specific to Jewish Studies, defined here as the academic examination of Jewish civilization in all its facets, religious, historical, philosophical, literary, linguistic, and more. Holocaust and Genocide Studies, including one of 4 master's programs in the US, also developed as a result of diversity and social justice concerns but is significantly more robust than other forms of Jewish Studies available at WCU. Both programs are severely constrained by limited faculty numbers, budgets, course options, and student enrollments. However, both programs are healthier than they appear from contextual perspectives which use quantitative evaluations. Additionally, both have potential to contribute to a genuine Jewish Studies minor at WCU.

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## INTRODUCTION

West Chester University celebrates diversity. In that context, the University offers a variety of specialized areas of study to students wishing to major or minor in Women's and Gender Studies, African American Studies, Native American Studies, Asian American Studies, and more. Within the Ethnic Studies minor, West Chester University (WCU) students can concentrate in Jewish American Studies. The school also offers a renowned Holocaust and Genocide Studies minor and master's program. WCU does not have, nor ever had, a Jewish Studies program dedicated to offering minor or baccalaureate degrees to its students. A minor in that area was proposed in 2008 (Friedman and Boes), but not approved. This research explores what is available in Jewish Studies content at WCU and how it developed. In other words, in the absence of a dedicated program, what Jewish civilization courses and programs expose WCU students to the unique contributions and diversity of Jews and Judaism?

In the beginning, post-secondary education at West Chester focused on teacher preparation. As a state-funded college located in an one of the original counties founded by the tolerant William Penn and dominated by various Christian denominations, especially Quakers, the college and the region were, perhaps, more tolerant than some. Certainly by 1900, Jewish students attended the college as evidenced by the names of students quaintly and routinely published in the catalogs in the early years. Untangling Jewish names from German ones presents a challenge in a region that attracted immigration from both of those intersecting communities, but surely among the Greens, Goldsteins, Bergers, Kauffmans, Steins, and Kratzes were Jewish teacher candidates (Annual Catalog of the West Chester State Normal School, 1900, p. 7-23). There is no way to know what percentage of the student body was comprised of Jews. No Jewish faculty member joined the college until Dr. Irene G. Shur was hired in 1956

(Obadiah, 1989, p. 15)<sup>1</sup>. Courses related to subjects of Jewish interest began to appear around the same time, but material specific to Jewish civilization did not emerge until the late 1970s. Dr. Shur designed Jewish content courses with several goals in mind: she wanted to represent fairly Jews and Judaism to the broader community while eliciting new insights in her Jewish students, and she desperately hoped that her Holocaust content courses would disseminate accurate information to counter revisionism and indifference. While much has changed since the 1970s, Dr. Shur's insights and apprehensions remain current and persuasive. Little is known about Jewish Studies in comprehensive, regional, public higher education settings, and there has never been an in-depth exploration of what has been available at West Chester University.

### **Problem Statement**

Concerns about Jewish continuity in America have reverberated through the years in Jewish communities across the nation, and facets of Jewish identity demanding attention include household practices and identification, intermarriage rates, affiliation with Jewish communities, and forms and duration of Jewish education, among other areas. The recent Pew Research Survey and Study, "A Portrait of Jewish Americans," (October, 2013) evoked a hue and cry from Jewish communities, which expressed concern about the picture the study painted as well as objected to the depiction. The comprehensive study combined demographic data, surveys, and interviews to illuminate the current state of Jewish life in America. The study essentially concluded that secular, or areligious Judaism is increasing (p. 31) while religious observance is decreasing (p. 48); in addition, the growing ranks of secular Jews are less likely to connect with other Jews, learn Hebrew (p. 60-66), or identify with Israel (p. 82). Certainly, the Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> The exact date of Dr. Shur's hire by the University varies according to source. She was hired in late 1954 as a substitute instructor but usually provided 1956 as the beginning of her faculty position.

community in the US is diverse, and religious practices are changing among many Americans. In fact, recent research indicates that fewer than 20 percent of Americans identifying with major religious denominations regularly attend religious services (Hadaway & Marler, 2005, 307). Engaged Jews in America, as a minority and often threatened elsewhere, bristled with indignation at the Pew Report's portrayal of seeming debility. The diverse American Jewish community as a whole responded to the study's methodology and data according to each respondent's identification and engagement: advocates of Reform Judaism suggested meeting socially identified Jews where they are while Orthodox spokespersons claimed a triumph of numbers and identification (Tobin, Dec. 2013). JJ Goldberg, on the other hand, objected (Oct. 2013) to the data analysis itself because of Pew's use of the flawed "National Jewish Population Survey, 2000-01" as a baseline (accessed online Sept. 2014). Goldberg compared the percent of non-religious Jews reported by Pew with the "highly regarded" 1990 Jewish population survey and found no significant change, and even claimed to see cause for optimism in the growth of the US Jewish population (accessed online Sept. 2014).

This action-reaction sequence to data about Jews and Judaism in America is not new: more than a century ago, Samson Benderly was appointed Director of the Bureau of Jewish Education in New York City after a survey by that city's Kehillah revealed that fewer than 25% of Jewish children received any form of Jewish education at all (Krasner, 2011, p. 41-43). Various sources of data, including the Pew study, point to declining exposure of young Jews to formal Jewish education or to other specifically Jewish experiences. Hanan Alexander asserts that the ethical, liberal Judaism espoused by many American Jews "poses a great educational challenge when trying to convince youngsters to choose a Jewish way of life, when they can have the same value choices without those Jewish trappings" (Dec. 2012, p. 295). Therefore,

those interested in ensuring the participation of young Jews in Jewish education and experiential learning must take stock of what is available.

Some Jewish education offered in mainstream American culture takes the form of academic coursework in the nation's colleges and universities. Over 90% of college-age Jewish students in the US do, in fact, go to college (Redden, 2008), so an exploration of Jewish Studies in the academy is called for. Furthermore, an unknown, but hypothetically large, percentage of Jewish students attend public higher education, but little is known about Jewish-subject courses offered in those venues. In Pennsylvania, the 14 universities in the state system began as land-grant colleges with vocational missions, such as teacher education. Today, many students, Jewish and non-Jewish, choose public education for a variety of personal, economic, and educational reasons, but Jewish students attending public, comprehensive, four-year universities like WCU are not typically choosing their institutions for Jewish reasons. Few Jewish students, of dozens I have asked, expressed interest in joining Hillel or otherwise participating in Jewish life while on campus. Their Jewish development during these emerging adult years may determine the course of their future Jewish engagement. Thus, it is vitally important to get a picture of what is available to support students' Jewish growth and learning.

Research indicates Jewish learning, to the extent students in public colleges opt for it, is frequently sought in an academic format (Sales and Saxe, 2006, Horowitz, 2003). Therefore, it is important to know what is and has been available to students at institutions like WCU. If sending our students to institutions like WCU is the equivalent of banishing them to a Jewish desert, we need to know, so we can decide what actions might be warranted. Institutions of higher education, especially large, secular, public universities, should participate in the collection of data in the JData system described by Amy Sales (2012), but at this time, very little is known

about academic Jewish education options and student engagement in universities of this type.

Most of the research in Jewish education seems to focus on early childhood, congregational, and day school models. At the other end of the education continuum, the 47 international campuses of Florence Melton School of Adult Jewish Learning offer a non-credit bearing two-year curriculum in a pluralistic setting designed to connect adult Jews to Jewish texts and People (Meltonschool.org, accessed Sept., 2014) and have been the subject of multiple studies. Adult education research on Melton and Israel education is more thorough than the attention given to young adults' exposure to Jewish education in academia. Jewish college students could potentially participate in Melton or other forms of co-curricular Jewish education, and many participate in Birthright trips to Israel, but what academic options can be found for them in their mostly secular institutions?

Of course, there are other Jewish education options at WCU and other colleges, including social experiences such as fraternities, sororities, Hillel, and synagogue-based and other experiential formats. This research focuses on academic offerings at WCU because this knowledge will provide a baseline for determining what programmatic and academic offerings exist. In addition, it should provide food for thought to Jewish students and parents weighing the merits of one institution or type of education over another.

Finally, this research is essentially a case study. Therefore, while we generalize regarding the types of programs offered at state colleges or about community interest and support for such programs, the objective of this paper is to provide a dense description of Jewish Studies at WCU. The possibility of collating existing courses at WCU in order to provide a Jewish Studies program or minor has been proposed but never researched in depth although faculty members have participated in speculating about the options. Further, while the Holocaust and

Genocide Studies program has been extensively in the news over the years, its creation and place in this particular academy have never been examined. Perhaps the success of that program has something to tell us about the future of Jewish Studies at WCU. It is certainly time for this type of institution to submit to the scrutiny of researchers. The case is specific to this place and time even if it produces knowledge with obvious applicability to other institutions, as stated above. Archival and participant contributions should yield a contextual portrait of a facet of WCU never previously analyzed, and it is my hope that others may be interested and find this portrait compelling and helpful.

### **Logical Path to Research Questions**

Interview questions designed to provide this information, as well as extensive background, are included in Appendix B, and numerous stakeholders participated. West Chester Jewish community members involved in these programs at the University described diverse motivations for engaging in programs on campus. Jews in the local area have been interested in communicating Jewish history and contributions to the larger, non-Jewish community as a strategic means of generating deeper comprehension and acceptance of Jews and the Jewish experience.

WCU faculty, on the other hand, required a legitimate outlet for their specific areas of academic expertise and scholarship. Faculty concerns regarding students, scholastic in nature, focused on the rigor of intellectual content and on attracting acolytes to their disciplines. The University, after all, housed courses and programs only if they are understood to satisfy goals outlined in academic or strategic plans. Holocaust Studies and the Jewish-American concentration in Ethnic Studies were established to address diversity goals, so faculty perceived themselves as focusing on the University mission, but most could devote only a portion of their

professional time to those programs. Similarly, University administrators, constantly mindful of overarching goals and of the necessity to satisfy stakeholders all the way up to the Pennsylvania governor's office, committed only a fraction of their time to these programs.

Students, likewise, allocated only a fraction of their academic attention to Jewish-subject courses since no undergraduate major in Judaic Studies or in Holocaust and Genocide Studies exists. For the most part, students at WCU added minors that cohered with their major programs of study either by including overlapping requirements or by fitting neatly into programmatic electives. The majority of participating graduate students in the Holocaust and Genocide Studies master's program conveyed limited interest in specifically Jewish topics. In nearly 20 years of working at WCU, I have encountered one student who expressed a desire to major in Jewish Studies. When informed that WCU did not offer that major, she opted for Philosophy with a Religious Studies concentration and English. She did not choose Biblical Hebrew, the only Jewish language offered, to meet her foreign language requirement.

My experience led me to believe student interest in Jewish Studies and in Holocaust and Genocide Studies at WCU was both intrinsic and pragmatic. Some students, regardless of religion, developed interest in Jewish topics for personal reasons, but even they habitually offered realistic, vocational rationales for choosing such courses and minors. Few WCU students could afford the indulgence of gratifying personal interest with non-required coursework, so students interested in Jewish Studies willingly participated in such courses to the extent that graduation requirements were also fulfilled by the same classes. Whether the classes lead to deeper Jewish identification might depend on students' motivations for taking the course and on the development of personal relationships with Jewish faculty role-models. Engaging in Jewish Studies of any kind at WCU should have some impact on students' perceptions and

appreciation of Jewish culture, regardless of religious background. That impact may translate to strengthened Jewish identity of Jewish students and into improved intergroup and interreligious relations, but that transition was outside the scope of this research.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions framing this study are

- What is Jewish about the Jewish learning available at WCU?
- What Jewish Studies programs or courses does West Chester University offer?
  - What has it offered in the past?
  - Why those courses and not others? In other words, what was the motivation and rationale for designing curricula for those courses?
  - Why is the Holocaust and Genocide Program, though still tiny, so much more robust than Jewish studies at WCU?
    - What was the impetus, the driving mission, for the initiation of the Holocaust and Genocide program at WCU?
  - What modifications, if any, would make Jewish Studies at WCU more meaningful and robust?

## **Contextual Framework**

Jewish Studies at WCU, such as it is, must be viewed through the lens of its institutional, educational, social, and religious purposes. The available programs meet the requirements of constituencies in some way, but the needs of students, faculty, administrators, and community members are often inexactly aligned. While this research explores Jewish Studies in a secular, academic environment, I found it helpful to employ metaphors and archetypes culled from Jewish culture which epitomize the contextual framework that is the best lens through

which to view the case. The lens of educational purpose shapes participants' perceptions of their experiences. Engaging in Holocaust and Genocide Studies as an undergraduate or graduate student presents a very different experience than participating in the same program as a faculty member, administrator, or community member. According to Benjamin Broome and Mary Jane Collier (2012), "individual thinking, cross-community relationships, and the group processes themselves [are] molded and shaped by a complex web of contextual forces" (p. 250).

Therefore, the context of participants' roles, and the degree to which each understands the whole, further informs each person's unique comprehension of, and contribution to, the case.

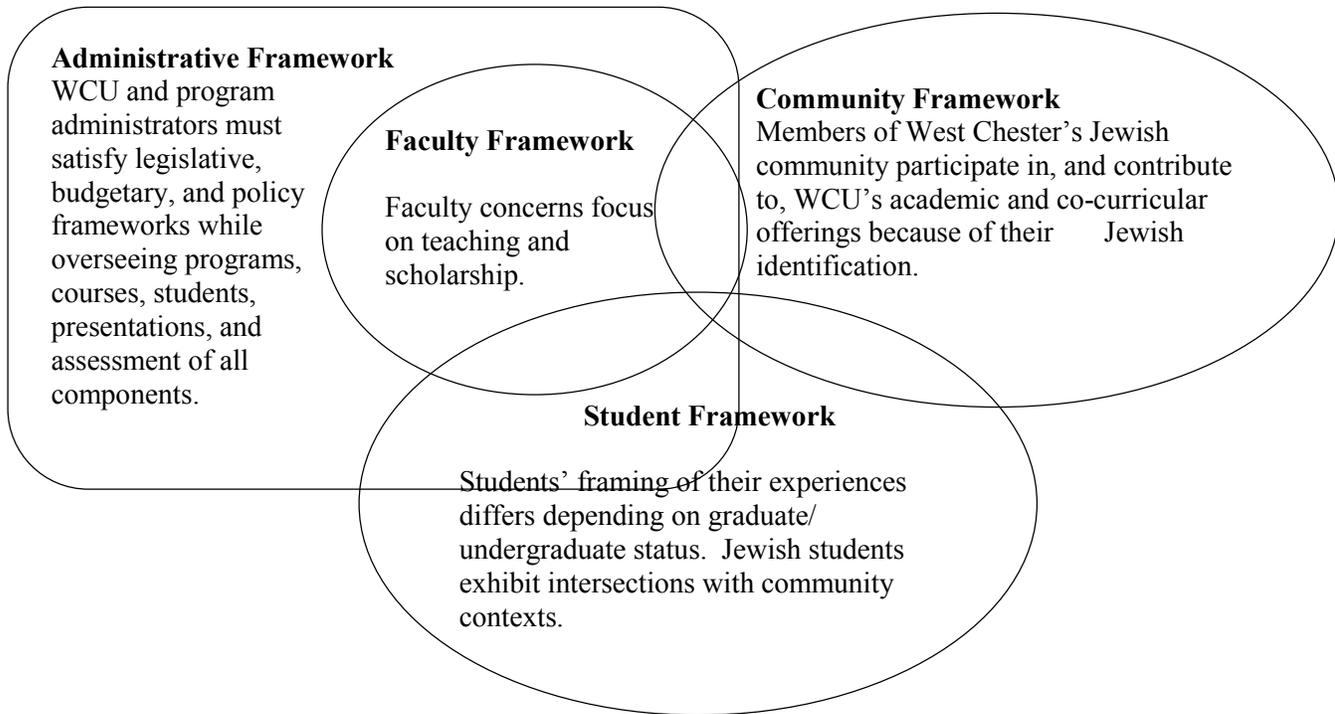
In addition, beyond educational purposes, the case includes religious and historic contexts which influence participants' appraisals. Individual contexts have significance; the child of survivors may attend a program-sponsored Yom Ha Shoah event for very different reasons than a sophomore student in the Holocaust and Genocide minor, and each may derive original insights. It is always the case in research that perspectives matter, but in a case study, where participants each shed light on the portrait of the case, their unique contexts shape distinctive views and contributions. Broome and Collier assert that culture and context are "inextricably linked" (p. 247), so participants' religious, professional, and social orientations inevitably color the way they frame their experiences.

Figure # 1

**Diagram of Contextual Framework**

**Ethnic Studies and Holocaust and Genocide Studies at West Chester University**

Participants' perspectives are shaped by their goals, motivations, and roles.



The light shed on the case by the archival material frames a different context since its purpose was primarily program proposal, implementation, or publicity. The public, higher-education setting of this case implies automatic structural requirements not necessarily present in Jewish Studies programs found in elite institutions in the region or in Jewish schools. A presumption of *areligiosity* accompanies academic offerings in public higher education. All courses must demonstrate applicability to the overarching needs of the institution, secular by nature and design. The archive material often publicizes program and faculty offerings by highlighting how unique they are in the context of the state's university system.

## Shammai and Hillel

The legend of Shammai and Hillel represents a familiar metaphor of not-completely opposing interests and viewpoints which, nevertheless, became emblematic of deeply polarized positions. The story is found in the Talmud, a multi-volume codification of Jewish law in which multiple opinions of leading rabbis, compiled from the second through the sixth centuries, are recorded around the periphery of a disputed law or biblical tract centered on the page. The Talmud has been the source of religious authority for widely-flung Jewish communities throughout the Diaspora. It supplements and explains Bible stories, clarifies points of law, and instructs in correct behavior. Despite the expressly religious character of the Talmud, I believe the interaction of Shammai and Hillel described in the Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat 31a* ([www.sacred-texts.com/jud/t01/t0110.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/t01/t0110.htm)), can be useful in framing this study.

Conceptually, Shammai epitomized conservatism, rigidity, and narrowness of interpretive viewpoints. Hillel, on the other hand, embodied openness, flexibility, and acceptance of diversity. The two rabbis headed different schools at the time of the Roman occupation of Israel, in the first century BCE. Stories about the two rabbis, especially about Hillel, are staples in Jewish education, and I first heard them while attending religious school during my elementary school years.

The following well-known story illustrates the different approaches of Hillel and Shammai: A gentile approached Shammai's school, and after knocking and demanding to see the master, was met in the doorway. Thereupon, the stranger announced that he would convert to Judaism provided Shammai taught him everything he needed to know while the potential acolyte stood there on one foot. Shammai reacted with anger, believing the man was mocking Shammai's school, religion, and person. Indeed, that may have been the case, but Shammai

drove the man away before exploring further. When the same gentile attempted an identical approach at Hillel's school, a very different scene ensued. Hillel responded to the man's challenge by explaining that the whole Torah centered on one principle: "Do not do unto others as you would not have them do to you." The rest, Hillel elucidated, was supporting material for this central dogma, so he invited the stranger, "Now, come in, and learn." And the man joined Hillel's school.

Today, Shammai and Hillel are often cast as combative, polar opposites, but one must be mindful of their common goal: both sought to educate future leaders of Judaism in the face of the unrelenting hostility of the Roman occupation, and their positions frequently coincided. The schools of thought that both founded were known to have disputes that occasionally came to blows, but as with many philosophies, Shammai and Hillel were not so much in disagreement as occupying different rooms of the same conceptual palace. As the story above illustrates, their mindsets and pedagogical approaches led them to perceive many of the same situations very differently.

I suggest this famous interaction can be useful in untangling apparent differences in interpretation and experience based on personal contexts. The participants in this case study bear some similarity to Shammai and Hillel: their different roles and goals shift their contextual positions and result in diverse conclusions about the same programs. The numerous stakeholders in Jewish content courses at WCU, with their differing responsibilities and backgrounds, may apply the same information to decide to reject a program or student or to expand the same program in order to welcome more students. In addition, the case itself, set in a suburban, public, comprehensive university includes commonplaces, such as an assumption of secularism, not found in most other forms of Jewish education. Similarly, rabbis and historians note that the

positions of Hillel and Shammai must be viewed through the context of Roman threats. Thus, the conceptual framework of this research places the institution, participants, and archival material in context to obtain the greatest understanding of the overall case, with its seeming conflicts of interest but true convergence of goals. It is through a *contextual framework* of perceived, but not inevitable, opposition, which derives from divergent perspectives and personalities that this study examines the differing assumptions and goals of the various participants in WCU's Jewish academic offerings to arrive at a construction of the case.

### **Organization of the Study**

Following this section, readers will find a Review of Literature that reveals a gap in the literature addressing Jewish Studies in comprehensive, public higher education. In addition, the literature review defines Jewish Studies and surveys its goals and purpose, examines Holocaust education in academia, and explores issues arising from interdisciplinary courses and programs. As is the case with many literature reviews, more information is no doubt available, but constraints inhibit greater thoroughness.

A brief Methodology section explains the research design and addresses the resolution of potential problems, such as conflict of interest. Detailed information about data collection and ethical considerations is provided. Trustworthiness is addressed in multiple ways, including the enclosure of a timeline depicting the completeness of data coverage provided by participants in the research. Instruments used in the research can be found in the Appendices.

The uniqueness of the case requires a short chapter depicting the overlapping settings of West Chester University and the local West Chester Jewish community. Both settings have nurtured the researcher, so I can only hope that I have done justice to their strengths.

Findings: Programs and Potentials include a blend of data collected from participant interviews and archival material. Program completion data, where available, are provided to impart a more comprehensive portrayal of enrollment challenges. Because this is a case study, interpretive material is included within the Findings section. Finally, a section on Conclusions and Recommendations closes the case.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### **Jewish Studies in Academia**

#### **Defining Jewish Studies**

Jewish Studies conveys a wide variety of meanings to different people. In modern America, Jewish Studies can be found in numerous institutions of higher education and, in secular schools, is often perceived as emblematic of embracing multi-cultural modalities rather than religiosity. Originally, Jewish learning as a traditional transmission methodology focused on sacred texts, and the exegetical brilliance of the, solely male, scholars. Students were evaluated based on both the clarity and the complexity of their reasoning, which linked Talmudic sources to Judaism's other sacred writings. This type of Jewish learning, essential to the continuity of rabbinic Judaism, is not the same as the Jewish Studies embraced in western academic practice. However, it should be noted that what is referred to as Jewish Studies varies widely depending upon institutional purpose. Andrew Bush (2011) contrasts "learning Jews," those fulfilling a covenantal mission by studying, with "studying Jews," in which Jewish history, culture, language, texts, and more are the subjects of study (p. 1). Most secular academic institutions draw the same line between the sacred and religious on the one hand, and the profane, mundane activity of studying 'about' Jews on the other.

Jews in traditional communities in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were uncomfortable with the dispassionate, clinical approach to the holy, but Jewish Studies is not solely, or even particularly the study of Judaism and its texts. Arnold Band would include all Jews and provides an excellent definition: academic Jewish Studies is "the discipline which deals with the historical experience in the intellectual, religious, and social spheres of the Jewish people in all centuries

and countries” (1966, p. 5). Thus, Jewish Studies potentially inhabits History, Literature, Philosophy, Political Science, Language, and other departments. Nahum Sarna (1970) applies similar standards of academic rationality and diversity: Jewish Studies is “the scientific exploration of all facets of the civilization of the Jewish people, its properties and products . . . free from the taint of *odium theologicum*” (p. 38). Gerson Cohen (1995) insists Jewish Studies be categorized in the humanities: “the cultural depository and record of experience of the Jewish people of every age and of every creative center, as the record of Jewish responses to the past and present, and as the articulation of dreams for the future (p. 177). These all-inclusive, scholarly approaches to Jewish Studies have the potential to build an infrastructure of knowledge bisecting time and space and yielding a contextual narrative of incredible richness. Handled correctly, Jewish Studies respects even those Jewish communities and education formats which reject its methodologies. For our purposes, we define Jewish Studies as the comprehensive examination of Jewish culture, history, civilization, and thought. Jews are a people with its own, often variable, rules of membership who have unique histories and philosophies as well as significant internal and geographic diversity.

Ritterbrand and Wechsler trace Jewish Studies to the advocacy, in 1818 and later, of Leopold Zunz and others for *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, or Jewish Studies, the scientific, intellectual study of Jewish texts and culture in an attempt to introduce western, scientific methodology to study of Talmud and Kabbalah and more (1994, p. 2-4). Jewish learning had been isolated from academic scholarship by centuries of anti-Semitism, and members of the *Wissenschaft* movement sought to demonstrate scientifically the validity and value of Judaism and Jewish topics. As a bridge between traditional Jewish culture and learning and the surrounding German culture, the *Wissenschaft* failed. The movement was caught between

traditional Jewish communities protecting what little prerogatives they had and the power of European emphasis, reinforced in academies, on Christian Europe's racial, cultural and linguistic superiority (Ritterbrand & Wechsler, 1994, p. 6-8). This topical tension remains a factor in 21<sup>st</sup> century Jewish Studies because it is so often seen as a subset, perhaps a concession to diversity, within specific academic departments. In fact, Ben Zion Dinaburg (later Dinur) argued for excluding the study of emancipated Jews from Jewish scholarship on the grounds that their activities should more properly be studied as components of their host nation's histories (Engel, 2010, p.116-117). His arguments advanced Zionist objectives of his time by enabling him to exclude happily emancipated Jews from the dialectic he envisioned between Jewish and non-Jewish communities (Engel, p. 95-1119). However, Dinaburg's precepts make for choppy methodology, and Jewish Studies in the academy cleaves to the evolving elegance of social scientific methodology. Having defined a community, either by accepting self-identified members or by evaluating baseline behaviors, modern Jewish Studies can bring diverse effective research tools and methods to the task. As a precursor to the potentialities of Jewish Studies, *Wissenschaft des Judentums* broached a set of topics for analysis and demonstrated a methodology that later found a home in American Jewish Studies.

## **Goals of Jewish Studies**

### Goals

The overarching goal of Jewish Studies cannot rest solely on the crafting of new Jewish scholarship and clever paradigms for connecting disparate geographies, societies, and theologies. In fact, since Jewish Studies is found in secular and Christian schools, it cannot have learning outcomes designed solely for its Jewish participants. Boston College, a Jesuit institution with a student body that is 70 percent Catholic and one percent Jewish, has a Jewish Studies minor

(Anonymous, 2005, p. 16). According to the program website, its goals include fostering “academic dialogue” between different cultural and religious communities as well as investigating Jewish civilization and the vibrancy of Jewish experience (Accessed online May, 2014). The broad appeal of such programs aligns with the objectives of the academy: to increase understanding and scholarship of the Jewish experience in all its permutations.

Overarching goals have changed somewhat since the original blossoming of Jewish Studies in the 1960s. Band details the growth in academic respectability of regarding Jews and Judaism as fit for intellectual deliberation (1966, p. 19-20.) The resulting scholarship conferred “prestige” that represented “far more than public-relations value” (Band, p. 21). In other words, Jewish Studies in the 1960s demonstrated that Jewish experiences were worthy of scholarly attention and helped legitimate Jewish contributions and participation in the nation and in the academy.

In the last fifty years, goals for the study of Jews and other ethnic groups have shifted. Twenty-first century goals for Jewish Studies transitioned to a focus on interdisciplinary thinking within the liberal arts.

It allows students to view Western civilization from the perspective of a people both inside and outside of that civilization. It cultivates the critical reasoning skills of modern secular scholarship even as it introduces other ways of thinking. It explores what it means to be on the margins, in the minority, or in an intermediate space between perspectives. It complicates the very idea of difference itself, challenging any neat or stable distinction between the self and the Other (Weitzman, 2006, p. 11).

Most American college students enrolling in courses with Jewish content are neither Jewish nor deeply involved with Jewish Studies programs, majors, or minors. Rather, they enroll in the classes because of interest and because the courses fulfill graduation requirements, such as

general education categories of Diversity or Interdisciplinarity. Students indicate that the service function of Jewish Studies classes is critical to their continuity.

For Jews, our goal, even in the academy, should be to endorse Salo Baron's 1937 admonition to produce "a kind of *historic Midrash*" (Engel, 2010, p. 58) to provide Jewish students and communities with tools for integrating our collective past into their own Jewish futures. As midrash fleshes out the terseness of Torah, so Jewish Studies can forge a visceral connection between our multiple pasts and our potential Jewish futures. Baron hoped to convince Jewish communities that "their collective survival and that of the culture they bore were indeed worth fighting for" (Engel, p. 60). Jewish Studies has the potential to fuse modern Jews, many with extremely limited Jewish knowledge and backgrounds, into the age-old narrative of our people.

The disparate religious, cultural, and political facets of Judaism have differing goals for Jewish Studies. Nahum Sarna (1970) cautioned against assigning enhanced identity and commitment as central goals of Jewish Studies although they might be a desirable 'by-product' (p. 38). However, more than a generation later, Reform, Reconstructionist, and Conservative American communities have concerns about the continuity of Jewish identity, and their objectives for Jewish Studies reflect a desire for detached students to turn their faces to Judaism and the Jewish people. The nearly complete integration of American Jews into the wider culture has resulted in some loss of cultural and religious identity relative to the experiences of our parents and grandparents who, even if not religious at all, exhibited a consistency between their world-views and their Jewish identities. This loss is especially poignant for many Jewish students at WCU, some of whom describe their only Jewish education occurring in grandparents' households in the form of Sedarim and cultural exposure. Even those WCU students with

exposure to formal Jewish schooling usually attended afternoon and Sunday congregational schools without acquiring much more than a cursory knowledge of Judaism, Jewish history, or culture (Silva, J. & Wachs, S., 1997, p. 6-7). Andrew Bush (2011) envisioned Jewish Studies as potentially revitalizing in its capacity to redeem Jewish students from secularization and to compensate for lost Peoplehood and Jewish learning (p. 30). Gerson Cohen (1995) agreed, “Hopefully, one of the by-products of knowledge will be identification on the part of many Jewish students with their people, its history and destiny; but that is a by-product and not a consciously sought aim” (p. 178). Advocates of this point of view believe any expansion in knowledge of Jewish history, culture, languages, and beliefs will result in a flourishing of Jewish identity. Unspoken goals and collective longings of community and faculty do not delegitimize the *academic* value of Jewish Studies, which potentially investigates information, concepts, and values of significance to students’ educations and futures. Jewish Studies in academia, then, potentially fulfills legitimate academic, communal, social, and identity functions.

Observing the inclusion of Jewish Studies programs in higher education in tandem with exploding interest in studies of other ethnic groups, Jacob Neusner (1983) described the radical social transformation Jewish studies underwent as they moved from yeshivot to colleges, from males and Jews only to including women and non-Jews (p. 63-64). Traditional Jewish learning yielded to new methodologies in the academy, with differing approaches to sacred texts and new subjects altogether (Neusner, p. 66). For Neusner, the Jewish Studies space between sacred and mundane focused on “holy people, holy books, holy faith” and will reach maturity when it exhibits “the capacity to describe, analyze, and interpret, in its own terms, . . . the inner life of ‘Israel,’ the Jewish people” (p. 84). Thus, Neusner placed Jewish Studies very much on the religious side of the continuum of academic study of Jews and Judaism. However, Roth objected

to that degree of religiosity by claiming the study of “Judaism” is inappropriate for secular universities (1986, p. 163). Instead, Roth contended that “Jewish *civilization*” was the proper subject of study, including religion in its social and historic contexts as well as literature, history, philosophy and more (p. 163). For the most part, academic study in non-religious institutions concentrated primarily on Neusner’s “Judaica,” the social, cultural, legal and religious study of Jews as a particular group with ethnic and historic coherence (Weschler and Ritterband, 1983, p. 254). Therefore, scholars whose goals for Jewish Studies centered on its benefits to Jews and Judaism exhibited significant theoretical and content commonalities with scholars more interested in developing a full body of knowledge about every aspect of Jewish civilization.

Goals designed to move the identification pendulum from unengaged to interested might have seemed exceptionally tepid to Zionists. Early Zionists advocated the “‘educational value of Jewish history’ with the conscious and explicit intention of strengthening the Zionist ethos of national rebirth” (Engel, p.87). Few instructors in 21<sup>st</sup> century American secular universities actively implement Jewish education objectives designed to return our dispersed Jewish students to their ancestral homeland. Robert Chazan (1995) was protective of the academic legitimacy of the field and its perceived truth value, so he maintained that “appeals to purposes of Jewish survival or Jewish identity lie outside the pale” (110). Outside of divinity colleges and religious institutions, open acknowledgement of religious objectives would taint Jewish Studies programs and courses.

However, for many, greater Jewish connections are embedded in a tacit meta-curriculum. Some believe that redemption is the overarching function of Jewish Studies: Scholem envisioned Jewish Studies as by, for, and about Jews with the objective of “building the Jewish nation” (Engel, p. 18). A hidden curricular intention among many Jewish Studies faculty may involve

expanding students' recognition of Jewish commonality to include their People and their Land, a commonplace of automatic belonging that extends to all Jews. Examining motivations for study of modern Hebrew literature, Leon Yudkin (1995) found students searching for connections and commonalities, and moving "through nationalism to articulation of Israelism" (144-145). Students may already be searching for Jewish connections, and faculty make the effort to meet them, to accompany them, on their journeys.

### Students

Students do not need to major or minor in Jewish Studies to participate; many classes fulfill general education requirements, and "survey courses attract large numbers" (Band, 1966, p. 21). Simple demographics dictate that the vast majority of students enrolling in such classes are not Jewish since there simply are not enough Jews in many institutions to support full course rosters and programs. The advantages of Jewish subject courses generally, and specifically at WCU, include greater understanding and acknowledgement of Jewish contributions and experiences by all students, as well as possible intensified affiliation with their religion and heritage by Jewish students. Considering that fewer than one in five college students who identify as being Jewishly engaged, and only three percent of the unengaged, observe Shabbat (Sales & Saxe, 2006, p. 11), Jewish Studies provides a camouflaged means of increasing Jewish identification, knowledge, pride, and potential practice on campus, reinforcing a tacit goal of such programs. Nevertheless, the legitimacy of Jewish Studies rests on its value to *all* students and in its ability to facilitate institutional goals.

If while participating in the implementation of University education objectives, Jewish participants undergo identity growth, it must be acknowledged that identity formation is usually part of the college experience. Marginally identified Jews do, in fact, participate in academic

Jewish Studies. In addition to secular Jews, Sales and Saxe (2006) determined that nearly half of Jewish students raised Conservative and nearly a third of those raised Reform took courses of this kind although Orthodox Jewish students had still higher levels of enrollment at 63% (p. 20). Encouragingly, more than a quarter of students who identify as secular or cultural Jews also took Jewish Studies courses (Sales & Saxe, p. 20). Some are encouraged by this engagement with Jewish subjects (Horowitz, 2003) and suggest that students' participation contradicts predictions of the collapse of American Jewish identity (p.7). However, considering students' often limited earlier exposure to Jewish education of varying quality, one could just as easily cast Jewish students' enrollment in these courses as an attempt to repossess their lost patrimony. In other words, maybe students choose Jewish Studies because they are seeking academic remediation of a palpable absence in their lives. Either way, Jewish Studies in higher education can address the goals of providing a safe place to explore facets of Jewish history, culture, text, and religion for curious, even marginally identified, Jewish students.

## **Jewish Studies in Academia**

### **Origins**

Regard for Jews and Judaism as subjects of interest for academic scholarship was not the original focus of Jewish topics in higher education. American colleges and universities have had cycles of growth and development in Jewish topics since the initial courses in Hebrew and Bible provided in seminary-focused Ivy League colleges. Ritterbrand and Wechsler described the inclusion of Hebraic studies in Ivy League colleges as an outgrowth of Puritan focus on the Old Testament, with Harvard establishing the Hancock Chair in Hebrew at the early date of 1674 (1994, p. 10). Hebrew was widely viewed as a requirement for a "gentleman's education" until after the American Revolution when more practical subjects gained precedence (Katsh, 1959, p.

15). By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, scriptural studies experienced substantial decline as a topic of undergraduate study (Ritterbrand & Wechsler, p. 14). It was not until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that renewed interest in Semitics, often focusing on philology, resulted in the reemergence of Hebrew scholarship in American higher education (Ritterbrand & Wechsler, p. 15). Also in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, religious customs, Bible and Talmud had been added to the mix of subjects taught in many institutions under the heading of a field often called Semitics.

However, what we now think of as Jewish Studies, with its multidisciplinary homes in departments of History, Philosophy, Sociology, and more, originated when Jews began to be appointed to those faculties in the 1920s (Greenspahn, p. 213 – 214). For many, however, Hebrew and the Old Testament are seen as topics of Jewish significance; consequently, the scholarly inclusion of those subjects in higher education might be considered nascent Jewish Studies. Connecting apparently Jewish topics with modern notions of Jewish Studies is common. Greenspahn, commented on the enormous growth of the scholarly Association for Jewish Studies since its founding in 1969 and traced the origins of the field to Hebrew instruction offered in 18<sup>th</sup> century universities (2000, p. 209-211). He was not alone in attempting to provide Jewish Studies with provenance and perhaps with the credibility of longevity, and he argued persuasively that “full-time professors of Judaica at Berkeley, Johns Hopkins, Cornell, Columbia, NYU, and the University of Pennsylvania beginning in the 1870s” saw themselves as teaching Hebrew literature and thought in addition to Semitic languages and philology (p. 210-213). Disputes concerning the origins of Jewish Studies focus upon institutional and faculty motivations.

In contrast to Greenspahn, Ritterbrand and Wechsler cautioned against drawing such a conclusion: the goal of Hebrew instruction in Ivy League colleges was to mine the Old

Testament for evidence that Judaism was superseded by Protestant and Reformation Christianity (p. 12). In other words, Jews were of limited interest except as possible proselytes. Band provided an ironic description of a typical scholarly article on the history of ‘Judaic’ Studies:

After the citation of the Mathers and the theologically-oriented curricula of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, which included Hebrew, we usually leap to the end of the 19th century, when oriental studies were introduced into several American universities and, with them, some postbiblical literature usually considered as a branch of Semitics. Then would follow the third period of interest in Hebrew or Judaic studies, which began with the development of programs in various New York colleges in the late 1930s or early 1940s. (1966, p. 4)

A more accurate theory of origination links modern American Jewish Studies to the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, as Kristen Loveland did in her 2008 presentation, “The Association for Jewish Studies: A Brief History,” at the Association of Jewish Studies Conference (p. 2). Moshe Davis made a nearly identical connection in the introduction to his 1995 compilation on Jewish education in academia (p. 3-4). Known as the Science of Judaism, the *Wissenschaft* movement applied the academic tools of rationality, literary analysis, social theories, and more to Jewish texts, histories, and peoples. The scientific, rational study of Jewish topics removed sacred texts from the sole purview of traditional yeshivah exegesis and rendered Bible and Talmud accessible to scholars, Jew and non-Jew alike. That scientific approach “has been superseded by the development of what is now called ‘Jewish Studies,’” according to Nathan Rotenstreich, and more accurately reflects changes in academic disciplines as well as the continued vitality of Judaism itself (1995, p. 13-14). However, the scholars of Jewish Studies are expected to adhere to standards of social-scientific rigor using methodological and theoretical tools to embed their topic within the humanities and make the *academic* value of Jewish Studies apparent.

**Transitions**

Assimilated Jewish scholars, historians, humanists, and social scientists, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and now, may give themselves permission to focus on Judaism and other facets of Jewish experience and thereby assert their Jewish identities without religiosity. The Jewish academics who initiated the discipline dreamed of assuming their logical place in the universities of Western Europe (Band, 1966, p. 5), but anti-Semitism and indifference inhibited that outcome. The nations of Europe never took seriously Abraham Geiger's suggestion to incorporate Jewish faculty into regional theological seminaries as equals alongside Protestants and Catholics (Urbach, 1995, p.16). Consensus among some American Jewish Studies scholars identified Salo Baron at Columbia and Harry Wolfson at Harvard as the modern founders of the field, and their students as its disseminators in US colleges and universities (Bush, 2011, p. 39-40). Greenspahn (2000), on the other hand, argued that Richard Gottheil's students were already positioned as faculty in critical colleges and universities when Judaic studies programs crystallized; therefore, quarantining origin stories for the field to Harvard and Columbia was "simplistic" (p. 213-216). The focus in the US was decidedly secular; rabbinic programs, rabbis, and yeshivot might contribute to but were not usually central to Jewish Studies. Nevertheless, many liberal Jews, in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, optimistically anticipated their seemingly inevitable, full integration into the social, economic, and political fabric of Europe and embraced that hope as a pinnacle of Jewish history.

There are scholars of Jewish Studies who objected to applying this Hegelian rationality, with its optimistic implications of inevitable and positive historical transitions resulting from Enlightenment and emancipation. Ben Zion Dinaburg faulted this focus on western European processes for ignoring "the rise of great new centers of Jewish population . . . in Russia, North America and Palestine; the origin, spread, and growth of *Hassidism*," and cultural movements

including Zionism (Engel, 2010, p. 114). Dinaburg insisted that Jews not living under the influence of the *Wissenschaft* made vital contributions both to Jewish life of the time and to our scholarly understanding of modern Jewish history, religion, and culture. Jewish Studies scholarship that ignores the effervescence of those regions results in a flatter portrayal of Jewish life and in a partial understanding of the emergence of the field. Fortunately, Jewish Studies, broader than its *Wissenschaft* origins, includes research on “the creativity of what are called the Oriental Jewish communities” (Rotenstreich, p. 15). So while the *Wissenschaft* movement provided the headwaters of Jewish Studies, the field now includes more streams of Jewish thought, experiences, and communities than originally.

### **Content**

Jewish Studies in the modern American academy includes a broad range of subjects and disciplines. At WCU, applicable courses can be found in departments of History, Political Science, Philosophy, Anthropology and Sociology, and Languages (see Appendix A). Every facet of Jewish civilization is fair game for study. “Hebrew is the most widely taught subject in the field of Jewish studies in institutions of higher learning outside of Israel” (Nir & Fischler, 1995, p. 132). In the US, the astounding prominence of Christian divinity schools in a list of programs offering Jewish Studies courses (Goldberg, 1995, p. 260-328) explains the quantifiable prevalence of Biblical Hebrew over modern (Nir & Fischler, p. 132-133). Curiosity about Jewish civilization in Christian academic settings seems primarily focused on biblical and ancient periods. Similar narrow concentration on Semitic languages and sacred texts in early Judaic programs explains why some scholars prefer to locate Jewish Studies’ origins with later non-theological developments (Greenspahn, p. 215). Christian academic interest in Jewish topics, depending on the institution, might still have more to do with faith in supersession than

with unbiased explorations of Jewish civilization. For more modern or less tendentious examinations of Jewish culture, thought, politics, history, and religion, Jewish Studies courses abound in secular colleges and universities as well as in Jewish institutions. Most often, as Robert Chazan (1995) noted, Jewish civilization courses tend to be located in academic departments, with few exclusively Jewish Studies departments (p. 104).

### **Visionary Moments**

The emergence of Zionism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century sparked new perceptions and revisions of Jewish experiences. Zionist framing of the *galut*, or Exile, typically envisioned evolutionary changes to Jews and Judaism as the people inevitably returned to the Homeland. The Holocaust presented an enormous challenge to the world-views of most scholars, not only those in Jewish Studies or those with a Zionist perspective. Ben Zion Dinaburg exhorted Zionist educators in the early 1940s to instill awareness of the unstable exilic past, including the ongoing Shoah, because the contemporary generation in Palestine would determine the survival of Jews in a Jewish nation (Engel, p. 88-89). The Holocaust painfully exposed the failures of earlier Zionists to educate and persuade European Jews to leave the Diaspora. This insufficiency resulted from “a fundamental misunderstanding of the Jewish past” (Engel, p. 90) on the part of European Jews who had ignored the “smoking volcano” of anti-Semitism for generations (Engel, p. 91). In addition, the Holocaust bolstered the Zionist ideology of Jewish Studies: that it should lead to migration to the Land and to rejection of assimilationist accommodations. The insight Dinaburg gained from applying the Holocaust as the latest in a pattern of a millennia-old Jewish/ non-Jewish dialectic and conflict forced a reframing of Zionist ideology about the persistence and exultation of the Jewish national spirit (Engel, p. 95-97). Jewish scholars of the time, and since,

grappled with the implications of the Holocaust for the total field of Jewish Studies. The Shoah reshaped Jewish Studies even as it occurred.

At the end of WWII, few colleges and universities provided Jewish Studies courses or programs, but several factors beyond the huge increase in student populations contributed to growth in the field: grappling with the Shoah, inclusion of Israel studies, Jewish integration into American life at all levels, and an increase in religious impulses (Band, 1966, p. 19-20).

However, even such a synergistic accumulation of factors does not fully explain the exponential flourishing of Jewish Studies. In the era of identity politics and culture that grew out of the 1960s, young Jewish college students embraced their difference in ways their parents had tended to keep private. Saul Wachs illuminated a pivotal moment in Jewish course development in higher education: “the reaction to the ‘black is beautiful’ movement combined with the rejection of Jewish activists at the Ann Arbor conference (Students for a Democratic Society, 1967) turned Jewish American radicals into American Jewish radicals” (Conversation, April, 2014). By this, Wachs meant that Jewish students, thwarted in their efforts to shape the agenda of this radical organization, turned their energies from the provocations sought by the SDS toward a revolutionary reclamation of identity and Jewish learning. The passage of time enabled that cohort to influence the direction and content of Jewish Studies programs.

By 1995, Florinda Goldberg logged 751 American colleges and universities in the “World Register” of programs in which “Jewish civilization is taught or researched,” including everything from departments of Jewish Studies to single courses offered in History or Hebrew (p. 253-328). Notably, up to half of the programs offered in some regions can be found in Christian divinity programs. Scholars of the field frequently cited the post-1960s inclusion of formerly marginalized groups as worthwhile subjects of academic scholarship as the basis for the

growth of Jewish Studies in American academia (Neusner, 1983; Sales & Saxe, 2006).

However, Andrew Bush (2011) submitted a more visceral rationale: “The specter of annihilation and the counter-imperative of survival characterize contemporary Jewish Studies” (p. 55). Bush believed the current period in Jewish studies should be named “after Auschwitz” (p. 55). Indeed, Engel (2010) characterized Auschwitz as challenging the epistemology of Western scholarship and reshaping entire fields, certainly including Jewish Studies (p. 10). Auschwitz was a metaphor for the all-encompassing distortion caused by the tragedy, which challenged us to develop new ways of knowing, and this was especially true for Jewish learning and scholarship. However the field is interpreted, it offers substantive courses recognizable to students, faculty, administration, and donors as being worthwhile of inclusion.

### **Holocaust Education in Higher Education**

Holocaust education has become tied, in many institutions, to humanity’s unfortunate proclivity for perpetuating genocide, so at WCU and other universities one finds a Holocaust and Genocide Program. As a result, the specifically Jewish character of the Nazi genocide might be subsumed in a comparison of the many similarities to atrocities against other groups, both ancient and recent. Rather than object to this conflation, quite a few academics agree with Leonard Grob (2004) that “Holocaust Studies must move out from its base in the study of events of 1933-1945 to the endeavor to shed light on other instances of inhumane conduct in our still genocidal world” (p. 90). While it may not be inaccurate to examine parallels between genocides, the unique character of the Shoah diminishes daily as the last survivors, liberators, and participants die. Zev Garber(2004) describes the apparent consequence of that loss:

What is clear is that the world community is at a point where it is about to lose the very meaning of the *Shoah* – not only because we cannot really understand a past others have suffered but because we relate it to all other horrors of the past and the present, which is a politically correct

way of diminishing it, compromising it, and finally dismissing it. And the ultimate travesty and disrespect . . . is the twinning of the Nazi swastika and the Star of David as symbols of genocidal fascism. (p. 72).

Denunciations in political rhetoric frequently descend to ‘Nazi’ and ‘Hitler’ name-calling in continuing demonstrations of widespread lack of perspective about, and manipulative willingness to trivialize, the realities of the Shoah. The sometimes popular, often petty, comparisons of Nazi policies to those of Israel, on western campuses in particular, demonstrate true lack of comprehension regarding the Shoah’s uniqueness, and that confounding misconception, alone, is enough to justify intensified efforts in Holocaust education. We must educate beyond competitive comparisons of relative suffering.

### **Unnecessary Divergence**

An additional consequence of the intellectual merger of Holocaust with genocide studies is the disciplinary removal of Holocaust Studies from Jewish Studies. Obviously, the *mechitza*, or partition, between the subjects is not universal, as demonstrated by a 1988 workshop on Jewish higher education that focused on the Holocaust as a Jewish Studies topic (Shimoni, 1995, p. 129). Nevertheless, the division is widespread and ongoing, so scholars would do well to question the necessity and continued desirability of isolating study of the Holocaust from Jewish Studies. One basis of the cleavage of Holocaust Studies from its Jewish parent is the extreme nature of the subject matter: it is difficult to look the Holocaust in the face. Engaging the power and pain of the Shoah in academic discourse has a potentially numbing, distracting effect. Or if fully engaged with the material, students may spend a semester or more feeling sad (Hass, 2004, p. 99-102). Other students report dissonance generated by a lack of closure and by their expanded but negative knowledge of human capacities (Skloot, 2004, p.201). Students, cast into vulnerability by the subject, may need faculty guidance in coping with the emotions generated by

study of the Shoah. Academics in general may prefer the rigors of intellect and disciplinary modes of deliberation to the emotional involvement of authentic Holocaust education.

Additionally, scholars of Jewish Studies who adhere to a linear narrative of progress since the Enlightenment cannot conceive of Emancipation as inevitable evolution when confronted with the “abyss of the apocalypse” (Engel, p. 20-26). In other words, we cannot tell ourselves a history about our growing equality with Christian Europeans and their acceptance of Jews and Judaism in their midst when entire communities were directly or passively complicit in the atrocities and the slaughter of our millions. There is a gap, a discrepancy, of more than a decade in the trend of progress frequently endorsed by scholars of Jewish European studies.

A couple of the most widely known commemorative museums, Yad Vashem and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, include the historical background of anti-Semitism but otherwise present the Shoah as largely disconnected from the much longer duration of Jewish pasts and presents. Potential problems arise because many people unfamiliar with the depth and breadth of Jewish experiences learn only of our status as targets, despised victims. In the case of such purposeful settings, the segmentation of the Holocaust from the remainder of Jewish history seems uncontroversial: the museums commemorate our lost millions and not the totality of the Jewish experience. But they include that part of the Jewish experience they believe is relevant: the history of anti-Semitism. However, Yad Vashem’s construction, designed to conclude with visitors gazing out at the resurrected nation of Israel, created a physical tie to the Jewish present. The deeper philosophical issue at stake is that museums and scholars decide what should be known and researched when we study the Holocaust, and excluding contextual information from other areas of Jewish Studies may result in perceptions that only in certain kinds of knowing are valid. William Miles (2002) discussed academic “appropriation” of the Holocaust and described

his distress at colleagues' insensitive glee at the "wonderful" teaching opportunity" provided by growing scholarship of the Holocaust, which now provides dissections of gender, class, regional differences and more, and which is a source of intellectual contention among scholars (Accessed online Dec, 2013). Scholarship and pedagogy related to the Holocaust are fraught with controversy, including academic and research disputes as well as Holocaust denial (described by Browning, 2004, among others).

Even scholars who decry the intellectual sequestration of Holocaust Studies may have arrived at that position after long professional experience in one camp or the other. For example, David Engel, the author of *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust* (2010), a critical examination of the multiple reasons behind the subject separation, taught "Problems in the Study of the Holocaust" (1991) without including the broader dilemma of fitting such study into the field of Jewish Studies (1991, p. 67-72). Stephen Feinstein (2004) maintained that the unique nature of Jewish history renders the Holocaust different from genocides perpetrated by other dictatorial regimes, and he found it "outrageous that a student can emerge from a semester course on the Holocaust, know the names of members of the *Judenrat*, but not Maimonides . . . and other important figures of the Jewish past" (p. 56). Students cannot be expected to truly grasp the qualitative differences of the Shoah from other genocides – the death sentence that Jewish blood carried which no assimilation or conversion could mitigate, or the Nazi vision of *Judenrein* which promised the erasure of a people – unless they understand a fraction of what Jews brought to the world.

### **Remembering**

While many faculty might object to including more content in already bursting curricula, a deeper engagement with Jewish Studies would also permit the sometimes overshadowed voices

of our martyrs to be heard. Nili Keren (2004) raised an excellent point: without at least a minimal grounding in pre-WWII European Jewish history, students cannot comprehend the loss of vibrancy and culture generated by the lack of Jewish populations in towns and cities once teeming with Jewish energy (p. 132-133). David Patterson agreed that the Shoah cannot “be understood without a thorough understanding of Judaism, since that was what the Nazis set out to obliterate in the annihilation of the Jews (p. 146). The deaths of many millions matter, but so did their lives. Patterson was concerned that Jews are being written out of Holocaust history because of our failure to discuss Judaism, Jewish culture, and ideas of the sacred (p. 148); realistically, it might be tenure suicide for an academic to tread into the waters of sacred traditions and absolute morality. However, we cannot understand the depth of our loss without studying what Jewish murder victims of the Shoah created, celebrated, fought over, and believed.

A literal separation in the fields cannot really exist since Holocaust scholars must take for granted some prior exposure of their students to “the outlook and philosophy, values and ideals of European Jews – as taught in other Jewish Studies classes” (Garber, 1991, p. 82). A danger is that if students do not understand Jews and Judaism, educators cannot have confidence that students will arrive at conclusions based on Jewish humanity rather than the stereotypical ‘strangeness’ of a possibly threatening people (Short, 2004, p. 180-81). In other words, questions about the constancy of European anti-Semitism may lead to conclusions that Jews were somehow to blame, somehow incited hatred, somehow resisted correction of their peculiarity. Patterson argued that teaching and learning about the Shoah “requires a profound understanding of the Jews and the Judaism targeted for annihilation (p. 141). He insisted further, “There can be no understanding of the Holocaust without an understanding of the Judaism – of the sacred tradition of Torah and Talmud – that was marked for extinction upon the

extermination of the Jews” (p. 150). However, beyond inbuilt and tacit interrelationships, academics have worked to uncouple the topics. In the absence of even minimal exposure to Jewish culture, history, beliefs, or philosophy, Holocaust courses, stripped of historical context and anti-Semitic antecedents may risk descending into a litany of irrational, horrific events.

This effort to avoid cross-pollination is peculiar since Christian academics frequently note the connection between Christianity history and the Holocaust: “the annihilation of the European Jews was inextricably related to Christianity and the behavior of Christian people” (Haynes, 1997, p. 76). Tying the events of the Holocaust to the history of anti-Semitic Christian behavior and teachings in Europe enables faculty in church-related colleges to grasp the continuity of their own history. Stephen Haynes’ willingness to draw a direct line between the racist rhetoric of nineteenth-century American Christian theologians and the ideology of the Final Solution called attention to the dangers of ignoring the power of prejudice (p. 27-41). To their credit, many theologians address issues of Church complicity and indifference during the Shoah (Unknown, 2000, accessed online Dec. 16, 2013) in recognition of the Holocaust’s emergence from European Christian anti-Semitism. Michael Steinlauf (Jan. 2015) noted this “welcome change: to locate the Holocaust chiefly in Jewish history is to avoid its roots in the history of Christendom. At the same time, knowing nothing of Jewish history and culture except for anti-Semitism makes the victims of the Holocaust featureless” (revision comments).

Shall Jews relinquish that self-knowledge and the intellectual terrain that accompanies it? Should Jewish academics permit the reframing of the Holocaust as “an event in the history of the Christian faith and the Christian church”? (Haynes, 76). Franklin Littell recognized that both academia and Christianity sustained a “credibility crisis” as a consequence of the events leading up to and including the Holocaust (Haynes, p. 14). For Patterson, the failure of Western

civilization and Christianity to actively redeem ideals co-opted by Nazism, such as autonomy, will, and morality that succumbed to relativism, remains an obstacle to *tikkun olam*, healing the world (p. 147). Students capably recognize and seek intellectual and moral coherence in the face of these breaches of our common heritage. The Shoah occurred *in* history, not outside of it, so connections with Jewish experiences in the past belong in Holocaust courses.

Some non-Jewish students at WCU reported to me that they participate in Jewish Studies and Holocaust Studies courses in order to explore their own faith history, and presumably those students are similar to non-Jewish students elsewhere, so logical presentation of the subject should explore the twining of our histories. That requires a backdrop, a context including everything from Jewish interactions with Rome, the medieval Church, and the Enlightenment. Gideon Shimoni collected a wide variety of syllabi in *The Holocaust in University Teaching* (1991). Several delve into the growth of late 19<sup>th</sup> century European anti-Semitism, but only David Bankier's course on Holocaust origins (p. 37-41), Jocelyn Hellig's "Theological Issues Arising Out of the Holocaust" (p. 95-101), and Richard Libowitz's "Jewish and Christian Responses to the Holocaust" (p. 133-138) ask students to conceive of the Shoah as emerging from the totality of the Jewish experience in Christian Europe.

Jewish Studies is perfectly positioned to provide a lens into our linked past. One reason it does not, according to Engel, is historians of Jewish topics mistakenly apply Salo Baron's admonition to avoid the "lachrymose" version of Jewish history (2010, p. 44-68). Truthfully, narratives of Jewish history do often sound like recitals of woe and persecution or like the tongue-in-cheek, joking holiday summary, "they tried to kill us; we survived, and now let's eat." Baron's point was more revisionist: Jews were agents in their own pasts, fully capable of responding to challenges with energy and creativity rather than passivity and wretchedness

(Engel, 2010, p. 65). The same rejection of passivity caused Zev Garber (2004) to object to the implications of the term “Holocaust” with its overtones of divinely desired religious sacrifice; instead, Garber advocates a paradigm of acknowledging the horror of people’s capacities for inflicting suffering and of embracing the message of survival (p. 66-67).

### **Purpose of Holocaust Education in Colleges and Universities**

College students, Jewish and not, deserve the option of examining the Holocaust in the academic setting, which might both mitigate its potency and magnify its essence. Christopher Browning’s explanation for the value of examining the wider historical context of the origins of the Final Solution is also an excellent reason for teaching the Holocaust: “the debate over Hitler’s role is not just the illusory search for an incriminating ‘smoking gun’ but crucial to understanding how the Nazi system worked and hence how the leadership of a modern nation-state can harness its bureaucracy, military, and population to the enterprise of total genocide. These are not arcane issues” (2004, p. 37). We teach the Holocaust in an attempt to grasp what happened, to parse the components, to impart vigilance, and to encourage intervention in injustice. These are not only Jewish issues but universally human ones.

The Shoah also raises issues deeply applicable to the humanities and social sciences most college students participate in as part of their general studies. Students of history, literature, sociology, psychology, and philosophy should be addressing evil and its causes, the nature of altruism and bystander behavior, and more. Leonard Grob (2004) noted that highly educated people were profoundly complicit in the crimes of Nazi Germany, so we are obligated to question both the form and content of education in the Weimar and Nazi periods and also “to what degree higher education in the United States has rethought its fundamental assumptions ‘in the shadows’ of the Holocaust” (p. 84). Grob held an activist position and insisted that we

“educate-toward-rescue” (p. 85). In other words, we must ask ourselves what types of education, what content, formats, and methodologies produce or prevent Holocausts, and we must wholeheartedly commit ourselves as educators to developing pedagogies designed to produce the kinds of human beings who prevent the genocides which still occur.

Aaron Hass (2004) was less optimistic that knowledge of events and perpetrators might have preventative effects since “Hutu extremists, Serbs in Bosnia, or lackeys of Pol Pot” (p. 97) surely knew about the Holocaust. Rather, Hass educated in order to personalize the “other,” to make it less possible to hate what we do not understand, to provoke an emotional response to the suffering of individual humans, to make us care (p. 96-103). Stephen Haynes (2004) also wanted to shape the way his mostly Christian students understood the world, and he fostered critical thinking by helping them make emotional connections and asking them to reflect on what they thought they knew about the Holocaust and Christianity (p. 116-120). Perhaps Holocaust education can be handled clinically, but the best learning will take place where students are guided across an emotional tightrope in order to avoid shock and dismay leading to a sense of futility, numbness, or indifference to suffering because of its seeming inevitability.

### **Interdisciplinary Jewish Studies**

Following the *Wissenschaft* movement, Ephraim Urbach linked the growth of Jewish Studies subjects to the establishment, in the 1920s, of Hebrew University, with its humanities and social science departments, and of the Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem (1995, p. 17-18). As a result, topics of Jewish interest penetrated a variety of disciplines. Numerous scholars point to the problematic task of differentiation which often must distill Jewish topics from the broader and more general fields in which they are found, such as history and philosophy (Urbach, 1995; Engel, 2010; Bush, 2011; Rosenfeld, 1995). However, Jewish Studies should be

regarded as interdisciplinary rather than multidisciplinary because it is “marked by a synthesis of disciplinary knowledge and methods that provides a more holistic understanding,” (Knight, Lattuca, Kimball, & Reason, 2012, p. 144) as practitioners have demonstrated since the Wissenschaft. Bush (2011) recommended we conceptualize Jewish Studies in Kabbalistic terms: the container of Jewish Studies is broken; the contents, “sparks of Jewishness,” are scattered (p. 9). With parts of Jewish Studies distributed among departments like so many pieces of a puzzle, it becomes easier to comprehend the intellectual and paradigmatic obstacles impeding the establishment of Jewish Studies in many American universities.

Lacking wholeness, it can be difficult to find a departmental home for Jewish Studies programs. They routinely engage in what Eisen termed “intellectual boundary-violation” (2003, p. 8), which makes them more exciting as courses but difficult to house with disciplinary thinkers who might prefer purity of content. In fact, determining structural norms for interdisciplinary programs can be challenging (Knight, et al., p. 144), and disciplines may compete to assert primacy and the integrity of potentially conflicting academic goals. Band found Jewish Studies courses in departments of Semitics<sup>2</sup>, history, sociology, foreign languages, philosophy, political science, and more (1966, p. 11-13). Interdisciplinary curricula defy specialists in departments: language competencies might demand credit hours that history faculty desire for upper level courses or which philosophy professors feel should be devoted to in-depth text analysis.

In another example of early disciplinary confusion, Salo Baron’s 1930 appointment to the chair of Jewish Studies at Columbia sparked a debate about his proper place, with Baron initially preferring a Semitics or religion department before conceding that Jewish history belonged in the

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<sup>2</sup> In 1966. Few secular schools had Semitics departments in 2014.

history department (Engel, p. 63). Those who challenge the disciplinary status quo, according to Eisen, have to “prove that the challenge is necessary or even worthwhile” (2003, p. 9), leaving Jewish Studies in the position of having to justify itself. We require “a rationale for Jewish studies that will draw upon, but at the same time be more encompassing than, the specialized interests . . . [which] form the essential core of any Jewish studies program” (Rosenfeld, 1995, p. 43). Wholeness in Jewish Studies necessitates faculty involvement in cross-disciplinary fermentation and fertilization to produce genuinely fruitful scholarship.

Simply put, Jewish lives and religious practices occurred in many nations and cultures over long periods of time; therefore, “If Jewish culture is not merely the result of an internal, autochthonous process, then scholarship in the field must venture beyond its limited— one is tempted to say ‘ghettoized’—boundaries” (Biale, 2003, p. 11). Because of its comprehensive nature, Jewish Studies is not well served when scholars insist on content-area fiefdoms and rigid boundary maintenance. Jewish Studies programs may vary hugely from one institution to another, and the degree of interdepartmental cooperation depends on both external factors and on the internal culture of the university and the program. “Variations in organizational structures include the number of faculty members holding appointments in the program, whether these appointments are full-time or shared between programs, and the extent to which the interdisciplinary program relies on other programs for courses and curricular leadership” (Knight, et al., p. 147). Because organizational goals, curricula, and student learning outcomes differ from one program to another, and because this paper focuses on the origins and shaping of programs at WCU, curricular goals and modifications at WCU are topics for a future study.

However, a theoretical approach other than interdisciplinary, described by Blumenthal in the 1970s, views Jewish Studies as a “data field” (1976, p 535 – 536). Conceptualized as a data

field, the different topics and disciplines of Jewish Studies cohere because their epistemological foundation emerges from Jewish experiences, languages, and beliefs. Mordecai Kaplan envisioned an institution centered on this holistic presupposition, the University of Judaism, designed to train the next generations of Jewish leadership of all kinds by removing “from the mind of the Jew all doubt as to the worthiness of Jewish life (1963, pp. 43). The faculty of Jewish Studies courses in American secular institutions had not collectively resolved issues regarding the “very nature and aims of Jewish studies” by 1995 (Rosenfeld, p. 44-45), but in the years since, some ideals have emerged. Large programs with instructors appointed solely for Jewish Studies can turn the disciplinary cafeteria into a Seder. In other words, professors who only teach in a Jewish Studies program can range freely over as wide a range of content as necessary to provide a fluid, orderly narrative and wide-ranging instruction for their students. Furthermore, students desire content-area “gestalt,” so Jewish Studies might avoid fracturing into subsets (Silberman, 1970, p. 15). Students are most likely to find such all-inclusive programs at large universities, elite private schools, or those focused on attracting large numbers of Jewish students.

## **Jewish Studies in Public, Comprehensive Universities**

### **Complications**

Current considerations of the value of Jewish Studies programs depend upon such institutional variables as the size of the Jewish student population, Jewish community interest and institutional financial support, the public/private mission of the college, the availability of engaged faculty and committed administrators, the national economy, and more. Funding for Jewish Studies programs and chairs often originates externally, with the Hillel Foundation, for example. However, Band argued (1966) that Jewish Studies, as an “integral part of a well-

rounded humanities curriculum,” should be included in an institution’s regular budget (p. 20).

Yet in consideration of enrollment and funding information emailed to me by Dr. Jonathan Friedman, current director of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at WCU, Greenspahn’s comment (2000) that support for Jewish Studies programs frequently originates outside the university resulting in tepid academic support (p. 209) seems to be borne out. The contributions of Jewish Studies to deeper appreciation of the humanities and other academic spheres are not widely acknowledged. Consequently, Robert Chazan (1995) argued that the “agenda of the academy-at-large will increasingly impinge” on factors in Jewish Studies ranging from student enrollment, to faculty assignments, to course content (p. 111). There are additional indications, besides financial and enrollment concerns, that pressure on these programs is likely to continue increasing.

Universities may be of a ‘type,’ such as large public research, or small private, but each is unique. Modern, public universities generally require measurable significance and applicability in order to justify establishing and maintaining programs, and in fact, low enrollment majors and programs are routinely phased out. Increasing numbers of Jews among faculty and students at colleges contributed to the growth of Jewish Studies programs, especially in the 1970s as can be seen at WCU. Faculty in Jewish Studies programs tend to be Jewish, and have been since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Band, 1966, p.6), but Laurinda Stryker’s uncomfortable experience of tacit anti-Semitism at a large, public university points to additional tensions which might make teaching Jewish and Holocaust Studies risky to one’s academic career (2007). Advocates and faculty of Jewish Studies and Holocaust Studies programs must successfully juggle funding, politics, challenges to scholarship, and widely varying student backgrounds and motivations.

## Student Experiences

What has been called “emerging adulthood” is a time of identity formation and individuation for young adults in their twenties and even into their thirties (Henig, Aug. 2010). This critical time for testing various identities, including religious, occurs while the vast majority of American Jews are enrolled in higher education. The self-absorption of young adults during these years heightens their capacities for reflection while they construct levels of Jewish observance and engagement that may characterize their adult lives. On the other hand, that same self-interest may render them “less interested in joining institutionalized religions than they are in undertaking personal journeys of religious and spiritual exploration” (Sales & Saxe, 2006, p. 16). In addition, students at public colleges and universities more often have family and financial distractions shaping their self-development processes. Rather than focus on Jewish development, those students necessarily adopt a vocational mentality; they attend college to become something professional, not to frolic in the intellectual playground of higher education.

A hidden curriculum can take advantage of the university setting to reach those students by rendering Jewish topics into academic discourse and normalizing Jewish content although objectifying it to a large degree. Students may take Biblical Hebrew<sup>3</sup> at WCU to fulfill a language requirement, but as a consequence, they also learn essential skills for penetrating sacred texts. This mainstreaming of Jewish Studies has the desired effect because almost half of Jewish students in Sales’ and Saxes’s 2006 survey took at least one Jewish topics course, and that held true even for students who grew up with minimal Jewish affiliation (p. 21). Students’ motivations for taking Jewish Studies courses tend toward the practical: classes fulfill some

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<sup>3</sup> No other form of Hebrew is offered at WCU although adjunct instructors of Modern/ Conversational Hebrew were occasionally hired for a year or two in the 1980s.

graduation requirement (Sales & Saxe, p. 21). Unfortunately, Dr. Elliott Ratzman, Temple University, told me that some Jewish students hope to attain a good grade based solely on prior knowledge (phone conversation) mostly acquired in supplementary Hebrew schools, and Jewish Studies faculty insist that their courses maintain the rigor and academic standards expected by their institutions (Sales & Saxe, p. 21). Obviously, if a percentage of students in a course feel that they can get by with minimal effort, but faculty assert the intellectual gravity of the material, the potential for marginal performance by Jewish students is high. Consequently, while Jewish Studies programs may have a tacit goal of enhancing Jewish students' religious and cultural identification, it is unclear whether they find their way to greater Jewish identification by enrolling in these courses. On the other hand, Jewish Studies as part of an experiential package of Jewish life, learning, and practice on campus may succeed, but that is a topic for another study.

## METHODOLOGY

### **Overall research design**

Case study research is the most appropriate means of developing an inclusive understanding of the unique qualities of Jewish Studies at WCU. Because of its relation to the researcher, this case is an intrinsic study as described by Robert Stake (1995), undertaken out of personal curiosity and involvement (p. 3). The qualitative research involved interviews with stakeholders including select faculty, program administrators, recent graduates, and involved members of the larger West Chester community. The objective of engaging those participants was to craft as complete a picture as possible of Jewish Studies at WCU. Interviewees were asked open-ended questions about their involvement in Jewish Studies and Holocaust and Genocide Studies courses and programming at WCU. They described the form their involvement took, their motivation for participating, their impressions of the course or program, and its meaningfulness to them now. In addition, they considered whether Jewish Studies at WCU could be improved and made suggestions where they felt a need for improvements or additions. The interview questions are designed to address the overarching questions guiding this research.

Understanding participants' involvement, experiences, reflections, and suggestions enabled dense contextualization of archival material for a complex portrait of Jewish Studies at WCU. This investigation yielded information specific only to WCU and Jewish Studies in that place; if generalizations resulted, those were not the overarching goal of this study. Some stakeholders' concerns about Jewish continuity prompted their focus on Jewish Studies in higher education, but again, answers provided here to those larger questions are specific to a single

place: West Chester University. Participants contributed to this study: each spoke within the context of his/her experiences as administrator, faculty, student, or community member. Table # 2 includes the length of participants' knowledge and their contextual role, the source of their authority. Archival and participant contributions yield a contextual portrait of a facet of WCU never previously analyzed, and it is my hope that others may be interested and find this portrait compelling and helpful.

Table # 1 Length of Participant Involvement and Basis of Knowledge about the Case

Participant	Time Period of Participant Involvement or Knowledge of the Case									
	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	
Dr. Madeleine Wing Adler										
Dr. Lawrence Davidson										
Dr. Andrew Dinniman										
Dr. Jonathan Friedman										
Dr. Wayne Hanley										
Dr. William Hewitt										
Dr. Linda Lamwers										
Prof. John Rosso										
Dr. Bonita Freeman Witthoft										
Dr. Morrie Gold										
Dr. Maury Hoberman										
Mr. Ronald Shur										
Charlie Student										
Jen Student										
Josh Student										
Matt Student										
Sara Student										
Susan Student										
<b>Color Key</b>										
Faculty	Community Member									
Administrator	Student									

Curiosity, propinquity, access, and personal involvement motivated this research. Very little of the narrative emerged from quantitative data, so readers should not expect linear explanations or transparent cause and effect relationships of universally acknowledged veracity. Rather, one should be prepared to go down the rabbit hole of multiple, seemingly contradictory, sources of qualitative data and to engage, with the researcher, in understanding the case and its relationships. Robert Stake (1995) included among the advantages of dense, qualitative research the following: one can approach a unique phenomenon with flexible, holistic construction, immersion in observations, and genuine connections with participants (p. 37 – 44). A primarily quantitative study, while having the advantages of producing precise, generalizable, replicable data, could not capture the fullness of this particular case. Where quantitative data is used in this study, it reinforces the qualitative narrative.

Limitations of qualitative case studies include potential biases and subjectivity, time constraints for thorough data gathering, and the sheer complexity of research topics rendering it problematic to determine completion (Stake, p. 45 – 46). To be fair, quantitative methods are subject to similar limitations but lack some of the strengths of qualitative case study. The specific limitations of this study included incomplete records, understandably faulty memories of interviewees given the decades of recall requested, time constraints in gathering and analyzing information, and potentially valuable sources of data the researcher overlooked. The fragmentary quality of the electronic records would be a serious limitation if they had been the sole source of information about the case. However, since those records are comprehensive for the last ten years, and since that data supplemented other sources of information, their spottiness did not have a significant impact on the study.

Not all of those known to have valuable experience and unique insights could be contacted. It was simply not possible, in the time available, to meet with everyone who had something of importance to add to this portrait. Additionally, the personal involvement of the researcher in both the academic and local Jewish communities being studied potentially represented a source of bias, so extra care was taken to validate research conclusions.

### **Why do interviews?**

This case study used a qualitative research plan that combined interviews with participants in every facet of Jewish Studies at WCU and use of archival materials and other records. The main benchmark for the selection of participants was accessibility, but in the case of students, graduates were considered more likely to be both reflective and forthcoming about their experiences in the programs. Interview participants included five graduates of the Masters' in Holocaust and Genocide Studies program, two Bachelors' graduates with minors in Ethnic Studies/ Jewish American concentration, two members of the West Chester Jewish community who have never attended the University, two administrators, and six faculty members, a few of whom are also program administrators. All interviews were analyzed for themes as well as mined for thick description and encapsulating metaphors. While Stake seemed to believe that interviews were necessitated by inadequate observation time (p. 66-67), this particular case existed, in large part, inside informants' brains, as well as in archives, documents, catalogs, and classrooms. Observations would have been less useful, and in any case, I have shared in many aspects of the case as an undergraduate, graduate student, and employee of the University.

Ernest Stringer (2007) offered the more relevant standpoint perspectives, which highlighted the value of individuals' framing and creation of their own experiences and emotions (p. 205-206). Each person's unique experiences and perspectives combine to form a standpoint,

a specific contextual viewpoint which shapes his/her understandings and actions. Appreciating and integrating participants' standpoint perspectives enabled the development of a holistic vision of the phenomenon of the case, of which they each had different constructions. Laboring to understand the position and viewpoint of each participant, and combining their stories with each other and with archival material, I developed coherent threads and themes that contributed to the overall tapestry of the case.

Use of combined methodology provided deeper understanding of the phenomena of Jewish Studies at WCU, something that does not exist as a program with that name, but which participants have realistic experience of within other program titles. Participants constructed unique, variant meanings and assigned values to their experiences, yielding qualitative data and themes critical to my apprehension of the case. Procedural explanations and interview tools are below.

#### **Archive availability**

The archival research included analysis of course offerings, review and evaluation of program development materials, use of periodical literature and program pamphlets, copies of correspondence between participants, and additional records held by WCU. Some of those included original program proposals, a recent feasibility study, and a catalog of program resources. Few of the archival records could be located in any organized fashion, so it was necessary to sort through vast quantities of material and hope to intercept relevant information or to learn of resources from an interview participant and track down tantalizing, partial pieces of data. In all probability, much more information exists than it was possible to locate in the time available.

Some of the additional records held by WCU offices, especially by the Office of the Registrar, are more orderly than the archives located in the library. As a result, gaps and missing information are more readily recognizable. While electronic records of course enrollments date back to 1979, those records are not 100 percent reliable since the pre-2004 records were auto-filled by a “legacy system,” which had partial data (email correspondence, Aug. 12, 2014). In addition, the Office of Institutional Research provided data on student graduation rates from specific programs. But again, even though the Ethnic Studies minor and Jewish American concentration pre-date 1987, it was not possible to obtain graduation numbers earlier than that date. So official archives, while helpful, were not comprehensive enough by themselves to engender deep knowledge of the case.

### **Disclosure**

In the interests of full disclosure, it must be noted again that I am a member of these overlapping communities. I grew up in the West Chester Jewish community, attended WCU for my undergraduate BA in Anthropology and for supplementary graduate courses, and am employed at the University now. I was fortunate to be a student of Dr Irene Shur, Dr. Jonathan Friedman, and Dr. Bonita Freeman Witthoft, all of whom have voices in this research even though Dr. Shur died more than a decade ago. Therefore, unless otherwise indicated, opinions, conclusions, and experiences stated herein are mine. Consequently, and unusually for a case study, readers will encounter both references to ‘the researcher’ and the inclusion of the first person.

In addition, reviewers assisted in careful attempts to detect and avert researcher bias in this case study. Dr. Joanne Conlon, Director of Pre-Major Academic Advising, and Librarian Mame Purce, both faculty members of WCU, have reviewed transcript analyses and findings. In

addition, Dr. Katrina Arndt, Associate Professor and Chair of Undergraduate Programs in Inclusive Education at St. John Fisher College of Rochester, NY, provided review of research analyses. Their oversight was intended to discern any instances or patterns of bias and to illuminate potentially overlooked data or questions. Their neutrality is presumed even though West Chester University faculty have a vested interest in the larger University community.

## **Data collection**

### **Interviews**

1. Procedures – Interviews were conducted primarily in June and July, 2014. I contacted prospective participants via phone and email to request their involvement and informed interview subjects of the reason for their selection, e.g., their names turned up in archival material, or another participant suggested they be contacted. I described the time commitment, about one hour, and potential for follow-up questions. We met in a location preferred by each participant, sometimes their homes, or neutral places like local restaurants and the WCU Library. Interviews were recorded, when participants permitted, using MP3 technology, and I took notes on a laptop during the interview. I followed up as needed, if participants consented, with questions and requests for clarification. Participants who requested transcripts for verification were provided with both audio transcriptions and with my notes, and no one insisted upon corrections.
2. Consent Form – Appendix C: Prior to beginning each interview, I reviewed the consent form with participants to ensure their understanding of the process and of the potential risks involved. This brief discussion also solicited participants' preferences regarding the use of their names. The names of recent WCU graduates

were changed in this research, but all other participants were identified because of their known, public association with the programs being investigated. One participant preferred that I not record the interview, and the technology, or the operator, failed to successfully capture audio of two additional interviews. Otherwise, seventeen participants consented to having an audio record, and the eighteen interviews were recorded, notated, or both.

3. Instruments – Appendix B: The Interview Instrument was a flexible tool, not strictly adhered to. Not all questions were relevant to every participant, and sometimes participants had extensive stories that contained gems worth the digressions, and rigid adherence to the Interview Instrument would have been dissonant and non-sequential to their narratives.
4. Reliability and Validity – Interview questions were approved by the Dissertation Committee to ensure the questions’ applicability to the research. Interview transcription permitted better analysis of themes and commonalities. Interviewees’ impressions were combined with those of other participants and triangulated with archival materials, course catalogues, literature review, and news reporting about the programs and their participants. Even when commonalities became apparent, it was critical that preexisting assumptions not vitiate the results and not prevent the researcher from recognizing and describing the insufficiency of themes or the inadequacy of the interviewer or the interview instrument. To improve the trustworthiness of the research conclusions, three colleagues not associated with this project reviewed my analysis of several audio transcripts. I sought confirmation that themes and elements which resonated with information about the

case study were, in fact, present and not distorted or misrepresented by bias or by my too-close perspective in these overlapping communities.

An additional measure of trustworthiness involved assurance that participant information addressed the totality of the time period which is the focus of this case.

Table # 1: Length of Participant Involvement and Basis of Knowledge about the Case illustrates participants' contexts and their years of involvement, and subsequent knowledge of the case. It should be understood that students, because of the context of their participation, were both less available during the summer of this research and also engaged in the case for much shorter periods of time than other participants. It remains true that the purpose of the programs and of the University itself is to teach and reach students.

### **Archival Research**

Archival information about Jewish Studies at WCU was available in several forms. Anyone can access scanned and digitally archived course catalogs online at <http://subjectguides.wcupa.edu/content.php?pid=84315&sid=3111850>. Those fascinating documents included much more than simply a list of courses offered, but this research primarily examined the emergence of courses with potential to be included in undergraduate Jewish Studies, and the later appearance of courses that became associated with the Holocaust and Genocide Studies program. Journal and local periodical articles about courses, WCU, the programs, and essential participants were also indispensable materials for this research.

In addition, I was granted access to unique material archived in the Sender Frejdowicz Holocaust Library Collection at WCU. These include notes and correspondence related to the initiation of the Holocaust and Genocide Studies program, as well as photos, program

information, saved articles, typed lectures, and more. While not organized in any fashion, complete, or comprehensive, this collection nevertheless offers deep insight into the program and personages at WCU. Used in combination with electronic material, literature, and personal interviews, the Holocaust and Genocide Studies archives will be a fundamental component of the thick description of this case study.

## **Significance of the Study**

No research has yet been conducted about Jewish Studies at WCU, so this case study represents a unique, albeit limited, contribution to a body of knowledge describing Jewish Studies in higher education. Further, as a public, secular, non-research oriented, four-year institution, WCU is a member of an often overlooked category of universities, and the more we understand about Jewish Studies in this common type of institution the better we may understand the Jewish education experiences available to our college students. So, while the case is unique, similar issues and institutions can be found across the nation. In addition, WCU's Holocaust and Genocide Studies is comparatively robust compared to other Jewish Studies options at WCU, and this research examines the origin and development of those differences. Finally, this research will raise questions for further research, and more significantly, will suggest areas of potential program development aimed at enriching Jewish Studies at WCU.

## **Limitations of the Study**

Time considerations necessarily limit the scope of this paper. Since the methodology was principally examination and analysis of archives and interviews with participants, areas of interest that could not be addressed within the scope of this paper included qualitative characterization and quantitative analyses of the experiences of current students taking advantage of Jewish Studies and Holocaust and Genocide Studies courses and programs. Several former students were interviewed, but this research focused on programs, not students.

In addition, it was not possible to conduct a comprehensive study of the many participating faculty. Faculty backgrounds and choices including studies of course syllabi and their historical change, as well as extensive evaluation of the social forces underlying program initiation and revision, should also be studied but lie beyond the scope of this research.

Furthermore, while WCU librarians and the Director of the Holocaust and Genocide Studies Program permitted free access to archives and files, that information has gaps and requires considerable organization. If scholars are aware of additional sources of relevant data in the areas under investigation, a fuller portrait of WCU's Jewish Studies and Holocaust and Genocide Program can be developed at a later date.

Although interviews were conducted with as many originating constituents of WCU's Holocaust and Genocide Program and Jewish courses as possible, inevitably, some have been missed or were unavailable. Omissions of non-student stakeholders did not imply any fault or detriment to their potential contributions; the fault lay entirely with the researcher and the time constraints. Qualitative research of this kind is most reliable when intensively triangulated and accompanied by dense and thorough description. The case study constructed by this research, while as thorough as possible, is a portion of an ongoing narrative. Discussions concerning the initiation of this research sparked interest on campus at WCU, and multiple constituents expressed interest in participating and in understanding the conclusions. Further research can be conducted as warranted by a maturing comprehension of the state of Jewish Studies and Holocaust and Genocide Studies at WCU. Finally, this research focused on WCU; as a result, it may not be applicable to other institutions, especially private, sectarian, or large research universities.

### **Ethical considerations**

This study has greater value because participants, with the exception of recent graduates, agreed to the inclusion of their full names and roles. The rationale behind naming interviewees was their involvement in known and authentic programs, courses, and events of the past and present. Archived material names faculty and community members whose contributions add

depth and quality to this case study. Naturally, interviews and quotes were handled with utmost respect for the sanctity of reputations and names of those who consent to participate. Interview subjects were given the option to refuse to answer questions, to ask for anonymity, and to revisit subjects they felt were problematic. An Interview Consent form (Appendix C) provided to all interviewees, explained by the researcher, and signed by participants indicated participant comprehension. Sensitivity to the humanity of all parties, living and deceased, must be the researcher's guide. A deep, accurate portrait of this community and this case will serve contributors and the community.

## WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY

### **Origins and Changes**

West Chester University was founded in 1871 to professionalize teacher preparation and was known as West Chester State Normal School of the First District, Consisting of the Counties of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery (Catalog Archive). Established as a consequence of the Normal School Act of 1857, the academy in West Chester met requirements including accommodations for at least 300 students, a faculty of at least six professors and ample tutors, an affiliated Model school for students to practice teaching, and an assembly hall that could hold at least one thousand people (Sturzebecker, 1971, p. 4-5). Though established by the state legislature, Pennsylvania did not originally provide any funds for construction, faculty salaries, or tuition, so local leaders and businessmen were asked to buy shares for \$50 each to be managed by a board of nine trustees (Sturzebecker, p. 6-8). The campus was located, and remains, on a lovely, relatively level lot in the south end of the borough of West Chester although its geography and infrastructure have expanded greatly since 1871.

WCU transitioned to a public institution when the state acquired the school, and a dozen others, in 1913 (Jones & Schoelkopf, 2010, online). Since 1871, prospective teachers attending the Normal School received state aid, despite the initial private character of the school, in the form of a fifty-cent per week stipend “toward defraying the expenses of tuition and boarding” (1872 Catalog, p. 9). By 1904, that amount had tripled to \$1.50 per week, and since tuition and board were \$200 per year for the 40 week combined winter and spring terms (1904 Catalog, p. 64 – 65), Pennsylvania was defraying more than one-quarter of education expenses for its

prospective teachers. At this point, West Chester Normal School fulfilled its mandate, seen as desirable at local and state levels, of preparing a professional teaching cadre.

The school was attended by some students seeking a liberal arts education or business preparation, but the character of the institution was dictated by its mission of preparing teachers for elementary or secondary education. A name change, to West Chester State Teachers College in 1927, reflected the expanded degree-granting capacity of the college, but the additional degrees were still in education fields: Music, and Health and Physical Education (1928 Catalog, p. 21). The next name change in 1960, to West Chester State College, was accompanied by additional bachelor's degree programs in "Education for Public School Nurses and for Dental Hygienists" (1960 Catalog, p. 35).

Within two years, however, the winds of change finally reached Pennsylvania public institutions when the State Council of Education determined to permit state colleges to issue liberal arts degrees (Sturzebecker, p. 217). In 1960, the catalog listed only six curricular options of study (p. 81), but by the start of the 1962-63 academic year, students could matriculate in "Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences" to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree for tuition of \$300 per year (1962 Catalog, p.112-115). Finally, in 1983, while I was an undergraduate at the college, it was renamed West Chester University as its Schools became Colleges. By that time, it was possible to get a bachelor's, associate's degree<sup>4</sup>, or teaching certificate in 45 different programs (1984 Catalog, p. 77).

Today, WCU has over 15 thousand undergraduate and graduate students attending a lovely, tree-covered, 400-acre campus, offers 80 undergraduate or 70 graduate programs (2013 Catalog, online) and is widely acknowledged as a top-tier regional, comprehensive, public

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<sup>4</sup> WCU no longer offers associates degrees of any kind.

institution. It is governed by the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, (PASSHE), which has a Board of Governors appointed by the governor of the state, who is also a board member. PASSHE establishes tuition, negotiates with unions, and monitors academic policies. The 14 PASSHE universities are not the only publicly funded institutions in the state; community colleges and state-affiliated universities provide less expensive tuition for in-state students than others, but the state-affiliated institutions<sup>5</sup> are not under the influence of this external, political, policy-making body.

### **Administrative Factors**

All American colleges and universities must deal with broader political and economic realities, but state funded and administered institutions are particularly vulnerable to those treacherous, shifting tides, notwithstanding Governor Lawrence’s 1961 assurance to a West Chester student that “political influence at the 14 state colleges was nil” (Sturzebecker, p. 216). WCU currently applies an accounting methodology known as “Key Performance Indicators” to assess the viability and fiscal worthiness of departments, programs, and courses.<sup>6</sup> Programs and courses exceeding enrollment targets generate revenue for their departments based upon “a performance based budget allocation model that supports and reinforces the University’s mission and academic goals” (Strategic Plan, 2013, p. 20).

While an improvement from the financial accounting mentality of the previous system, known as the Academic Year Model, Key Performance Indicators pose a burden for Jewish Studies and other specialized programs of interest to small numbers of students. In a widely accepted metaphor, higher education is business and therefore has to run as efficiently as

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<sup>5</sup> University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania State University, Temple University, and Lincoln University

<sup>6</sup> My familiarity with Key Performance Indicators developed during the course of performing professional duties at WCU, where I am employed.

possible, and business cannot tolerate a product with a low volume of sales, such as many Jewish Studies programs. The University formerly based funding allocations for departments and programs on the Academic Year Model: WCU had an implementation goal that every faculty member would increase “credit-hour production by 1 percent annually” between 2000 and 2003 (Plan for Excellence, p. 17). Again, from a business perspective, it made sense to motivate employees to be more productive and to build on that success, but there was predictable and bitter resistance from faculty who saw themselves as education purists. Both accounting techniques quantify the relationship between departments and students by stipulating how many students should be served by departmental courses during an academic year and requiring departments to develop high-enrollment options if substantial numbers of their class offerings had low enrollment. Programs and majors already experiencing limited enrollment experienced tremendous pressure to increase enrollment or risk closure. These budgetary pressures are as inexorable as tides, and since Jewish Studies programs typically have low numbers of majors and minors, the most effective recourse is outside funding and cross-disciplinary course listings.

This might be considered a moot point since WCU does not have, and never had, a Jewish Studies program. However, appropriate courses for such a program already exist on campus and have been available for some time. The teacher education programs that dominated the University’s early curricula provided nothing with Jewish Studies potential, as one might have anticipated given the vocational goals of the times. Keeping in mind that all curricula were designed for various education programs, until 1956 the only courses in which Jewish issues might have been discussed were in the Social Studies department: Modern European History and European History since World War I (1945 Catalog, p.103-104). However, since the Catalog descriptions do not include any discussion of Jews and Judaism, we should assume limited

inclusion of Jewish interests and contributions in course content although presumably there was some mention of Jewish civilization in World History courses.

In 1956, History of the Middle East and India suddenly appeared (1956 Catalog, p. 149). In 2014, it can take at least a full semester, and often much longer, to develop a course and obtain approval from the Curriculum and Academic Policies Committee to offer it, but the process was substantially simpler in 1956. The History of the Middle East and India offered this course description: “A study of the various civilizations that developed in this area with regard to their contributions as they influenced both oriental and occidental achievements. *Special emphasis is placed on the modern aspects of their relation to world knowledge and to problems of current international interest*”<sup>7</sup> (p. 149). Perhaps America’s geopolitical interests were awakened, in ways they had not been following the Shoah and the establishment of Israel, by the turbulence leading up to the Suez Crisis. In any case, History of the Middle East and India was the first course offered, at what was then still a Teacher’s College, which had potential for inclusion into something like Jewish Studies. From that point on, the listing of courses appropriate for Jewish Studies waxed and waned. The History of the Middle East, and the Geography of North Africa and the Middle East were listed in the early 1970s, and by 1974, students could take Biblical Hebrew with Prof. John Rosso, Classical Languages. Although not found in the catalog, the course was one of the “Additional Languages” (1974 Catalog, p. 100) falling under the catch-all “etc.” in the course offerings of the generic “LAN 191 – 192, Critical Languages I – II.” Dr. Irene Shur expanded the college’s Jewish and Holocaust history course offerings in the 1970s and 1980s. A further exploration of such courses and programming at WCU, and the issues and people involved, encompassed a large portion of this research.

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<sup>7</sup> Italics added.

Jewish life on campus also offered social and religious opportunities. The Hillel Foundation first became available to the campus's Jewish students in 1949 as a member of the "Council of Religious Clubs," whose mission on campus was to emphasize "ethical action" and to "raise the standards of honor and character" (1949 Catalog, p. 44). The presence of Hillel speaks to a measurable Jewish presence on campus, but, unfortunately, there is no way to know exactly how many Jews attended then or now because Hillel participation has been limited and no organization or campus office ever conducted a census of the University participants' religions. Furthermore, it may be that many of the Jewish students of that time were returning veterans taking advantage of the GI Bill, and several catalogs of the era address veterans concerns.

### **Curriculum and Academic Policies Council**

All new programs, even those that integrate existing courses, as Jewish Studies at WCU could do, must be approved by the Curriculum and Academic Policies Council (CAPC) in a time-consuming and meticulous process designed to ensure the compatibility of the program with the University's mission. Fortunately, the CAPC website is replete with forms, handbooks, and rubrics designed to aid the navigation of the complex process of obtaining approval for courses and programs. A Jewish Studies program can meet several of CAPC's criteria by providing "a unique and valued service to the community at large or to the university system," and meeting "community demands," and using "resources efficiently" while we "coordinate with other programs" ([www.wcupa.edu](http://www.wcupa.edu), accessed 11/17/2011). WCU's Jewish Studies program, like similar programs elsewhere, would be interdisciplinary. Since all students must take at least one interdisciplinary course to fulfill a general education requirement, Jewish Studies courses could be service courses, that is, enable WCU students to "see the interconnectedness of different

disciplines. However, WCU is currently planning revisions of its general education model to be implemented in 2017. In addition, revisions already in place have marginalized courses in the Jewish American concentration of Ethnic Studies by limiting their applicability to graduation requirements for most students. The political dance of compliance with CAPC and with University and state policies and priorities remains a concern for WCU's Jewish-content courses and Holocaust and Genocide Program.

## LOCAL JEWISH COMMUNITY

West Chester, Pennsylvania, is a lovely, bucolic town with stately 19<sup>th</sup> century Greco-Roman style buildings and a thriving retail district, and much of the surrounding area falls under West Chester's postal codes and is considered part of the region. The borough is the county seat, so it houses a large courthouse complex, and it also hosts one of Pennsylvania's 14 state colleges. Although there may have been a transient Jewish population among the volunteers in Washington's army (Shur<sup>8</sup>, 1998, p. 1), and Jewish merchants were known to travel through the region (The Gale Group, 2008, accessed online), the first confirmed Jewish settlers in the West Chester area arrived in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as peddlers and merchants (Shur, p. 2). I know descendants of these families, so many have remained in the area even though, as Reform Jews at that time, they initially traveled the 30 miles to Philadelphia to worship at Knesset Israel Temple on North Broad Street (Shur, p. 2). West Chester began to get its share of the Jewish flood from Eastern Europe by the 1890s; over 100 thousand Jews settled in Pennsylvania between 1889 and 1910 (The Gale Group). The Jewish population peaked around 1970, when 444,000 were estimated to reside in the state, but has declined since then as Jews have smaller families and migrate to other regions (The Gale Group). The great emptying out of Jewish communities occurred more in the center of the state and in regions with limited economic bases. Urban areas, such as Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, and their suburbs with diverse industries, have continued as Jewish centers according to the Gale Group (accessed Aug. 3, 2014). The density

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<sup>8</sup> Dr. Irene Shur, a subject of a significant portion of this research, was an accomplished author and speaker who presented a brief history of the Jews of West Chester, and the typewritten manuscript, dated 1998, located among her files in the Sender Frejdowicz Holocaust Studies Collection at WCU, has been helpful here.

of regional Jewish populations figures importantly in Jewish student enrollment in local colleges and universities.

The Jewish community in the West Chester region formed Keshet Israel Congregation in 1914 after worshipping in homes and halls for a couple of decades, and bought a house to serve as a synagogue in 1915 (Shur, p. 3-4). This Conservative congregation, where I grew up and am currently a member, built a dedicated synagogue in the borough in 1926. Congregational growth required a move to larger quarters just outside the town in 1989. Keshet Israel Congregation is the only Jewish community ever to make its home inside borough borders, but the broader region currently supports a Reform congregation, a Renewal movement, a few Chabad centers, and the county hosts two other Conservative congregations. Consequently, one might get the mistaken impression that vast numbers of Jews can be found in West Chester and Chester County.

While there are many more Jews living in the region than when I grew up in the area, no mechanism exists for obtaining an accurate census of the local Jewish community. Many self-identified Jews known to me do not affiliate with local congregations, so by extrapolation, we must assume congregational membership lists do not convey an accurate picture of the Jewish population. Notwithstanding the growth in Jewish numbers, the percentage of Jews as a portion of the local population remains very small. In Pennsylvania as a whole, Jews made up 2.3% of the population in 2010 (US Census Bureau, 2012). The majority of the state's nearly half million Jews live in and around Philadelphia, with secondary concentrations in Pittsburgh and "more than a thousand in each of fifteen other communities" (Bazelon, 2014). However, the Gale Group estimates the number of Jews living in the state to be much closer to a quarter-million than a half (Accessed Aug. 3, 2014). While West Chester is 30 miles west of Philadelphia, its

Jewish population might be considered part of that larger pool, and indeed, much of the recent influx of Jews to the West Chester area has come from Philadelphia and its ring suburbs.

However, the availability of Jewish culture and community differs greatly between Philadelphia and its close suburbs and the West Chester area. The Borough of West Chester and the surrounding area are attractive to Jews and others because of high-quality public schools, high property values, diverse industrial and economic bases, and genuinely attractive countryside with ample recreational opportunities. What West Chester does not have, and has never had, is a dense Jewish population with accompanying cultural and religious infrastructure for Jewish living. I grew up in this area and was an adult before I comprehended the feelings of naturalness and Jewish security, of sanctuary, which accompany a childhood spent in a densely Jewish community. As Rita Milberg, Keshet Israel member and past president, commented in 2013, for Chester County residents hoping to engage in meaningful Jewish social, worship, and educational life, “the challenge is geography” (Dunbar, April 2013). Large portions of Chester County remain rural, and Jews in the area experience the challenge of physical distancing common to suburbanites nationwide. As one of four Jews in my elementary school<sup>9</sup>, I was acutely aware of our difference, and most of the Jewish children in the Keshet Israel Congregation religious school, attending a variety of public and private secular schools in the area, felt similarly. I, and many of my religious school classmates, did experience overt anti-Semitism in our secular schools, but, fortunately, that seems to be a thing of the past.

My own children attended the same religious school, which by the 1990s drew over 200 students from 56 public and private schools in the area. The several days a week students meet

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<sup>9</sup> The other Jews attending my elementary school were mostly my siblings with the occasional child of a family who lived in the area for a few years.

for religious instruction or services are often their only opportunities for Jewish engagement and interaction outside their homes. Keshet Israel Congregation had approximately 90 member families in my childhood and has about 350 member units now. A great deal of the Jewish programming and events in the immediate region originate with or are lead by members and leaders of Keshet Israel. Our rabbi leads or participates in events ranging from Yom HaShoah commemorations to interfaith dialogues.

Overall the local community is prosperous, and few families send their college-age students to WCU; most prefer institutions with higher Jewish numbers, like Brandeis or Penn State, although they may not have chosen the college for Jewish reasons. “By the 1990s, 30 colleges [in the state] offered courses in Jewish studies, and 29,000 Jewish students were estimated to be studying in Pennsylvania colleges. By 2005, many colleges had active Hillels or Jewish student centers, among them the University of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University, Dickinson, Lehigh, Muhlenberg, Temple, [and others]” (The Gale Group, accessed Aug. 3, 2014). West Chester University has a Hillel ranked ‘Small and Mighty,’ with fluctuating student membership, and the University does not have a Jewish Studies program or minor.

Nevertheless, West Chester is a good place to be Jewish if one does not require Jewish culture, religion, and associations to permeate his/her life. Few strictly observant Jews make their home in the county, but those who do have affiliated mainly with Chabad, with its burgeoning infrastructure. Jews have made substantial contributions to the area as merchants, mechanics, professionals, and educators (Shur, p. 5-6), and we continue to participate fully in the economic, cultural, and civic life of the region.

## FINDINGS: Programs and Potentials

### **Introduction**

Post-secondary education at West Chester began with a focus on teacher preparation. A state-funded college in an area dominated by various Christian denominations, especially Quakers, the college and the region were, perhaps, more tolerant than some. Certainly by 1900, Jewish students attended the college as evidenced by the names of students published in the catalogs in the early years. Untangling Jewish names from German ones presents a challenge in a region that attracted immigration from those intersecting communities, but surely among the Greens, Goldsteins, Bergers, Kauffmans, Steins, and Kratzes were Jewish teacher candidates (Annual Catalog of the West Chester State Normal School, 1900, p. 7-23). There is no way to know what percentage of the student body was comprised of Jews. No Jewish faculty member joined the college until Dr. Irene G. Shur was hired in 1956 (Obadiah, 1989, p. 15).

Since that time, of course, WCU faculty have become much more diverse, and Jewish faculty and students increased in numbers. WCU responded to faculty and student diversity in the academic arena by incorporating curricula and programs designed to showcase the contributions and history of those populations. This research focused on the availability, content, accessibility, and viability of Jewish Studies courses and programs at WCU, and the study also attempted to determine what was Jewish about such offerings.

### **Since the Beginning**

Courses related to subjects of Jewish significance began to appear around the same time (See Appendix A) as Shur's hire, including History of the Middle East, initially in Social Studies Education and later in the History department, and History of Jewish Thought in the Philosophy

department. History 323, History of the Middle East, first appeared as a course listing in the 1959 catalog, but there is no *evidence* it was offered until spring of 1970, and at that time there were *two* enrolled students! My surprised inquiry to the record-keepers in the Registrar's office revealed that data prior to 2004 is backfilled when alumni request transcripts (email). Therefore, it is only possible to truly know the enrollments of earlier courses by mining the transcripts of every one of West Chester's thousands of graduates. No one has yet been dedicated enough to undertake that particular Herculean task. As a result, enrollments in courses prior to 2004 may appear deceptively low, but no participant in this case described classes that had fewer than 15 to 20 students, with the exception of Biblical Hebrew courses.

Several community members indicated their awareness of the new Jewish-content catalog listings. As the state college transitioned from a dedicated teachers' school to a liberal arts college, there seemed to be more room for Jewish civilization courses; and consequently, Jews of the region felt more included. In an interesting feedback loop, community members began to participate in and contribute to the college in greater numbers. For example, my own father, Stanley Lieberman, became the second Jewish member of the Board of Trustees in 1972 following Joseph Saltzman's 1965 appointment (West Chester State College Bulletin, 1965, p. 4). Obviously, there is no evidence of cause and effect at work here, but the increasing visibility of Jews and Judaism permeated multiple facets of campus life.

As noted above, determining exact numbers is problematic; electronic records only go back to 1960, and other methods of obtaining this information remain fragmentary. In any case, records dating to 1960 should certainly show whether the course had been offered and populated, but the electronic data appear massively incomplete. Electronic requests for information such as faculty assignments within departments, readily available now to those with access to the

PeopleSoft system, return empty fields until 1986. Requests to the Office of the Registrar and departments were stymied by the passage of time, the transition of personnel, and the overwhelming complication of locating and deconstructing the data. While this information might be considered germane to the case, the programs under study did not emerge until the mid-1970s and later, so the data was descriptive as background but otherwise tangential.

However, data marginally more reliably were available by the spring of 1979 when the literature course, American Jewish Novel, LIT 304, first appeared in the records despite being developed and listed in the catalog five years earlier. The same instructor, Dr. Paul Green, taught the class when I took it during the spring 2012 semester. Green, a cheerful, trim man who wore sweater vests and the same pair of battered boots throughout the semester, brought charm and erudition to the classroom. While students were exposed to such classic Jewish American authors as Chaim Potok, Saul Bellows, and Philip Roth, with their deep-seated Jewish points of view, the course was primarily a literature course, as the Course Goals/ Intentions made very clear:

This course will introduce students to some of the most talented writers in America, all of whom happen to be Jewish. Through ten important works of fiction students will be exposed to American Jewish culture in all its diversity and in its complex interaction with other cultures in the American melting pot. Historically the material will range from the great Eastern European migrations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the horrors of the Holocaust and the tensions of the contemporary, post-Holocaust world. Thus it is to be hoped that students will increase their understanding of some significant social, political, and cultural issues of the modern world in the unique way that good fiction offers its readers.

(Green, 2012, Course Syllabus)

Dr. Green engaged students in discussions about Jewish experiences and points of view but generally let the material speak for itself rather than teach concepts explicitly. Among the 24

students in my class, only two or three asserted their Jewish identities though a few more may have been Jewish. However, Green's course met graduation requirements for students majoring in Literature and for several other programs, including serving as an elective for students in the Jewish American concentration of the Ethnic Studies minor. Significantly, the course is a model for how inclusion of information about Jewish civilization typically takes place in public higher education. It embraces secularity to ensure the comfort of all participants while exposing students to a culture about which most knew little prior to enrolling. The real question is how much more students know about Jews and Judaism upon completion of the class.

## **Ethnic Studies**

### **Rationale**

West Chester's sensitivity to "otherness" coincided with developments in the rest of the country in the 1960s and 1970s. As mainstream America woke up to the real contributions and individual and collective value of its diverse communities, West Chester State College unveiled its interdisciplinary Ethnic Studies minors to prepare students to value and embrace difference. By 1976, the college offered concentrations within Ethnic Studies including, according to one of the program's developers and its current chair, Dr. Bonita Freeman Witthoft, "We had a Spanish one; we had a black one. May have been a Jewish one" (May 1, 2014). A diminutive woman with a shy manner but forthright speech, Freeman Witthoft specializes in the culture of American Indians and teaches Ethnic Groups in America, a core class for the Ethnic Studies minors. When asked to describe the purpose of the program and specifically the Jewish American concentration, she mused, "To create a climate where Jews would feel welcome, to give them a chance to explore their own heritage and the heritages of other people, so they would be more prepared to work in the Pennsylvania workplace and wherever" (May 2014). Unspoken but

pertinent, she assumed this minor concentration appealed mainly to Jewish students who would make up the bulk of its enrollees. A corollary assumption is that the various ethnically focused minor concentrations attract primarily members of their eponymous ethnicities. There is some anecdotal evidence to support such assumptions; however, in a changing educational climate, programs need to establish broader appeal in order to demonstrate stability or growth in registration.

Enrollments in the minors never overwhelmed the program. Freeman Witthoft explained that many students choose the Multi-Ethnic concentration, and, “After that point [the mid-1970s] we had a lot of little concentrations, but we never had many students in them.” The idea of cultural concentration attracted faculty who had specific areas of personal or research interests, so some concentrations blossomed briefly before withering like grass when faculty retired. An example was the brief flowering of the Scotch-Irish concentration, which grew out of the personal fascination and ancestral yearnings of a member of the Foreign Language department, Phil Smith (Interview, Freeman Witthoft, May 2014). For a few years, the concentration attracted students from as far away as Harrisburg, but in the absence of faculty with the energy and interest to continue the Celtic emphasis, it faded when Professor Smith retired.

The Jewish American concentration in the Ethnic Studies minor represents a fraction of the students enrolled in the already tiny program. The following table, # 2, details the number of WCU graduates who had earned a minor in Ethnic Studies since fall 1987. Again, the program began in 1975, but no information regarding exact numbers of graduates currently exists, and the already fragmentary data is partial prior to 2004. However, since the numbers exceed the single digits in only one year, there is no reason to believe the incompleteness of the early data hides extraordinary surprises. A further complication of this information is that the various

concentrations do not have, and never had, distinguishing codes, so it is impossible to sift out students with a Jewish American focus from those in African American, Asian American, Native American, or Latino Studies. Nevertheless, this information clearly refutes administrative narratives regarding the program’s decline. It is not declining and is as robust, if not more so, as it has been for most of its history.

Table # 2 Numbers of Graduates with an Ethnic Studies Minor

<b>Ethnic Studies Minor Graduates</b>					
<b>Term</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>#</b>
Fall 1987	1	Spring 1995	2	Fall 2009	1
Summer Post 1988	1	Fall 1995	1	Spring 2010	13
Spring 1989	2	Summer Post 1996	1	Summer Post 2010	3
Spring 1990	1	Fall 1996	1	Fall 2010	5
Fall 1990	1	Spring 1998	1	Spring 2011	8
Summer Post 1991	1	Summer Post 1998	1	Summer Post 2011	4
Fall 1991	1	Spring 2000	1	Fall 2011	2
Spring 1992	3	Fall 2002	1	Spring 2012	7
Summer Post 1992	1	Fall 2003	1	Summer Post 2012	4
Fall 1992	1	Fall 2007	1	Fall 2012	2
Spring 1993	4	Spring 2008	1	Spring 2013	5
Summer Post 1993	2	Summer Post 2008	3	Summer Post 2013	2
Spring 1994	2	Fall 2008	1	Fall 2013	6
Summer Post 1994	1	Spring 2009	5	Spring 2014	3
Fall 1994	1	Summer Post 2009	2		

*ii. Dr. Irene Shur*

A formidable woman with Sephardic swarthinness and the dynamic presence and power of a dreadnought, Dr. Irene G. Shur was part of the original Ethnic Studies Institute and initiated the Jewish American concentration as well as the Holocaust and Genocide program at WCU. Shur was a pioneer in many ways: she was the first Jewish faculty member hired to teach at the University (Campbell, June 2003), and she claimed to be the first in the state system (Obadiah, p.

13) although that is not verifiable. Shur began her teaching career in Cleveland, OH as a music instructor, moving to the West Chester area following her marriage to William Shur. She taught in the West Chester public schools before being hired in 1954 as a substitute teacher (Campbell; West Chester State Teacher's College Bulletin, 1955, p. 18) by Dr. Charles Swope, then President of West Chester State Teacher's College. While working in secondary education, she wrote a popular children's book, *Mr. Puckle's Hat* published in 1962, designed to teach regional history to local students. Her son, Ronald Shur, described the catalyst for the book: her perception that local children were not being exposed to the rich history of this region with its unique colonial, Revolutionary, and Civil War stories. Indeed, Shur was often described as a "take charge" person who worked to resolve problems where she found them.

Dr. Shur taught in WCU's History department for 47 years. She was first hired to teach in the college's Demonstration School. The way she described it, she met the President of the college at a party and so impressed him with her erudition that he contacted her the next day to teach during the spring 1954 semester (Obadiah, p. 12 – 13). During that time Shur was completing her Master's in History at the University of Delaware, and in 1956 she officially started as a faculty member in the History Department of what was then West Chester State Teacher's College (Obadiah, p. 15). Within 10 years, she developed courses on East Asian history, traveled to China on a Fulbright Scholarship, and initiated courses on the history of the Middle East (Obadiah, p. 17). She had an enduring interest in diverse communities and brought extensive experience to the classroom as a result of travels, described by Ron Shur and listed in her curriculum vitae found in the WCU archives, to China, Japan, Pakistan, and Eastern European countries behind the Iron Curtain. Shur was a bold, social woman, exceptionally

suiting to journey to places with limited opportunities for American women in the 1950s through 1970s, and she generously shared what she learned.

### **Ethnic Studies – Jewish American Concentration**

The combination of her forceful personality with her perception of a content-area deficit at the college resulted in her proposing and creating new courses and programs. Her course, *The Jew in History*, first offered in 1976, changed catalog numbers several times but is offered today and is a core component of the Jewish American concentration in the Ethnic Studies minor. I took the class in the early 1980s and found it challenging and interesting. Beginning in the Biblical era, the class tracked Jewish history from the Kingdom of Israel through Babylon and Rome, into Europe, Asia, and America, and back to Israel. Those three thousand years were covered with great speed and clarity but not much depth or analysis. Shur's teaching style combined straightforward lecture with dynamic digressions of combined opinion and experience which captivated the classroom. Table # 3 tracks enrollment in *The Jew in History* course from its inception through the past year; however, the data is partial until 2004. Typically, and importantly, the History department required a minimum of 15 students to run an undergraduate course.

Table # 3 Tracking Enrollment of The Jew in History

The Jew in History					
Term	Tot Enrl	Term	Tot Enrl	Term	Tot Enrl
Spring 1976	1	Spring 1983	14	Spring 1998	25
Fall 1976	2	Spring 1984	13	Fall 2001	22
Spring 1977	1	Spring 1985	8	Fall 2003	28
Fall 1977	9	Spring 1986	9	Fall 2005	30
Spring 1978	5	Fall 1988	21	Spring 2007	24
Fall 1978	6	Spring 1990	1	Fall 2008	25
Spring 1979	6	Spring 1991	1	Fall 2010	28
Spring 1980	4	Fall 1991	14	Spring 2012	0
Spring 1981	3	Fall 1992	30	Fall 2012	28
Spring 1982	12	Fall 1994	9	Fall 2014	22

The class became a cornerstone of the Jewish American Studies concentration within the Ethnic Studies minor. As one of the originators of the interdisciplinary Ethnic Studies minor program, Shur explained the need for the program in an oral history interview in 1989 (Obadiah): “We thought there was a need. We felt that the horizons were changing. West Chester could not stay within the little ivy covered walls, the college nor Chester County. It was getting too big. The world was getting closer – communication, transportation, more foreign students, more foreign people coming to work” (p. 17). Thus, according to Shur, the development of this particular interdisciplinary minor was designed and envisioned as a mechanism to prepare the college’s students to work and thrive in a global environment vastly different from the often local, homogeneous, and predictable environments of their parents and grandparents. Exposure to different cultures and to disciplines’ wide-ranging intellectual frameworks equipped students to approach diverse cultures and mindsets with flexibility and sensitivity, or so the thinking went. Shur felt it necessary to address parochialism and insularity and believed teaching college students about Jewish history would serve that purpose. Accompanying her assumption

pertaining to the remediation of provinciality was the deeper belief that education about Jews and Judaism represented contact with diversity and could fulfill the need.

Notably, her philosophy regarding the value of the program differed somewhat from the theory of purpose put forward by Freeman Witthoft. Where Freeman Witthoft perceived self-esteem development on the part of Jewish students as its primary purpose, with preparation for diversity as an outgrowth, Shur touted the ambassadorial function of the program as a public relations vehicle for exposing the broader community to the diversity of Jews in its midst. The personal and professional contexts of the two faculty members accounts for this difference to some degree. Freeman Witthoft has been an Anthropology professor on campus for more than 40 years and is sensitive to the needs of minority students to attain a sense of place at the academy. Further, she is keenly aware of the consequences of racism and ignorance of diversity, so when asked for clarification, her rationale more closely echoed that of Shur. Like the schools of Hillel and Shammai, the two professors shared goals but had differing underlying motivations and approaches shaped by their different temperaments and experiences. Fortunately, their vastly different temperaments did not lead to combative exclusion of constituents but rather resulted in a meeting of the minds as Shur and Witthoft both supported Ethnic Studies.

Dr. Shur's extended family had been destroyed by Nazis in her parent's native Poland during World War II (Obadiah, p. 18), so she energetically educated and cultivated Jewish students, but her focus was on the broader community. The context of her upbringing as the daughter of observant Jewish immigrants shaped a perspective about ensuring the dissemination of accurate information about Jews and Judaism. She was a practicing Jew, an active member of Kesher Israel Congregation for more than 60 years, and the decades-long faculty advisor of the campus Hillel chapter, but her courses focused on facets of Jewish civilization with never a hint

of religiosity. Authority in the academic setting of WCU was conferred by neutrality, scholarship, and intellectual rigor.

Shur's desire to share information about Jews and Judaism, and later about the Holocaust, emerged from a muscular assertion of legitimacy. After watching the head of the KKK on the news, in 1977, claiming, "They must rid America of the Jews; they must rid America of the Blacks," Shur asked her husband, "Why am I going to China when there is so much work to be done right here in America? Look at the hatred and the bigotry!" (Obadiah, p. 18). She engaged students, faculty, and community members in efforts to educate ambassadors for Judaism and Jews, as evidenced by an undated, but mimeographed and therefore decades-old, program Committee list (Archives) which included clergy from several religions, and community members, faculty, and students of all ethnicities and religions. Her participation in Ethnic Studies and Holocaust Studies was motivated by a deep-seated need to educate non-Jews, to ensure their appreciation of the contributions of the Jewish people and their acknowledgement of the potential disastrous consequences of denying the merit of Jewish humanity.

Another faculty member involved with Ethnic Studies at the beginning was Dr. Andrew Dinniman, now a Pennsylvania state senator whose ready smile camouflages his sharp intellect. Beginning in 1972, Dinniman taught a course in the Sociology department called Racial and Ethnic Understanding. His perceived rationale for the Ethnic Studies program more closely aligns with Shur's when he said, "public schools were certainly looking for people, students in Latino Studies and African-American Studies" (Interview, June 13, 2014). Preparing teacher candidates and future professionals to include and understand diversity afforded the program value at a time when employers were beginning to prize awareness and sensitivity to otherness.

Dinniman, Jewish himself, attributed no unique significance to the Jewish American concentration.

Rather, speaking from his current perspective as a legislator, he sees less need for focus on diversity now as professionals in the workplace and disciplines in the University incorporated the principles of diversity. Dinniman believes the University has already succeeded in its goals for programs of this kind because, “Now, most of the departments have become much more diverse in their thinking; it [Ethnic Studies] was a catalytic agent” (Interview, June 2014). He raises thoughtful questions about the role of such programs for institutions like WCU:

How do we get an understanding of the role of various ethnic peoples and their assimilation and integration into the larger society? That was done. That has been done in most disciplines. I think there are very few disciplines that won't reflect that. So now we get to a new question, and the new question is, Okay, so this has been integrated into History, integrated into English. Now, the question is, how do we start to bring these different disciplines together so that we can even understand the role that ethnicity played in our society in a deeper, in a more profound way?  
(Dinniman, Interview)

Dinniman's optimism has led him to embrace interdisciplinarity as the next commonplace to be integrated into curriculum and workplace because he believes diverse communities have found acceptance in the minds and marketplaces of Americans. His conception of interdisciplinarity as a mechanism for deeper integration of ethnic understanding assumes full American and academic acceptance of diverse populations. Dinniman is not naïve, but in this case, his personal history may color his assessments, which are more true for Jews (Goldstein, 2006) than for some other minority groups, such as African-Americans or Latinos.

### **Interdisciplinary Ethnic Studies**

In any case, the Ethnic Studies minors already are interdisciplinary to the extent that no concentration can be completed with courses in only a single subject area. In fact, the website

for Ethnic Studies Institute asserts that the minor is “interdisciplinary in nature, including six areas of concentration. Students select one of these and take courses in such disciplines as anthropology, education, English, history, philosophy, political science, public administration, religious studies, social work, and sociology” (accessed online, Sept. 2014). The three core classes for the minor focus on ethnicity and race and are found in three different disciplines: Cultures of Ethnic Groups in America, Anthropology; Race and Cultural Minorities, Sociology; and Race Relations, Social Work. Notably, however, students need take only one of these courses, so no specific, overarching, interdisciplinary keystone course ties the minor together regardless of concentration. The [Ethnic Studies Minor Course Guide Sheet](#) (accessed online, Sept. 2014) has the virtue of flexibility but may sacrifice fundamental coherence in the absence of an overarching minor course that addresses commonplaces of ethnicity and interdisciplinary thinking.

Senator Dinniman expressed the need for such a keystone course when we spoke (Interview, June 2014). He believes the program lacks a class designed to address critical value questions like “What is unique about Ethnic Studies? What keeps it together? What are the questions that any students should be asking no matter which Ethnic Studies courses they’re taking?” Core classes are the closest the program comes to providing an overarching, discipline-bridging method of conceiving meaningfulness in how ethnicity, culture, religion, and race play out across different conceptual areas and in different settings. All the core classes, however, also fulfill requirements within major departments or general education requirements, so instructors may not even know or acknowledge a student’s application of a course toward an Ethnic Studies minor. In other words, the program so completely draws from departments that not one course is specifically designed for Ethnic Studies or for the Jewish American concentration.

Shippensburg University, another PASSHE institution, does provide courses dealing specifically with Ethnic Studies as an option for its Ethnic Studies minor (Shippensburg University, 2013, p. 46). The minor at Shippensburg requires nine credits of specified core classes (p. 76) including ETH100, Introduction to Ethnic Studies. The goals of the course plainly foster a fundamental interdisciplinary perspective: “Through an interdisciplinary examination of intellectual thought presented through various formats, students facilitate the formation of a well-rounded view of ethnic groups, an awareness of their own ethnicity, and an appreciation for human diversity” (p. 148). The Ethnic Studies program at Shippensburg University guides students in the formation of a holistic conception, a vision of Ethnic Studies as a “data field” (Blumenthal, 1976), with its own coherence and integrity. The program seems to have solved the challenge of disciplinary insularity.

Part of the difficulty lies in housing interdisciplinary programs within institutions granting acknowledgment of authority to scholars who have mastered narrow niche areas within silos of knowledge. Departments and professors may take risks when they opt for cross-disciplinary involvement, especially tenure-track faculty members who need to clearly establish bona-fides. The interdisciplinary context of the program and its concentrations cannot conform to academic norms of content coherence, especially in the absence of an overarching meta-curriculum addressing the conceptual unity of the minor.

The [Jewish American Studies concentration](#) (accessed online, Sept. 2014) provides elective options in seven different disciplines, including Languages and Cultures, History, Literature, Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, and Philosophy. Few course options are specifically Jewish in content focus. Those include The Jews in History and American Jewish Novel although many scholars would include The Holocaust in the list. Most elective options

address Jews and Judaism as a portion of the material, such as American Religions, HIS 474; Sociology of Religion, SOC 344; and Peace and Conflict Studies, now PAX 200. Again, in the absence of a core class of some kind, WCU students with this minor concentration must construct a framework of the Jewish American experience for themselves.

Nearby Temple University, a state-affiliated institution that costs about twice as much as WCU for in-state students, has a robust Jewish Studies major and minor program offering dozens of classes specific to Jews, Judaism, and Jewish history and thought (Accessed online, Oct. 2014). Temple's Philadelphia location, larger size, and greater access to Jewish communities and resources allow it to attract students interested in Jewish studies. On the other hand, WCU's suburban setting, lack of any kosher dining option, and small Jewish communities curtail the interest of students who might choose the school for Jewish reasons. WCU students wishing to learn specifically about Jewish thought, culture, history, language, or religion may feel sadly disappointed; however, at WCU, those students are not numerous.

### **Students in the Jewish American Concentration**

Susan, a student interviewed for this study in July, 2014, earned an Ethnic Studies minor with the Jewish American concentration in the early 1990s. One of the few Jewish students in the program, she worked closely with Dr. Shur on several occasions. Driven by her need to reclaim the Jewish culture which had been marginal in her upbringing, Susan's impression of the program was that the Jewish American concentration met academically acceptable criteria for diversity and was included because existing programs in African American and Latino studies necessitated parity. In other words, Susan believed Jewish American studies was similar to Scotch-Irish studies in that faculty interest sparked its development. WCU "had an Ethnic Studies program," Susan stated, "It was [originally a solely] African American subject, and

because Dr. Shur was Jewish, because of her knowledge, she brought to the Ethnic Studies table the Jewish element. Had she not been there, I don't think that would have been in the Ethnic Studies program" (Interview, July 2014). Importantly, this student's perceptions of Ethnic Studies derived from her belief that African American studies provided its principal, initiating purpose and Jewish American studies was of secondary, perhaps marginal importance.

Of course, the focus on Jewish civilization was not marginal to Susan; indeed, she speaks of gaining a new sense of purpose and professional interest as a consequence of her exposure. A blonde, energetic woman and now a professional educator, she credits her education at WCU with opening her eyes to new opportunities. She later earned a Masters in Holocaust and Genocide Studies at WCU and further pursued her Jewish education. As a student in the Jewish American concentration of Ethnic Studies, she was one of the few to take Biblical Hebrew with Professor John Rosso, a scholar and instructor of Classical Languages. She credits Rosso, Shur and other professors with her improved readiness "to teach Jewish History and the Holocaust and to be knowledgeable about Biblical Hebrew, to also make me a better Hebrew teacher" (Interview). Thus, Susan, enriched by her Ethnic Studies experience, moved more deeply into the field as a result of her recognition of its personal and professional value. Her journey represents an ideal outcome for members of the Jewish community concerned about identity drift among American Jews reported in numerous studies, including last year's Pew Research Center Survey of US Jews.

Most students of the Jewish American concentration are more like Charlie, a non-Jew with a life-long interest in things Jewish sparked by early exposure to a Jewish friend and Jewish culture (Interview, Sept. 2014). Charlie took The Jews in History and Ethnic Groups in America as cognate options for his Political Science major. One day, Freeman Witthoft showed up in the

Anthropology class with forms for adding a minor that already had her signature, as Director of the minor, on them. All students had to do was opt to complete the minor, sign the form, and take it to the Registrar's office. By maneuvering for calculated ease in the process, Freeman Witthoft cleverly increased the minor's enrollment and simultaneously made an effective case for completion of a minor towards which students in that course were already earning credits.

Charlie certainly found the professor's methodology persuasive since he went on to add not only Ethnic Studies, but also minors in Holocaust and Genocide Studies and Peace and Conflict Studies. Overlapping requirements for the three minors unquestionably assisted Charlie to earn such an impressive list of credentials. As a non-Jew, Charlie's interest in the courses was predominantly academic although he did express a growth of his affection for and willingness to vocally defend the Jewish people. Charlie's passage through WCU occurred a decade after Irene Shur's death, but his willingness to serve as an ambassador for Jews and Judaism, a consequence of his exposure to the courses of his three minors, realizes Shur's hopes for the Jewish American concentration in the Ethnic Studies minor.

### **Faculty: Agendas amid Diversity**

Ethnic Studies is an interdisciplinary minor, and the Jewish American concentration may include courses from Languages and Cultures, History, Philosophy, Political Science, and Peace and Conflict Studies. Faculty participating in interdisciplinary programs typically retain obligations to their home departments. The challenges of adhering to notions of subject-area purity while meeting the needs of students in an interdisciplinary program have the potential to discourage participation. However, most professors do not venture far from their disciplinary silos, ignoring the challenge. Rather, if they have any thought at all for their function within the overarching program, they see their responsibilities as teaching a vital component of the whole,

which happens to be their specialized area of expertise. Nothing is wrong with approaching Jewish American studies in that manner.

On the other hand, as Senator Dinniman pointed out, the absence of a fundamental, specifically interdisciplinary course in the program leaves students in the position of needing to assemble the puzzle without a picture of the whole. Prof. John Rosso has taught Classical languages at WCU since the late 1960s. If anyone can be said to have a grasp of the complete history and purpose of the role of Biblical Hebrew in Jewish American studies, it should be him. Over the decades, he has received numerous requests from, Shur and Freeman Witthoft for his deeper involvement in the program by teaching modern or conversational Hebrew.

Rosso knows his own limitations and expertise. A true scholar, Rosso emphasized the value of Biblical Hebrew while refusing to operate beyond his competence. As fewer and fewer students expressed interest in Classical languages through the years, he has felt increasingly marginalized, not only within the Jewish American concentration but also in the Languages and Cultures department. Too few students on campus request Modern Hebrew for the University to make a consistent commitment to providing an instructor. Unless students take Biblical Hebrew then, the Jewish American concentration does not offer a Jewish language. To complicate matters even further, Biblical Hebrew is no longer even listed in the semester schedules of open courses but must be enrolled in using a special form to request Individualized Instruction. Rosso views the situation in the University and in the program as emblematic of declining interest in foreign language instruction and in Classical education. Additionally, just as he insisted on remaining within his area of expertise, he views the Jewish American concentration through the context of his discipline. Thus, when Rosso evaluates the current program, he focuses on the

absence of a language requirement because the main source of his knowledge of Jews and Judaism has always been classical Biblical Hebrew.

Dr. Lawrence Davidson, heir to the liberal ideals of the 1960s, viewed the Jewish American concentration through the lens of his participation in History elective courses in the program and through his participation in presentations offered by Ethnic Studies. A secular, liberal Jew and avowed anti-Zionist (Interview, May 2014), Davidson opened his classrooms to all viewpoints, and in numerous Middle East history courses, such as Middle East to 1700, HIS411, and History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, HIS375, “most of the time I ended up supplying the evidentiary base sometimes for both sides because there were lots of opinions out there” (Interview). Students enrolled in the courses for a number of reasons, including participating in the Jewish American concentration of the Ethnic Studies minor. A professor of History at WCU from the late 1980s through 2012, Davidson “represented the attitude and beliefs of Muslims, people in the Middle East, how they saw things. I guess I had a reputation, an ability to represent the other sides and their attitudes and feelings, and so I did” (Interview). Appalled and disenchanted when his friends and colleagues endorsed Israel’s post-1967 borders, Davidson spent considerable professional energy “to educate the students as to humanize the people in the Middle East,” by which he mainly meant Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan, and occupied territories.

Since students with the minor flew under the radar of his awareness, Davidson saw himself as a marginal participant in the Jewish American concentration but as more involved in Ethnic Studies because he engaged in and developed presentations. His intolerance of Zionism colored his perceptions regarding events surrounding his attempt to bring Ilan Pappé, an Israeli historian who questioned the Zionist rationale for that nation’s collective military and political

narratives, to present at WCU. In general, Davidson experienced his involvement in Ethnic Studies presentations as “always very civil. They [presentations] were small. There would be two, three, four panelists, and each was talking about their non-Western region of interest, and there would be twelve people in the audience. And, you give your spiel and sometimes there were questions” (Interview). During our interview, however, Davidson spoke in tones of dire warning, saying Judaism has been politicized, and “major Jewish groups in the United States refuse to legitimize debate. They refuse to actually recognize the debate, and they tend to get very vitriolic about people who don’t agree with their position” (Interview). He gloomily hinted that I should verify with Jonathan Friedman the ability of Jewish fundraisers and community members to censor programming, especially appearances of the Israeli New Historians, those whose revisionist work challenges institutional narratives about the founding of Israel.

Friedman recalled the incident with some exasperation. Pappé was scheduled to appear in November, 2009, in a diversity event sponsored in part by the Holocaust and Genocide Education Center. There was “pressure from Philadelphia Anti-Defamation League, and [Senator] Andy Dinniman got involved,” remembered Friedman, but “in the end, Ilan was sick, and Larry retired shortly after, so it just never happened” (Interview, Sept. 2014). Davidson had valid concerns regarding community involvement in stifling debate, but his widely known and self-professed loathing for Israeli government policies delegitimized his position because more ardent Israel supporters in the community did not believe their valid concerns would be heard or addressed. Involved Jewish community members ‘circled the wagons’ to protect themselves, their notions of Judaism, and their identification with Israel from an anti-Zionist agenda, for which both Davidson and Pappé were notorious. Davidson would have liked to see students on campus, especially Jewish students, exposed to contradictory viewpoints regarding Judaism and

Israel. However, in the absence of the vivid debates which might have ensued, Davidson pointed to squandered opportunities for discourse, which should be the goal of academia and of Ethnic Studies, when the Pappé presentation was blocked.

WCU faculty members involved in the Jewish American concentration have, for the most part, disciplinary rather than international agendas and have not courted controversy. Dr. Freeman Witthoft's agenda focused, with some success, on increasing enrollment in the minor. Dr. Green cultivated students' interests in Jewish American authors in the hopes of stimulating lovers of literature. Dr. Friedman and participating members of the History department expose students to periods of Jewish history, both broadly and specifically, and expect students to develop some skills in historical analysis in addition to studying Jewish experiences. Professors love their subjects and want students to acquire an appreciation for those fields, so disciplines supersede the interdisciplinary nature of the program for many participating faculty. Students hoping to gain a deeper understanding of Jews and Judaism should view the Ethnic Studies concentration as a starting place rather than a full-course banquet of Jewish civilization.

### **Jewish American Program Courses**

Some of the courses in the Jewish American concentration predate the minor and have been offered for decades while others are more recent (see Appendix A). American Jewish History, HIS440, appeared under that name in 2012, but the course was first offered as Jewish History beginning in 2010. The course description is identical:

This course traces the history of the Jews in the United States from the earliest communities of the 17th century to the present. Topics will include Jews in the American colonies, Jewish immigration in the 19th century, anti-Semitism, Zionism, Jewish labor movements, the growth of Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Judaism, and the impact of the Holocaust and Israel (2013-2014 WCU Undergrad Catalog, p. 109).

American Jewish History certainly offers a comprehensive picture of the Jewish experience, but the Ethnic Studies concentration does not list the course as one of its options. Freeman Witthoft confirmed (email) its absence as an oversight because no one has updated the online form. Importantly, the class unites social history with transitions in religious thought, economic conditions with military and national consequences. It has the potential to unite interdisciplinary streams of thought into a coherent depiction of Jewish experience in America. Unfortunately, the only instructor for the course, Dr. Jonathan Friedman, also teaches *The Holocaust, Jews in Modern Europe, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Europe*, and much more. HIS440 simply is not offered very often; in fact, official records indicate it has been offered one time – in spring of 2013 when 19 students enrolled. Friedman’s academic time is spoken for this coming spring as well, and the class is not scheduled to be offered again for the foreseeable future. For now, students could certainly use the class for the minor, were it to be offered, under the umbrella of “other courses under advisement.”

The *Jew in History* continues as a popular class, offered every other year or so, with enrollments of at least 22 students and usually more. Students enrolled in the class might be in any major, including Marketing or Biology, but many have History majors and minors, American Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Holocaust Studies minors. The class tracks the narrative of the Jewish People, in as comprehensive a way as possible, given the limitations of its single semester format and of limited prior knowledge on the part of many students, most of whom are non-Jews. Charlie, a graduate with minors in Holocaust Studies and in the Ethnic Studies Jewish American concentration, spoke of the rigors of absorbing huge quantities of new material, which enabled him to imagine Jews as a stream of people connecting with the history of the whole world (Interview, Sept. 2014).

Jewish students in the class expecting to receive high grades with minimal effort have been disappointed; students with even minimal exposure to some form of supplementary Jewish education sometimes presumed adequate knowledge. Dr. Shur, in my past experience, and Dr. Friedman, according to recent graduates, handled the class with the intellectual and scholarly exactitude any self-respecting academic expects. Jewish students open to the challenge, and most were, also expressed wonder at the continuity of Jewish experiences, but those students experienced a greater degree of self-knowledge than Charlie. Susan mused, “I set out to get certified in Social Studies, but what happened was I was so enthralled by this [Jewish American Studies and later Holocaust and Genocide Studies]. This pulled me away” (Interview, July 2014).

The Bible in History remains listed as one of the elective options for the Jewish American concentration even though the course was last offered in 2006. Table # 4 details class enrollment, which seems fairly consistent after the spring of 1993, especially when it is recalled that the data are partial prior to 2004.

Table # 4 Enrollment in The Bible in History

The Bible in History, HIS 348							
Term	Tot Enrl	Term	Tot Enrl	Term	Tot Enrl	Term	Tot Enrl
Spring 1978	4	Fall 1983	1	Spring 1990	1	Spring 1996	12
Spring 1979	2	Spring 1984	1	Fall 1990	1	Spring 1998	20
Fall 1979	9	Fall 1984	19	Spring 1991	19	Fall 1999	23
Spring 1980	8	Spring 1985	1	Fall 1992	2	Fall 2001	24
Fall 1980	5	Spring 1986	1	Spring 1993	14	Spring 2004	28
Spring 1982	15	Spring 1989	23	Spring 1995	16	Spring 2006	23

No longer in the Undergraduate Catalog, the class was taught by the now retired Dr. Claude Foster. A nonspiritual treatment of sacred texts, the course used “the Pentateuch, through the prophetic literature, the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls to the New

Testament” (Undergraduate Catalog, 1981, p. 151) as historical records. Since the Jewish People’s history formed the basis for much of the narrative under examination, the course fit well with non-existent Jewish Studies, but less well with the Jewish American concentration in Ethnic Studies. Did the administrators of Ethnic Studies believe any course with Jewish content applied; were they clutching for substantive course options regardless of applicability? The Bible in History clearly emerged out of Foster’s absorption with the topic, and now that he has retired, the course has faded into obscurity, still a ghostly presence, or an empty promise, on the Jewish American Studies list of course options.

A much better match for the Jewish *American* concentration is Religion in America, PHI 130. Housed in WCU’s Philosophy department, which also has a Religious Studies minor and concentration, the chances for long-term viability of the course are high. In addition, the class fulfills a general education requirement in the Diversity category, so enrollment does not rely only on Philosophy or Ethnic Studies students. The usefulness of the class ensures consistent enrollment as Table # 5 demonstrates; the Philosophy department fills a single section in both fall and spring semesters.

Table # 5 Enrollment in Religion in America, PHI 130

Religion in America, PHI 130							
Term	Tot Enrl	Term	Tot Enrl	Term	Tot Enrl	Term	Tot Enrl
Spring 2007	33	Spring 2010	35	Spring 2012	41	Spring 2014	40
Spring 2008	36	Fall 2010	36	Fall 2012	40	Fall 2014	39
Spring 2009	35	Spring 2011	36	Spring 2013	40		
Fall2009	36	Fall 2011	35	Fall 2013	41		

As a service course, often taught to first-year students, the material has a degree of approachability that an examination of the Apocrypha or the Pseudepigrapha might lack. A fairly straightforward exposure of students to the diversity of American religions, the course

explores “the rich diversity of religions in the United States and the impact of religion on our culture” (WCU Undergraduate Catalog, 2013, accessed online). None of this study’s participants mentioned having taken the course, but my own students speak highly of the instructor and of the interest level.

Cultures of Ethnic Groups in America, ANT 220, has been taught by the same professor, Dr. Bonita Freeman Witthoft during the nearly 40 years of its existence. As discussed earlier, Freeman Witthoft developed the course when the University, then known as West Chester State College, focused attention on cultivating diversity awareness among its graduates. Diminutive and soft-spoken, Freeman Witthoft’s authority in the classroom stems from her vast expertise. A core class, but not a uniquely required one, for all the Ethnic Studies concentrations, students examine the experiences of different peoples in the US. Groups under study are as varied as recent immigrants from South America and Africa to Amish groups in America’s rural areas. Jewish cultures are included in the exploration of immigrant experiences and of sub-groups within the nation. Students in the course must produce an ethnography or oral history of an extensive interview with a member of an ethnic group. That project yielded a direct benefit to this research as a result of Mary Obadiah’s long interviews, still on file in the library, with Dr. Irene Shur. Both Shur and Freeman Witthoft practiced life-long educational habits designed to increase students’ appreciation of difference.

While absolutely exposed to human variety, WCU students in 2014, with their constant contact with multiple media and international sources, may need to learn discernment more than data. Anthropology 220’s “survey of the cultural history and traditions of ethnic groups in America” (WCU Undergraduate Catalog, 2013, accessed online) might not explicitly guide students to analyze the value of, or to think critically about, our society’s profusion of

information about others. Another concern centers on the probable fate of the course upon Freeman Witthoft's retirement. A section of the class filled with a high degree of reliability, but only every other semester or every other year, as can be seen in Table # 6.

Table # 6 Enrollment in Cultures of Ethnic Groups in America

Ethnic Groups in America, ANT 120 & ANT 220 (after 2008)							
Term	Tot Enrl	Term	Tot Enrl	Term	Tot Enrl	Term	Tot Enrl
Spring 1978	4	Spring 1989	1	Fall 2000	29	Spring 2010	41
Fall 1979	6	Spring 1990	22	Fall 2002	23	Spring 2011	40
Fall 1981	22	Spring 1991	1	Spring 2003	26	Spring 2012	32
Fall 1983	14	Spring 1992	18	Fall 2003	23	Spring 2013	31
Spring 1984	1	Spring 1994	18	Fall 2005	25	Fall 2014	13
Fall 1985	14	Spring 1996	31	Fall 2008	0		
Fall 1987	26	Fall 1999	37	Spring 2009	16		

Because of new curricular regulations as of fall 2014, ANT 220 no longer meets general education requirements, so now the class fulfills graduation requirements for Anthropology majors and Ethnic Studies minors, and works as a cognate for a few other majors. The potential pool of enrollees shrank dramatically as a result of the new rules. Since students often decide on majors or minors after realizing a fascination for a discipline resulting from initial exposure in a general education class, the exclusion of ANT 220 from possible general education alternatives may contract an already small program.

The same danger exists for The Holocaust, HIS 332, a source of enduring fascination for students and one they could indulge while still fulfilling graduation requirements under the pre-2014 general education curriculum. The course no longer satisfies general education criteria. Taught by Dr. Friedman or Dr. Brenda Gaydosh, and formerly by Dr. Shur, the class filled every single semester it ran, and some terms two sections were needed. In Table #7 any enrollment over 30 students represents two sections of The Holocaust during that semester, but again,

numbers are incomplete prior to 2004. For example, the Holocaust Summer Workshop enrollment in 1983 appears negligible, but the hands-on class outlined in library archive material was required to have at least eight students to run in the summer. Students took the course to satisfy general education requirements in the past, but many also took it, and will continue to enroll in the class, because it fulfills major electives for History and works for minors including Holocaust Studies, Peace and Conflict Studies, and others.

Table # 7 Enrollment in The Holocaust, HIS 332 (formerly HIS 146)

The Holocaust, HIS 332 (HIS 146 until 1994)							
Term	Tot Enrl	Term	Tot Enrl	Term	Tot Enrl	Term	Tot Enrl
Fall 1978	8	Fall 1987	43	Fall 1997	50	Spring 2006	27
Spring 1979	12	Spring 1988	38	Spring 1998	28	Fall 2006	27
Spring 1980	26	Spring 1989	41	Fall 1998	56	Fall 2007	28
Spring 1981	15	Fall 1989	32	Spring 1999	52	Spring 2008	26
Spring 1982	24	Fall 1990	27	Spring 2000	58	Spring 2009	27
Fall 1982	13	Spring 1991	44	Fall 2000	54	Fall 2009	29
Spring 1983	27	Spring 1992	38	Spring 2001	57	Spring 2010	25
Summer 1983	5	Spring 1993	37	Fall 2001	61	Spring 2011	33
Fall 1983	22	Fall 1993	33	Spring 2002	59	Fall 2011	31
Spring 1984	30	Spring 1994	35	Fall 2002	52	Spring 2012	29
Fall 1984	26	Spring 1995	66	Spring 2003	30	Fall 2012	31
Spring 1985	37	Fall 1995	65	Fall 2003	30	Spring 2013	31
Fall 1985	26	Spring 1996	64	Summer 2004	21	Fall 2013	30
Spring 1986	37	Fall 1996	29	Fall 2004	29	Spring 2014	29
Fall 1986	34	Spring 1997	57	Spring 2005	34	Fall 2014	30
Spring 1987	38						

The majority of the students who take the class are not Jewish. Enrollment in the course speaks to the persistent interest of generations of WCU students. I took it in the mid-1980s with Dr. Shur. Even students who had read extensively, or who had family narratives entangled with those terrible events, spoke to the enormous volume of material addressed in the course. The

current course description is remarkably terse: “Focuses on ethnic, nationalistic, economic, and religious causes of the Holocaust, including 20th-century Nazism, racism, and anti-Semitism; study of the Nuremberg trials” (WCU Undergraduate Catalog, 2013, accessed online). The catalog description is also imprecise since it inaccurately seems to bypass the horrors of the Holocaust itself by stressing causes and aftermaths. However, the content is very substantive and addresses the events of the Holocaust in as much depth as a single-semester, undergraduate course can capably handle. Charlie concurred, “Those [Holocaust and Jewish American minor classes] were some of my harder classes but also the most rewarding. They allowed me to identify so much more with other groups not just biologically and provided another perspective I valued” (Interview, Sept. 2014). Matt, a non-traditional student who had attended WCU in the 1990s and returned later to complete his degree believed the time spent developing historic background knowledge to the Holocaust was imperative: “You can’t learn about the Holocaust unless you learn about the history of Jewish people.” He did characterize that education by saying “it was secular, I wouldn’t want something that was overly religious” (Interview, June 2014). These non-Jewish students participated in programs which would be portions of Jewish Studies in other institutions, and as with the schools of Hillel and Shammai, the overarching goals of WCU’s programs and of Jewish Studies elsewhere seem to produce similar results: students who understand, value, and vocally defend Jewish experiences.

In the context of a Jewish tradition encompassing several thousand years, the Holocaust may not have endured long, but its impact still marks American Jewry. The inclusion of The Holocaust as a course option in the Jewish American Studies minor concentration is fitting since the catastrophe was designed to eliminate Jews and struck Jewish communities hardest, but it becomes problematic when members of the campus community view Jewish history principally

through what Friedman calls “the lens of destruction.” Since the course is one of the most consistently offered of the minor elective options, which also deals primarily with Jewish experience, Friedman recognized the real possibility that many gentiles might primarily identify Jews as the people targeted for destruction by Nazis. As just one among many options for the minor concentration, the popularity of The Holocaust is due to the significance of the subject, the popularity of its instructors, and the frequency of its scheduling. A student attempting to complete the minor concentration has few alternatives which address Jewish experiences predominantly, rather than describing Jews as one among many religions or cultures. Between 1978 and 2014, The Holocaust was offered at least one time per year and often more frequently. Whether that will be true in the future remains to be seen.

Many other options in the minor are offered infrequently, except the more general topics like Sociology of Religion, SOC 344, or PAX 200, Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies. Jewish students attempting to tease out a measure of reclaimed heritage must delve deeply or research independently on open-topic assignments. The Jewish American concentration of the Ethnic Studies minor has much to offer WCU students, especially non-Jews with limited baseline knowledge about Jewish experiences, but the minor requires students who want more in-depth knowledge of Judaism and Jews to probe and weave between unrelated topics and groups. Designed to address diversity as a value, the minor concentration works in that context and successfully assigns the Jewish American experience a level of complexity and Peoplehood often misunderstood by mainstream American culture.

### **Holocaust and Genocide Studies**

When Dr. Irene Shur first developed Holocaust courses at WCU, she was driven by twin duties to remember the murdered millions and to defend that memory from those who would

deny or minimize the Shoah. Begun as a single undergraduate class, the popularity of the course drove the expansion into an undergraduate minor and then to graduate certificate and Master's degree programs. Truth-telling about the causes, events, and consequences of the Holocaust remains a goal for faculty and students committed to the program. The Graduate Certificate in Holocaust/Genocide Studies (HGS), available from 1981 to the present, requires students to earn 18 credits with two mandatory courses and four electives. The required courses included HIS545, History of the Holocaust, and HIS546, Genocide in Modern History; HIS549. The interdisciplinary elective options include courses from the departments of History, Anthropology and Sociology, Philosophy, Communication Studies, Languages and Cultures and more. Dr. Friedman indicated, however, that no student has earned the HGS certificate in years since students can earn a Masters' degree by completing just a few more classes.

An additional resource supporting the program includes a library and archive collection, the Sender Frejdowicz Holocaust Studies Collection. Dedicated in October, 1999, (Archives) the collection includes hundreds of books, videos, audio recordings of survivors, documents, resource materials, and more (Shur, 1999, p. 8). Supplemented by Shur's personal collection, the material available to WCU students has a tangibility which nicely complements coursework, required readings, online materials, exhibits, and speakers. The collection provides substantial materials for initiating research on Holocaust topics, and is robust for a topical collection at WCU, but its single stack and closet-sized room might suffer by comparison to collections at larger institutions or private colleges.

### **Master's Program Development: Proposal and Goals**

Graduate courses on Holocaust topics already existed when the formal Master's degree proposal was drafted and submitted to Curriculum and Academic Programs Council in 1999.

Drafted by Dr. William Hewitt, the owner of greater organizational and diplomatic skills than the inventive but impatient Dr. Shur, the proposal addressed perceived communal and institutional needs and included an independent program assessment by the renowned Dr. Saul Friedman of Youngstown State University, Ohio. In the Background section, Hewitt detailed regional, professional, and student interest in the courses offered already, and then conferred additional legitimacy on the program request by name-dropping like a champion. For those familiar with the field, references to Shur's work with Dr. Franklin Littell, Dr. Yehuda Bauer, and others, and the citations of her receipt of an Emmy Award for the film CANGLES and the Janusz Korczak Award for teaching from the National Association for Holocaust Education (Hewitt, p. 1-2), amounted to a testimonial of legitimacy and authority. The message was clear: WCU was already home to a dynamo in the field who provided necessary legitimization.

The overarching goals of the program, as described in the proposal, focused on the objective of fostering "UNDERSTANDING" of the Holocaust, its causes, events, preliminary and after effects; "development of proper ATTITUDES" of empathy, appreciation, and respect; and development of "SKILLS" including research, communication, and refutation of revisionism (Hewitt, p. 5). This dry list fails to convey the emotional impact of the course material and the meta-analysis encouraged by WCU faculty. For example, the syllabus for The Final Solution in Europe, HIS 544, required eight texts and listed goals that included, "To address the historiography of the 'Final Solution' from both geographic and thematic perspectives" (Friedman, Jan. 2010, p. 1). The course required students to engage in protracted philosophical analyses and establishment of evidence regarding motivations of participants in the Final Solution as well as of the authors whose research was included in the class. The HGS program

proposal seemed to follow norms of an undergraduate education, but that is not the current reality in practice in the master's program.

The program goals outlined in the proposal addressed the lifelong concerns of Dr. Shur regarding acceptance of Jews and the consequences of prejudice. The proposal included several paragraphs summarizing the developments that led to the attempted annihilation of Europe's Jews. Shur's voice came through clearly, "Thus, study of the Holocaust, and examination of the step-by-step process by which the Nazis removed the rights of a people, including millions of non-Jews, serves as an important lesson of how hate and bigotry eventually destroys" (Hewitt, p. 7). Importantly, for Shur, Holocaust courses and programs never failed to incorporate Jewish pasts and presents, a feature not always found in HGS programs (Engel, 2010; Keren, 2004). In the secular setting of WCU, explaining Jews and Judaism to the largely non-Jewish student body, as recommended by some scholars of the Holocaust (Garber, 1991; Short, 2004) posed a critical but unstated educational task for the program. The proposal connected the MA in Holocaust Studies directly to WCU's responsiveness to the "rights of minorities, women, handicapped persons and others with specific needs" (Hewitt, p. 7). This social justice meme echoes Browning's call (2004) for connecting Holocaust coursework to the task of developing vigilant attention to social and governmental behaviors. Having established the connection between HGS program goals, faculty expertise, and University and societal goals, the proposal implied confidence in forthcoming administrative support.

The master's degree in HGS was originally conceived as a means of improving teacher education about the Holocaust and providing classroom instructors with tools for teaching American students "about the darkest tragedy in human history" (Hewitt, p. 3). Again, an implied goal, certainly for Shur, was the protection of the Jewish future by exploring the

consequences of anti-Semitism and disseminating that understanding. The original program committee sent a questionnaire and program flyers to administrators and principals of regional secondary schools with the apparent goal of galvanizing community promoters (March 16, 1998, Archives). Program advocates were “certain that the popularity of an MA in Holocaust studies will result in rapid growth of the program” (Hewitt, p. 3). Basing this conclusion on queries from current and potential students, and on Irene Shur’s legendary capacity to network, the proposal anticipates continuing interest in the master’s. Other strategies for advertising the HGS program included an article for the *Jewish Exponent*, “posters from the Graduate Department sent to 200 schools, universities and Jewish agencies,” the “Chester County Art Contest for children on a Holocaust topic,” an Anne Frank drama to be presented at the WCU Alumni House, and a Yom Hashoah program, among others (Unknown, Dec. 2001, Archives). In the current climate of public higher education, however, the techniques for outreach and the estimated growth of the program seem quaintly optimistic, as it would for most non-vocational master’s degrees in the liberal arts. In 2000, the state of Pennsylvania encouraged the teaching of the Holocaust in public, secondary schools, and as of summer 2014, now uses slightly stronger language and recommending the subject to be taught (Dinniman, Interview, June 2014).

Shur rewrote the state’s standards for teaching the Holocaust and developed “several intermediate unit programs throughout the state” (Hewitt, p. 4), and had her students engage in developing “A Resource Unit for Teachers in the Chester and Delaware County Schools” (1978, Archives). Prepared by The Holocaust Workshop taught by Shur during summer, 1978, the Resource Unit included rich information about Jewish history, the background of anti-Semitism, and even suggested test material and co-curricular activities. The Unit was dramatically shaped by Shur’s compulsion to explain and protect Jews and Judaism. Thirty years later, secondary

students remained drawn to the study of the Holocaust and genocide, and elective courses in regional high schools were always oversubscribed (Hewitt, p. 4). Local high school students surveyed about their reasons for enrolling in a Holocaust class indicated personal interest, family history, and connections to Jewish family members or friends (Unknown, Archives).

Consequently, program developers at WCU expected enduring interest from secondary educators, especially within a context where many school districts paid for teachers to continue their educations. Unfortunately, many of the state's public school districts no longer have the resources to reimburse teachers for graduate courses, and the immediate region around WCU is saturated with teachers who have already participated in the program. Not one of the graduates who participated in this study worked in secondary education, and, crucially for those students, they all paid for their degrees out of pocket or with loans. A single, fortunate graduate student can be awarded the program's only assistantship.

## **Enrollment**

Initial program enrollments have subsided to a steady, but relatively small five to eight new entrants per year. In 2013 and 2014, the HGS Master's program admitted 15 students, of whom 12 matriculated and eight scheduled courses. Those numbers are comparable to the History MA, and to quite a few other graduate programs in Arts and Sciences as reported in Fall 2014 Grad Program Enrollment Data (WCU, Fall 2014). However, few WCU graduate programs in Arts and Sciences can compete with the University's professional preparation degrees including Masters of Education, Social Work, and Nursing, for example. Enrollment in the HGS Master's program has never come close to outside consultant Dr. Saul Friedman's, enthusiastic projection of 35 – 40 students by the fifth year (Friedman, Appendices). The new Pennsylvania state education recommendation may drive another cohort of educators into the

HGS Master’s program. The most reliable means of gauging enrollment uses graduation data.

Table # 8 paints a picture of a small program, but one with relative consistency and potential for growth.

Table # 8 Number of MA Graduates from the HGS Program

HGS MASTERS GRADUATES					
Term	Count of Graduates	Term	Count of Graduates	Term	Count of Graduates
Spring 2002	3	Spring 2008	3	Spring 2011	5
Summer Post 2002	3	Fall 2008	2	Summer Post 2011	3
Fall 2002	2	Spring 2009	4	Spring 2012	1
Spring 2004	2	Summer Post 2009	1	Fall 2012	1
Fall 2004	2	Fall 2009	2	Spring 2013	1
Spring 2005	2	Spring 2010	2	Summer Post 2013	1
Spring 2006	2	Summer Post 2010	1	Fall 2013	2
Spring 2007	2	Fall 2010	1	Spring 2014	5
Fall 2007	2				

The original program proposal included a section labeled “Contributing Factors to the Projected Increase in Enrollment in the Holocaust/Genocide Masters Program” (Hewitt, Appendices). The list of eight items includes many factors already mentioned, but in consideration of current trends in higher education and the troubled economic situations of many institutions and students, the list seems unduly buoyant. In no instance does it include inaccuracies; however, the factors described lack the depth and energy needed to realistically increase enrollment. An example is the first item: “The reputation of Holocaust programs [at] West Chester University adds credibility to the graduate program” (Hewitt), which goes on to describe Shur’s accomplishments in Holocaust education. Indeed, a flyer found in the library archives to announce the hiring of Dr. Friedman indicated that twenty students were enrolled in the program by the 2002 – 2003 academic year. The program is still reputable, and is certainly headed by a scholar with wide renown in the HGS community, but that feature does not appear

to drive profuse enrollment. While several students cited the gratification of working with Friedman as one of the reasons they chose WCU, the real challenge is convincing greater numbers of interested students to pursue further education in HGS in the first place.

Dr. Saul Friedman's evaluation prepared in October, 1999, and included in the program proposal as an "Assessment of Proposed MA in Holocaust Studies and Certificate Program in Holocaust/Genocide, West Chester University" also discusses potential enrollment. He based his conclusions on "universities which offer Master's Degrees with a specialization in Holocaust (Kent State, Youngstown State, Akron, and Ohio State University)" (Friedman, Appendices). A quick search online determined that none of those schools continues to provide specializations in Holocaust although Ohio State University does offer a Master's concentration in Jewish History, but the most recent theses on Holocaust topics at Kent State were in 2006 and 2007. However, in 1999 the current state of academia was not foreseeable, and Friedman listed secondary school educators, graduate students intending to complete terminal degrees, professionals in Holocaust centers, and non-traditional students drawn from the Chester County Jewish community as potential students. Oddly, only one of the graduates I spoke to professed to belong to any of those categories. Community members who participated in this research remain interested in WCU program offerings related to the Holocaust, but few expressed interest in semester-long or years-long commitments to enroll in classes or matriculate in the Master's program.

The proposal's list for increasing enrollment does include some direct connection to professional enhancement by referencing state mandates for Holocaust education and programs offered by the local Intermediate Units. But several of the factors, such as the "sterling reputations of the Pennsylvania System of Higher Education, West Chester University, and the various departments participating," and the anticipated increase in the number of participating

faculty members beg the question of what enrollment engine can be fueled by those items.

Another anticipated growth factor naively connects Shur's experience in film direction to the expected growth of the Holocaust Distance Learning Program which was, apparently, to take place "via televised relay" (Friedman, Appendices). While an online HGS degree would open up WCU's program to a world full of students, the University's Grad Program Enrollment Data clearly reveal higher enrollments in professional preparation programs, such as nursing and education. Originally, it was hoped that WCU HGS graduates would go on to a Ph.D. in the field at Clark College in Massachusetts (Friedman, Appendices). Current faculty, administrators, and students could build HGS program numbers to the extent that direct connections to some sort of professional proficiencies can be demonstrated. In other words, if HGS were known to lead to well-paying, professional employment, the program could grow.

### **Program Administration and Faculty**

The original program coordinator was Dr. Shur, whose bona fides were repeatedly trumpeted throughout the proposal. Her twenty years of experience in the field, roles as organizer and director of the National Association for Holocaust Studies and board member of the Coordinating Council on the Holocaust, as well as numerous publications (Hewitt, p. 10), ensured that administrators at WCU could not even consider refusing to permit her this position. In addition, numerous faculty and chairs of contributing departments had responsibilities in the program's development and maintenance. However, since the proposal was approved all of the originally listed participants have retired or died. Thus, the vitality and continuity of the HGS program resides completely in the hands of a new generation.

According to her son, as WCU searched for the right person to head the Master's program in HGS, Irene Shur knew that the point of the process was to find her replacement. She

was in her 80s, unwell and tired, but she had been teaching at WCU for nearly 50 years and had mixed feelings about handing over the keys to the Jewish civilization edifice she had worked so hard to construct over a lifetime. To a person, everyone who worked with Shur in her capacity as an administrator described her as energetic, forceful, authoritative, and single-minded. Freeman Witthoft described her as “persuasive” and “not a person you said ‘no’ to” (Interview). Community member, and former president of Keshet Israel Congregation, Dr. Morry Gold portrayed her as someone who “made sure that everyone was involved; she made things happen” (Interview). Her former student, Susan, found her so compelling even after Shur’s death that when Susan dreamed of Shur telling her to return to college, Susan embarked on the Master’s program in HGS (Interview). The transition from one leader to another was sure to be difficult for many of those involved.

Regarding the search for the next Director, Dr. Hewitt said, “Irene knew that she was at the end of her career, so we wanted to get a director, and we knew we wanted to get someone Jewish” (Interview). Reminded that WCU could not advertise religion as an employment qualification, Hewitt replied, “No, no. We couldn’t do that, but we thought that would be nice.” Of course, a higher percentage of HGS scholars are Jewish than in many other fields, so the likelihood of the WCU search committee meeting this hidden stipulation remained high. Hewitt’s tacit prerequisite had several implications worth examining. As a non-Jew, he probably did not feel that Jews made better instructors of HGS courses since he already knew his own teaching, and that of numerous non-Jewish colleagues in the program, was very well-regarded. In addition, since the vast majority of students enrolled in the courses and participating in the HGS minor and master’s programs were not Jewish, there must have been limited need to provide positive academic role models for a specific minority population. In other words, a

Jewish director was not sought because of any aim of assisting Jewish students to identify with the academy. Rather, the director's chair implicitly needed a Jew for non-instructional reasons. The integrity of the program in the eyes of the international HGS community, and, perhaps more importantly, of the Philadelphia-area Jewish community of potential participants and donors, required the director of WCU's HGS program to be a full member of their selective communities. Indeed, Dr. Maury Hoberman, a lifelong member and engaged participant of West Chester's Jewish community, spoke of his willingness to endow a chair at WCU in honor of Shur (Interview, May 2014). Ironically, the facet of WCU's HGS program that is most manifestly Jewish is the religious identity of its director.

Dr. Jonathan Friedman (son of Dr. Saul Friedman) is a compact, slender, boyish man whose appearance belies the narrative power he wields in the classroom and the vast erudition and scholarship for which he is widely respected. He was hired to direct the Holocaust and Genocide Studies program, with its Master's, certificate, and minor options, in 2002. Coming from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, he provided enormous credibility and additional legitimacy to the WCU program. Students, faculty, and administrators alike describe him as a scholar and are in awe of his wide-ranging intellect and depth of knowledge about all aspects of the Holocaust.

Friedman is a something of a jack-of-all-trades in the HGS program. He writes curriculum, designs courses and shepherds them through the CAPC process, recruits new MA students, teaches every semester as well as during the summer to relieve the History department of the burden of supplying so many HGS-focused courses, engages in program assessment and review, serves his department in other capacities like chairing the Executive Committee and serving on the Tenure and Promotion Committee, engages in research, and much more. The

courses he teaches in rotation include 20<sup>th</sup> Century Europe, HIS331; The Holocaust, HIS332; The Jew in History, HIS349; 19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe, HIS434; American Jewish History, HIS440; Nationalism and Democracy, HIS535; Jews in Modern European History, HIS543; Final Solution in Europe, HIS544; Holocaust, HIS545; Women and the Holocaust, HIS548; American Perspectives on the Holocaust, HIS549; as well as Field Studies, Independent Studies, and Special Topics courses. In some cases, Friedman is the only instructor to offer a course; consequently, he has never been able to take a sabbatical. Additionally, the services he provides to the History department certainly cement his reputation as a valuable colleague and team player, but just as certainly consume the time available to accomplish duties connected to directing the HGS program.

Asked how he felt about the current situation, he responded, “Overwhelmed. I’m teaching, and running the program, defending the program” (Interview, Sept. 2014). He pointed out that when he was hired, he taught two graduate courses per semester and had a half-release which ensured him adequate time for his diverse obligations. Recently, the Associate Provost attempted to require him to teach three classes in the fall, and four in the spring, while also retaining all the duties of Director of HGS. Friedman negotiated to preserve the status quo of his current one-quarter release in addition to a three class per semester load; even that small victory, however, provides much less time than he originally had as program director. Budgetary realities do not align with the original program proposal, which indicated expectations that the majority of funding would come from outside sources such as the Lasko Foundation Endowment and various grant agencies (Hewitt, Appendices). Friedman recognized the universality of financial and enrollment burdens on WCU’s departments, especially those in the liberal arts, and does not feel HGS has been singled out in any way, but he poignantly described “less and less

oxygen for the program for the twelve years I've been here.” As an equitable solution he recommended a “rotating directorship” for HGS since the “expert” does not have to be the director. Instead, he envisioned the position revolving among other faculty in the program, even among those in participating departments other than History.

Friedman has, besides, been left behind by the History department's move to another building across campus, so HGS is more obviously a stand-alone program. His isolation from his History colleagues is both physical and intangible. In consideration of the interdisciplinary nature of the program, Friedman did not object to the attenuation of its relationship with History. However, the chair of the History department holds the privilege of determining what courses are offered. Friedman acknowledged the chairperson has the overarching managerial view but insisted that “the director of the program [HGS] needs to be able to schedule the courses” (Interview). For example, in spring 2015, he put in to teach American Jewish history, and must also teach 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe and 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe at the same time. For the first time since his hire date in 2002, The Holocaust will not be offered. The Final Solution course will not be offered at all anymore because of departmental constraints on the number of Holocaust courses offered. Departmental needs dictate programmatic offerings. From an administrative context, allocations of this kind occur all the time, but to faculty in the trenches, HGS appeared increasingly stripped of resources.

This poses problems for HGS for several reasons. Despite administrative narratives to the contrary, HGS courses are usually over-enrolled, with more than 24 students in graduate classes ideally designed for 15 to 20 students. In fact, Holocaust courses are the largest graduate courses offered by the History department and served as electives for students obtaining History graduate degrees. Students experienced class-size as overly compressed as well; Sara criticized,

“Some of the classes were a little too large; twenty is too many grad students. Summer classes had eight and were so much better. People yell over each other if there are too many” (Interview, May 2014). Furthermore, several students mentioned feeling lured to WCU by a “bait and switch” gambit because courses were listed as part of the HGS program which were rarely or never offered. The additional work burden generated by large class sizes further reduced Friedman’s ability to engage in other portions of his director’s job, including program review and assessment, for which most departments have additional personnel. Friedman’s characteristic scholarship is both his greatest asset and a comparative weakness. When it comes to program direction and development, Friedman endured comparisons to Shur. Students reported his bemoaning loss of resources and support from WCU and the state, but they were confused by his seeming inability to ‘fight’ for the program. However, students had extremely limited awareness of the changing fiscal and political contexts of the WCU environment. Navigating this narrower boundary required Friedman to cultivate allies, which he had successfully done in the academic arena even though he is essentially a “department of one.”

Of course, other faculty are involved in the program, but since all are housed in various home departments, they have obligations for teaching and service which make them less available as resources for Friedman. This is true even for professors like Hewitt and Dr. Brenda Gaydosh, whose direct involvement in HGS History courses meant they shared some of Friedman’s experiences. Hewitt taught one of the first secondary education Holocaust classes in the country in the 1970s (Interview, May 2014), and has an extensive scholarly background in American Indian History which added depth to the program’s inclusion of Genocide as a topic of study. Hewitt was a founding collaborator in the HGS program and indicated that “there wasn’t a lot of support in the History department” for HGS, and “then it became a process of who would

cooperate with us in providing the number of courses we needed to have enough credits for a program. It became political as much as academic” (Interview). Programmatic isolation is an important consequence of the interdisciplinary nature of HGS. The program has no department to call home, few cards to play in obtaining necessary courses and resources, and limited leverage with University management. None of these problems is insurmountable. But shifting University priorities have resulted in the withdrawal of earlier commitments, according to Hewitt, and in pressures, both subtle and blatant, to demonstrate value through quantitative means.

The University commissioned a feasibility study, “Evaluating the Future of the Holocaust and Genocide Studies MA,” completed in May 2014, by Hanover Research. The report claimed to evaluate “the long-term viability of West Chester University’s master’s degree in Holocaust and Genocide Studies” (p. 1), but was actually much more general than that. The researchers interviewed directors of HGS undergraduate and graduate programs throughout the nation but did not speak to the director of WCU’s program. Dr. Friedman found his exclusion incomprehensible but chose not to construct negative hypotheses regarding this seeming lack of transparency. Nevertheless, while the research conclusions may be valid, the absence of contextual interviews specifically about WCU’s program risked undermining the appraisals.

Those conclusions do effectively communicate the complexity and risks of Holocaust master’s programs in the US. The other three American MA programs in HGS are all offered within 100 miles of WCU. Reflecting the fate of many non-professional graduate programs, “Holocaust and Genocide Studies master’s programs have experienced stagnation or decline in student enrollments” including the closure of California State University, Chico’s graduate program in HGS (p. 3-4). Gratz College beat the odds by providing online options, and Dr.

Michael Steinlauf indicated that Gratz's HGS program had experienced steady growth since the launch of the online alternative (p. 6). MA programs at other institutions require campus attendance, but WCU offers the least expensive program (p. 3-4). Program viability at WCU may depend on developing online courses, or even on making the whole degree accessible online.

The original program proposal included a plan for a class called Holocaust/Genocide in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to be offered online. The distance learning option was to begin in September 2000 (Hewitt, p. 15) and would have potentially expanded the reach of "graduate students who will be able to gain the expertise and experience of working with Dr. Irene Shur . . . and nationally recognized professors, speakers, survivors, and veterans of wars" (p. 15). While Shur did teach an over-enrolled graduate Holocaust class that fall, there is no evidence of any distance learning alternative. WCU continues to press faculty to develop online courses and programs, and it now offers training and support via a sophisticated Distance Learning office.

An administrative option suggested by Hanover Research include merging HGS with another program (p. 7-8) such as Peace and Conflict Studies because of the perception of better employability among graduates with broader interdisciplinary degrees. At WCU, considerations of merging HGS with another program depend completely on context. Dr. Hanley, chair of the History department, would like to see HGS reabsorbed by the graduate History program, with HGS as a concentration in a History master's (Interview, June 2014). Such a move would be a coup for the History department since HGS courses are among the most popular graduate classes. The department could retain those students, and the significant university funding which accompanies them, while significantly increasing its yearly enrollment.

Friedman, on the other hand, would prefer to merge HGS with the Peace and Conflict program housed by the Philosophy department (Interview, Aug. 2014). In his context as Director of HGS, he experienced continuous support for his overarching mission from the faculty and administration of Philosophy. Despite his own History background, he considers Philosophy a more natural fit for HGS because “Philosophy is totally committed to HGS, so Peace and Conflict would be a more logical fit than history if we had to blend programs. I would like to call it Holocaust and Human Rights Studies since I don’t want ‘Holocaust’ to disappear” (Interview). Again, a merger of the kind projected by Friedman would be a substantial benefit to the Philosophy department with its tiny graduate and undergraduate populations. However, depending on overarching curricular goals, combining programs might further diminish the Jewish content of the program; at least, it is difficult to foresee any way in which such a merger would intensify the Jewishness of the program.

### **Students of HGS: The Need to Understand**

Students of HGS report and exhibit an enduring fascination with the Holocaust. For them, both undergraduate and graduate, this fascination, a consuming need to know and understand more, is not salacious; rather, they are the reservoirs of memory. It is in them, the fascinated few, that the future of remembrance resides, and the truth is preserved by their bulwark of defense against revisionism. At WCU those students, primarily non-Jews, bring diverse regional and undergraduate academic backgrounds to the program, including music, anthropology, history, political science, and communication studies. Indeed, Bachelor’s degrees in any area are accepted for admission (Hewitt, p. 8). Quite a few of the Master’s students, many from the mid-west, worked prior to matriculating at WCU; commonly, they were employed by non-profits with social justice concerns.

As of now, the majority of students in the HGS Master's pursue the degree out of personal interest and a visceral need to understand. Many sought a community and found a sense of relief that their steadfast interest in Jewish experiences or in the Holocaust was shared by others. Josh felt that his interest in the Holocaust might be abnormal until he discovered the community at WCU. "It's hard being interested in this topic. It's hard to talk about it and feel good about it. I felt like a freak because I was interested in some of the most horrible things that have ever happened to anybody, so when I came here it felt like coming out of the closet because others were also interested in this dark thing that now I can share" (Interview, June 2014). At least half of the graduates I spoke to researched programs online and traveled from the mid-west and even farther to attend this specific program because of Dr. Friedman's reputation in the field. Far from home and committed to the program, students' regard for Friedman's scholarship sustained them through some disappointment with the thinness of program offerings. They hoped to find employment in Holocaust education, museum work, or library science on the strength of their master's degrees.

Students need to maintain a 3.0 GPA in the program and earn at least Bs in their History courses. Completion of the degree took two years for full-time students and up to six years for part-time students, according to the proposal, which also intended that students would take a foundation course during their first semester in the program (p. 8). However, the reality was that students enrolled in whatever HGS courses were offered in a given semester; choices were few for students who hoped to graduate within a couple of years since a desired course might never come up in a department's rotation. If class options were few, choices of faculty were even fewer since most of the courses were taught by the same professors in their respective

departments. Josh grumbled, “A problem that I have with this program is that he [Friedman] teaches everything. Students adapt to professor expectations” (Interview, June 2014).

Expecting a primarily history-focused program, a few students experienced interdisciplinary courses as padding. Matt, a grad student from the Philadelphia region, applied late and, consequently, had to enroll in Multicultural Psychology his first semester since it was the only open course option (Interview, May 2014). Jenn’s first class was Criminological Theory. She also had to take Ethical Theories and commented, “It was a good class. I can’t say I learned a whole lot just because it’s not really my element, and I don’t understand philosophical courses especially at a graduate level, but I got through it. So, it was fine” (Interview, June 2014). Such faint praise reflected Jenn’s original hopes for the program. While she understood upon enrollment that the HGS program was unavoidably interdisciplinary due to program requirements, Jenn preferred History courses specific to the Holocaust.

Sara, another graduate of HGS explained, “The program is kind of broad, so students can take things that speak to an overall field, like multicultural psych, philosophy of ethics, etc. Dr. Friedman and Dr. Gaydosh are very flexible and support independent studies” (Interview, June 2014). Josh agreed, but said the non-history classes, especially Multicultural Psychology, “were disappointing and just not necessary for the program.” For Josh, courses in other disciplines were chaff displacing the substance of Holocaust courses in History. Nevertheless, the program proposal listed “New Courses to be Added to the Program” (p. 9) and included courses in disciplines other than History. While some students appreciated the interdisciplinary facets of the program, most expressed a desire to focus on the history of the Holocaust. Josh bemoaned the rarity of some course offerings and complained, “depending on when you get admitted, you may never get to take some classes. Women and the Holocaust was finally offered after I

graduated!” (Interview, June 2014). Sara agreed that the timing of course offerings could be problematic, “Students are only here for 2 years, so if something isn’t offered we never get that class. There should be more Holocaust specific electives in History, a whole course on T-4. The Holocaust class was jam packed with information but skimming the surface. It could be a two-semester sequence: 1933 – 39, and war years” (Interview, May 2014). Context dictates perception: most HGS students saw themselves as immersed in the *history* of the Holocaust and expected new insights in other areas to derive organically from that discipline.

In a profound, applied example of their connection to that history, HGS students provided an extraordinary and moving display of respect and empathetic compassion towards the Jewish martyrs of the Holocaust. HGS students on the 2012 summer Field Studies trip to Holocaust sites in Poland rescued a Torah fragment. Discovered by a student in a shop in Warsaw, a substantial portion of a Torah had passed WWII hidden in a wall and was for sale. Haunted by the specter of abandoning a relic connected to, and valued by, the victims whom they appreciated more completely as a consequence of the trip, the students agreed that the Torah could not remain in the store with Nazi memorabilia also for sale. So they pooled their remaining money and purchased the still-sacred artifact. These amazing students grasped the need to restore a semblance of dignity to a text they could not read, but whose significance they understood. They said to each other, “We can’t leave it there” (Matt, Interview, May 2014). Returning with the Torah to WCU, they collaborated with Hillel and other community organizations to raise the necessary funds to have the remnant authenticated and preserved by the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts in Philadelphia (Friedman, 2014, p. 5). The Torah fragment is now on permanent display in an environmentally-controlled glass case with accompanying narrative and explanation of its significance. The HGS students’ exhibition of leadership, and their

compulsion to preserve the memory of vanished communities represented one of the most desirable outcomes possible for Holocaust educators.

### **Co-Curricular HGS: More than Papers and Tests**

Holocaust history occurred in principally European settings. Numerous students mentioned WCU-sponsored trips to European sites of significance to HGS as the highlight of their educations, providing emotionally meaningful contexts as well as opportunities for personal growth. Archival material from the mid-1980s indicates that Shur planned for study abroad and exchanges of students and faculty to Israel and European nations (Shur, 1986?, handwritten notes). The trips, now with Dr. Friedman or Dr. Gaydosh, Assistant Professor of History and scholar of modern Germany and the Holocaust, crystallized students' commitment to the program by encapsulating the meaningfulness of their educations, which had previously begun to seem esoteric and abstract. Jenn described the Field Studies trip in 2013 as "probably the highlight of my whole time at WCU" (Interview). Josh tied his study in Europe more tightly to his HGS coursework, "I think I probably learned more on that trip, just going to actual sites where things you read about happened. I was struggling with the fact that after you've been studying this for so long, things just become statistics, and you lose sight of the fact this actually happened." (Interview).

As Josh pointed out, in the absence of exposure to the lived reality of those who were involved in the Holocaust, individual people become "Six Million," and data detached from grief. He reflected, "I mean when I was actually standing in Auschwitz it just really brings it back that this is very personal. This actually happened. They're not statistics, you know. It was six million *real* people" (Interview). Comments like his represent the dense contextualizing of education made possible by experiences outside the classroom. HGS offered other trips, and

Gaydosh has taken students on international trips to the sites of other genocides, including Rwanda. Nevertheless, realistic considerations of time and money inhibited the ability of many students to participate in this most transformative of experiential education models.

Additional common co-curricular components of education included conferences with the accompanying opportunities for presenting, permitting students to perceive themselves as scholars with unique possible contributions. Susan mentioned accompanying Dr. Shur to several conferences in the early 1990s. “Dr. Shur always had interesting things for us to participate in, educational seminars. I went to Washington D.C. with her. That was where Vladka Meed spoke about being in the Warsaw Ghetto underground. I was in with the greats” (Interview, July, 2014). The Washington conference made an enduring impression on Susan; her awe and appreciation still resonate across decades. Students in 2014 had many fewer opportunities to meet with and hear survivors and liberators, but conference opportunities still abound. However, program logistics restrict access to opportunities, according to several recent graduates.

Students expressed a legitimate desire for expansive opportunities and sometimes collaborated among themselves to increase their contact with additional scholars and presentation opportunities in the field. Matt observed, “There are too few faculty, so we couldn’t have a lot one-to-one time with our advisor. Workloads seemed overwhelming for faculty, so students didn’t have a lot of opportunity to collaborate with faculty to arrange to present papers at conferences” (Interview, June, 2014). Instead, Matt and other students arranged to attend local workshops or mini-conferences such as a Holocaust Teach-In hosted by Gratz College.

Exceptional leadership on the part of Jen and Josh resulted in some of the students being able to attend Gratz College’s 2012 Esther Tuzman Memorial Holocaust Teach-In featuring a keynote speech by Dr. Robert Lifton, a widely respected expert on the roles Nazi doctors played

and on genocide globally. Jen wistfully described an ideal vision of WCU's more direct involvement with the kind of outreach represented by conferences like the one she attended at

Gratz:

We went to the teacher education conference at Gratz November 2012, and that was great. There were people from all over the place. They had all these different breakout sessions, and it was great that all these people are coming right here to Gratz College in this one building. Robert Lifton was there, and he gave a talk. He wrote Nazi Doctors. That was great just to get to see him. I think it would be nice, even if West Chester's not the center of that, just to have a better relationship with all those things [conferences and presenters]. It helps students get experience and maybe internships with different places or museums or even the Jewish museum in Philadelphia, its American-Jewish history, but if there could just be more at West Chester with other schools, it would be really helpful.

(Interview, June 2014)

Gratz College produced a meaningful conference that opened Jen's eyes to the possibilities at WCU beyond the classroom. In a dramatic shift of context, she was suddenly able to envision a broader role for WCU's HGS program, and more substantive experiences for its students.

WCU has had conferences and events, often hosted in collaboration with the local Jewish community at Keshet Israel Congregation. Dr. Morrie Gold, a member of the local Jewish community and former president of Keshet Israel recalled, "At KI we had a number of programs with survivors. One year I remember we had a rescuer who came out and spoke to us. We had events at KI or at the college, but we haven't been quite as coordinative as we were in the past" (Interview, May, 2014). Gold may have an impression of a reduction in local collaboration centered on Holocaust education; after all, he joined the WCU sponsored trip to Holocaust sites in several European countries in 2000, and it appears difficult to sustain that level of intertwined interests. Under Shur, community outreach was a consistent goal of the program, according to Dr. Madeleine Wing Adler, former president of WCU (Interview, June 2014). That energetic

outreach defined and justified the program for many administrators and community members. In the meantime, other institutions in the region have stepped up to build events in ways that did not happen as routinely when Shur started HGS programming in the late 1970s.

The sheer vigor of Shur's ability to generate programming may have conditioned some members of the local community to rely on WCU for those events. Gold and other community members continued to value WCU as a resource and attended HGS presentations and speakers, which are generally offered at least one time per semester. This academic year, HGS sponsored, or will sponsor, a lecture by Dr. Robert Miller of Catholic University on "recent trends in ancient Israelite archaeology," a film screening of *The Last Days* about the Holocaust in Hungary, a lecture by Dr. Ingrid Bianca Byerly of Duke University on music and social protest, a lecture by Dr. Jonathan Friedman on Jon Anderson's Chagall Project, a Holocaust Remembrance Day Program, summer Field Studies to Armenia and Turkey to learn about the Armenian genocide, and summer Field Studies to Los Angeles to "learn about the rich history of the gay and Jewish communities" of the city (Friedman, 2014, Events Calendar). Thus, the perception among some in the community of a decline in programming is inaccurate.

So much more has been learned about the events of the Holocaust in the past 20 years, with the opening of archives formerly locked behind the Iron Curtain, that academic programming entered newer, narrower terrain rather than repeating tropes of near-universal destruction which dominated Holocaust programming in its earlier years. Many contrasted Friedman's scholarship with Shur's energetic community involvement (Gold, Adler, Lamwers), but all agreed that outreach programming continues to be a component of the HGS mission. A quick glance through this year's planned programming underscores the variety of opportunities HGS offers. Rather than heading diminished programming, it appears Friedman's quieter, self-

deprecating personality cannot compete with communal memories of Irene Shur's insistent immediacy and attention-demanding presence. Additionally, a presentation on Germany's short-lived T-4 program to eliminate citizens with disabilities, for example, may not garner the attention of yet another presentation about the Warsaw Ghetto or Babi Yar, but scholarship in all areas is ongoing and deserves exposure.

The same was true of student participation in programming: a lot is going on even if less is known. In September, 2013, several WCU students of HGS attended a commemorative event at Albright College (Friedman, 2014) featuring Dr. Geoffrey Megargee speaking about "The Universe of Nazi Camps and Ghettos" (p. 8). Later that fall, HGS students traveled to Cherry Hill, NJ for a presentation by Thomas Harding on his book about the German Jew who tracked down the commandant of Auschwitz (p. 8). Students also took at least one trip per year to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. Exposure to minds and ideas in the field connected to students' learning generated new insights; however, programs such as these, while important supplements to classroom instruction, did not have the same experiential value for students as conferences.

The richness and challenge of presenting at a conference was captured by Brittany Grim, an HGS graduate student who shared (2014) the confidence in her own scholarship gained as a result of presenting at the International Association of Genocide Scholars in Sienna, Italy, during the summer of 2013 (p. 6). Encouraged by Dr. Gaydosh to submit a proposal, Grim rose to the occasion both personally and intellectually. Her awed tone permeates her tale, "I saw and met so many historians and researchers that I had been reading about for years - including Gregory Stanton, the scholar whose research I used in my conference paper. I sat in on presentations so fascinating that I furiously took notes . . . to record every fact and detail I saw, heard, and felt,

just in case I never had an opportunity like this one again (2014, p. 6). Grim clearly treasured her experience and reflected on her own expanded capacity for communicating specialized knowledge about the Holocaust and genocides. Those reflections exhibit renewed commitment to scholarship and to publicizing the reality of the Holocaust and ongoing genocides. Given enough resources and time, WCU faculty craft openings where they can.

Other students felt that opportunities to present were limited, and while they are not wrong, prospects were available. Students in a Master's program may reasonably expect faculty to cultivate a mentoring relationship and assist students in pursuing ventures such as presentations. WCU faculty are encouraged to include students in prospective conferences and presentations, and to have students represent the University and its programs. Jen suggested a solution: WCU should host a Holocaust and Genocide conference. She would like to see WCU "get more involved in Holocaust education and awareness because it's all of our responsibilities to remember it" (Interview, June 2014). Her idea offers an elegant solution to several perceived deficits of the HGS program at WCU, permitting students' acquisition of practical skills beyond the museum design projects assigned in some of Friedman's courses and fostering mentoring relationships between faculty and students within existing contexts. Project management skills developed as an outcome of hosting a conference could alleviate Matt's concern (Interview, June 2014) about employment prospects upon graduation. Students of HGS cherished their experiences; they simply desire more – more history electives, more presentation opportunities, more interaction with faculty, and more validation of their educations through work opportunities.

## Summary: Jewish Studies at WCU

This research focused on the availability, content, accessibility, and viability of Jewish content courses and programs at WCU, and also attempted to determine whether there were specifically Jewish features within the programs. A student at WCU could learn a great deal about Jewish civilization, history, culture, and contributions despite the absence of a formal, credentialed Jewish Studies program. Students who participated in this research spoke of the deep value they placed in their experiences in the Jewish American concentration of Ethnic Studies or in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. The Jewish American concentration has profound merit even if few participants.

The Holocaust courses have always generated interest and high enrollment since the origin of both HGS courses and Ethnic Studies in the 1970s. Dr. Shur's drive to share Jewish experiences, and her dynamic, theatrical teaching style, resulted in the development of courses in Jewish history that fed both programs. Beginning as part of WCU's inclusion of diverse communities, the Jewish content classes always attracted more non-Jews than Jewish students because of regional and institutional demographics. While Shur certainly contributed vitally to Jewish students and the Jewish presence on campus, she had a visceral need to acquaint non-Jews with Jewish history and civilization. She accomplished that through both Jewish History and Holocaust courses, and her life's work culminated with the development of the Master's in HGS program, a goal she nurtured for decades before seeing it come to fruition shortly before her death.

### Enrollments

Enrollment remains a primary challenge for both the Jewish American concentration in the Ethnic Studies minor and in the Holocaust and Genocide Studies program. The archival, electronic, and interview data indicated that enrollment fluctuated, but the programs never

experienced large numbers of participants. However, it is important to distinguish between *program* and *course* enrollment, especially for the graduate HGS courses. Those classes are consistently oversubscribed since students in other programs take them as electives.

Consequently, despite administrative pressure to increase program enrollment, HGS can make no promise to students regarding their ability to enroll in desired program courses in History.

Students in HGS reported feeling impelled into other departments' classes in order complete the program in a timely way, but several students expressed resentment at the size of the HGS History classes and disinterest in courses in Criminal Justice or Philosophy. However, since both programs have always described themselves as Interdisciplinary, perhaps students should have had a clearer notion of the requirements.

At WCU the thinness of student enrollment in the Ethnic Studies minor may have much more to do with scripted requirements of degrees which lead to specific vocations rather than with lack of student interest; all the associated courses are now fully enrolled whenever offered. In other words, given greater latitude in their degree programs, students who expressed an interest might be more inclined to participate by adding the minor credentials to their transcripts. However, the interdisciplinary nature of the Ethnic Studies minor may also obscure coherence in course selection and in advocating for the vocational relevancy of the program. An overarching course, such as the pair offered at Shippensburg University, might clarify the value of the minor for students, parents, employers, and administrators.

Many more students might be willing to participate in the programs if the courses counted towards graduation with their degrees. Sara, a non-Jewish HGS student, explained her willingness to participate in Jewish Studies by stating, "I'm very interested in Jewish culture but might be intimidated because I'm not Jewish. But you can't learn about the Holocaust unless

you learn about the history of Jewish people. I'd do it if it's secular; I wouldn't want something overly religious" (Interview, May 2014). Any course taught at WCU about Jewish civilization and Judaism would be areligious by virtue of the requirements of public higher education. Sara could add the Jewish American concentration with no fear of exposure to proselytizing or concern about her lack of prior knowledge since it is entirely possible to study a religion without endorsing a faith. She and others were open to deepening their knowledge of Jewish culture and history beyond the catastrophe that swept over European Jews in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some Jewish students enriched their Jewish knowledge and acquired tools for further exploration through courses offered at WCU, a personal journey epitomized by Susan's path from presumptive Social Studies certification candidate to Jewish educator. Neither program specifically solicits enrollment of Jewish students.

The HGS program has a higher profile and larger enrollment than the Jewish American concentration of the Ethnic Studies minor. Matt prized his experience with HGS: "The faculty was amazing. It's a difficult content to work with on a daily basis, and it was good to be in a situation with people who understood that and could share academically, personally, professionally" (Interview, June 2014). Sara claimed her participation in the Field Studies trip to Europe was "like a dream come true. I never thought I'd have an opportunity like that" (Interview, May 2014). Again, given broad underlying interest in HGS as a subject, many more potential participants could be enrolled if they could find some justification.

### Students

Asked to describe the purpose of the programs, students of HGS described a sense of responsibility to victims of genocides, especially of the Shoah. "Eventually everyone who lived through it will be gone, so I want to be a voice for them when they're no longer here, and I hope I can teach someone else to speak up when I'm no longer here" (Sara, Interview, May 2014).

Their devotion to continuity of memory unified HGS students and faculty. In the past few years, HGS students have volunteered with survivors from Rwanda, undertaken the Warsaw Torah project resulting in the rescue of a European Torah fragment, organized Yom Hashoah services, narrated documentaries, and more. Students at WCU, Jewish and not, have wide-ranging, if not deep, opportunities to learn about many facets of Jewish civilization. Only a single student, Susan, indicated personal or program agendas which included the deepening of Jewish religious identity as a goal of her education.

Undergraduate students participated in the Jewish American concentration of Ethnic Studies and in the HGS minor. Because both programs consist of 18-credit minors out of total graduation requirements of at least 120 credits, students in the minors necessarily devoted only a fraction of their academic attention to Jewish civilization coursework. Consequently, while students and faculty attested to the rigor of the classes, both groups appeared to have limited expectations regarding students' persistence in the overarching field of Jewish Studies. That shared presumption has implications including the tacit diminishment of the programs' relevance to students' futures. Here again, the context may frame the outcome: students at a this four-year, public institution consistently expressed financial and time constraints to me, and this practical mindset constrained their capacity to envision value in the study of humanities, such as Jewish Studies.

Graduate students in HGS did imagine themselves in potential employment in various capacities related to Holocaust Studies, such as in museums, memorials, education, or social justice work of some kind. Unlike their undergraduate counterparts, those students also specifically disclosed a need to participate in a community of like-minded students and scholars;

they supported each other in the development of skills and vigilance to become shields of righteousness, protectors of memory.

### Faculty

WCU does not have Jewish Studies, so faculty teaching courses that include Jewish content are always housed in departments which have contractual primacy on faculty time and course offerings. For example, despite Dr. Jonathan Friedman's status as Director of the HGS program, and as a widely respected scholar in the field of Holocaust Studies, he must comply with course allocation decisions made by the chair of the History department. Consequently, Friedman is not teaching *The Holocaust* this spring even though it has filled every semester he has taught it in the past.

To be fair, most of the faculty who teach classes tied to HGS or to the Jewish American concentration conceive of themselves as scholars within their disciplines rather than within any particular field of Jewish knowledge. Furthermore, participation in interdisciplinary programs and courses generates an additional, potentially burdensome, need for clarity when faculty apply for tenure and promotion because their evaluating colleagues must be taught the value of work that breaches disciplinary silos. Nevertheless, interdisciplinary programs, with clear conceptual bridges, are among the most exciting to work within, and new courses continue to be approved through the arduous CAPC process. The Jewish civilization courses at WCU, listed in Appendix A, would be an acceptable component of many Jewish Studies programs.

Faculty must also accommodate students' need for clear, tangible value in courses and programs. If courses fulfill general education and graduation requirements, that work is uncomplicated. Unfortunately, recent and upcoming changes to WCU's general education requirements mean that courses like *Jewish American Literature* and *The Holocaust* no longer fulfill that category unless faculty engage in the complex approval process, which they can only

do if given time and support by their respective departments. Some professors might be motivated to accomplish the multi-step course-approval process because of personal interest in a subject, but one consequence of such ‘ownership’ of a course is that the class ‘dies’ when its instructor retires, as was the case with *The Bible in History* upon the retirement of Dr. Claude Foster. While not unusual in academia, tying courses to personalities does not permit the consistency or longevity required of substantive programs. Without the connection to general education, even Jewish students must be ‘sold’ the value classes about Jewish culture and civilization, and faculty, by their nature often lofty intellectuals, need marketing skills to sell the University community on the value of these programs.

#### **Administration**

Quite a few of the faculty and students who participated in this study assumed administrative discontent with the programs because of unrelenting pressure to drive up enrollments. As with the parable of Hillel and Shammai, their assumptions reflect differing methodologies and priorities, but not dissimilar overarching goals. Chairs of departments and Dr. Linda Lamwers, the Provost, (Interview, Sept. 2014) expressed unreserved support for the HGS program. However, chairs and the Provost must also comply with the union agreement in the hiring of temporary faculty and in the allocation of faculty time; other legal considerations also affect administrative perceptions of program success.

The Pennsylvania legislature demands detailed accounting of resource rationing, and WCU provides that information in the primarily quantitative format commonly requested: the number of student credit hours per faculty. By that simple metric, low enrollments equal expensive programs which then must justify themselves. As Friedman pointed out, the constant pressure to produce more is not personal. But students who have embraced HGS or the Jewish American concentration, and some of their faculty, sometimes feel threatened, and

administration is cast as out of touch, with Shammai-like hostile rigidity. Dr. Wayne Hanley, the chair of History, would resort to the absorption of HGS by the History department, but participating faculty, including the HGS Director, Friedman, have more imaginative, flexible ideas about resolving enrollment and scheduling problems. In the end, all stakeholders will need to collaborate to maintain the integrity and longevity of HGS and the Jewish American concentration of Ethnic Studies, but since all have the same goal – quality programs inhabited by enthusiastic students – cooperation should certainly be possible.

Professionals working in Jewish education routinely evaluate ideas and programs through a filter of continuing Jewish identification and cultural health, a value-concept of *Klal Yisrael*, epitomized by the question, “Is it good for the Jewish people?” The Jewish American concentration in Ethnic Studies and the Holocaust and Genocide programs at WCU are good for the Jewish people. All programs and classes at WCU have to fulfill the core mission of the University, with its guarantee of a rigorous, liberal-arts education designed to equip students to succeed in future academic and employment goals. WCU diversity goals are a significant subset of its core mission, and courses including information about Jews and Judaism help address this purpose. In addition to institutional goals, the programs can supplement the self-knowledge of Jewish students or cultivate allies through greater understanding among non-Jews, so the not-quite Jewish Studies programs at WCU benefit all involved.

## CONCLUSIONS

At WCU, I meet Jewish students who dwell in the shadows of their earlier Jewish education experiences and who resist engaging in overtly religious behaviors, or even activities they perceive as gateways to religiosity, such as joining Hillel. These students epitomize the decades of declining enrollments and increasing non-participation in formal Jewish education described by Jonathan Woocher (Sept. 2012, p. 191-192). Woocher asks how we can teach the meaning and value of being Jewish in such a way that we foster a thirst for more (p. 190) in contrast to the “Judaism of Shabbat and holidays, life-cycle events, and time spent in synagogue . . . the largely futile effort to teach Hebrew, which . . . reinforced the message that Jewish learning was ‘other,’ not connected to one’s daily life in any meaningful way” (p. 200). Much of early Jewish education is costly, but one wonders, though, whether the enduring educational value is worth the ticket price. Fortunately, there are other entryways to Jewish knowledge besides the supplemental schools which many WCU students attended until they contrived a post bar/bat mitzvah escape. What happens to the Jewish identification and behaviors of our young people when they go to college?

The majority of American Jewish youth attend post-secondary education of some sort, and most of those attend secular four-year colleges and universities. Earlier Jewish education, from early childhood through part-time Hebrew schools in elementary and secondary to day schools, of widely varying quality frequently accompanies those students and shapes their willingness to engage in further Jewish learning. Undoubtedly, the non-sectarian education found in US public colleges does not generally include increasing Jewish students’ identification with Judaism as a curricular goal. Nevertheless, academic exposure to Jewish civilization through

courses which meet degree requirements can be a tantalizing taste of a deep cultural buffet. Jewish learning and Jewish identity need not require religiosity (Steinlauf, Jan. 2015, revision comments). In addition, possibly incorporating Jewish content courses into degree plans enables students to satisfy graduation requirements, learn about their own culture and religion, and normalize that learning within the academic context. At WCU, students wishing to explore their Jewish heritages in a safe, if small, setting have multiple academic options and, perhaps even fewer, non-academic options.

As undergraduates, students at WCU can minor in the Jewish American concentration within Ethnic Studies and in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Both minors include several course options which focus on Jewish civilization in some form, such as history, literature, and philosophy. A student choosing with deliberation could independently build a quasi-Jewish Studies minor. In fact, combining both minors could enable a student in WCU's Liberal Studies, Arts and Sciences program to graduate with something like a Jewish Studies major, including four semesters of Biblical Hebrew. However, for several reasons WCU is not an institution which attracts students with overt interests in Jewish learning. As a regional, comprehensive, public university, WCU offers a wide range of quality programs, and Ethnic Studies and HGS certainly provide deep, skill-based, thought-provoking liberal arts education of the sort valued by employers. What WCU does not do is appeal to Jewish students looking for Jewish academic exposure in its secular setting, but it could.

### **About Ethnic Studies: Jewish American Concentration**

The Jewish American concentration within Ethnic Studies has been available for nearly 40 years, and during that time the diversity rationale which was the impetus for its creation has

given way to assumptions of inclusion because most American Jews are considered by many to be completely acculturated into the overarching culture of the US. In other words, Jews are no longer perceived as minorities or as diverse by many members of WCU and the broader American community. However, WCU's general student body could certainly benefit from increased exposure to the history and contributions of Jews and Judaism. WCU's mostly secular Jewish students, however, can potentially gain so much more. None of the Jewish students I met at WCU articulated a need to disassociate from his/her Jewish identity; however, almost all were detached from religious expressions of Judaism. Despite widespread objections to the 2013 Pew Research Center Survey of US Jews, scholars have been describing this population for years. WCU's Jewish students perfectly fit the profile described by Chaim Waxman (2010):

Young American Jews are increasingly less likely to distinguish between the Jewish and American components of their identity. For these Jews, the two are seen as inseparable parts of the American Jewish identity package in which the boundaries between Jewish religious beliefs and values and American national beliefs and values have disappeared. The two belief systems, the religious and the national, have synthesized into an inseparable whole, with American Jews assuming that many liberal American values are actually Jewish values and, indeed, the most essential ones. The declining group ties of contemporary American Jews is [sic] manifest in the religious as well as the broader Jewish communal sphere. Like many of their non-Jewish countrymen, young American Jews increasingly shun organized public religion and are now turned inward. . . . These are the patterns of the broad spectrum of America's Jews and they are especially pronounced among the young, unaffiliated, non-traditional (p. 229).

Rather than being completely assimilated, most young Jews at WCU are contentedly disengaged, satisfied with their marginal or cultural identifications. Since they are content with the status quo, Jewish education professionals must take care to avoid judgment or disdain for their choices; Jewish education is for all Jews. Given their spiritual detachment and occasionally undistinguished earlier Jewish education, are there inroads, paths to Identity, and to Peoplehood,

for these Jewish students? The central goal for Jewish educators of these types of courses in a secular higher education setting is simply an increase in Jewish knowledge which might engender a desire for more.

WCU's Jewish American concentration within Ethnic Studies cannot, of course, bridge the chasm of Jewish engagement for unaffiliated students. That is not its purpose. Faculty and students in the program come from a variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds, but the regularizing of information about Jews within the academic context does sometimes result in the outcome of stirring a slumbering curiosity and sparking the tinder of latent Jewish yearning. Susan reveled in her increased knowledge of Jews and independently reconnected with Judaism. While that outcome might seem ideal to Jewish educators concerned about increasingly tentative connections of American Jews to their religion and culture, it cannot be the goal of the concentration for students at WCU. In the environment of WCU, Shur's focus on demonstrating the enduring and continuing value of Jews and Judaism should continue to be the epistemological foundation of the concentration. In other words, courses in the concentration should be fundamentally based on cultivating knowledge about the worth and contributions of Jews, about the Jewish contributions to American life, about Jewish experiences and viewpoints. This approach, already in place among WCU faculty in the program, yields the most desirable outcome for all participants, Jewish and not. In addition, it confers academic legitimacy while showing Jewish students a portal to further knowledge.

For example, HIS440, American Jewish History should be a required course for both the Ethnic Studies minor concentration and for a Jewish Studies minor. The course has the virtue of inclusion of multiple time periods, political and religious movements, and thought histories. Students would no longer be required to create their own integration of this interdisciplinary field

in the absence of a clear demonstration of how that can be accomplished. Because students currently must construct a unifying concept of the field for themselves, it is apparent that WCU faculty and/or administrators assume either that students will be successful at that endeavor or that it does not matter. The absence of a keystone course, combined with the cobbled-together impression engendered by out-of-date information remaining on websites, produces an impression that the Ethnic Studies minors are tangential to the interests and goals of WCU. In other words, if it really mattered, we would get it right. Requiring Friedman's American Jewish History course for the Jewish American concentration would be an excellent first step, but then WCU would have to commit to offering the class often enough to be useful to program students. The current Jewish American concentration has real potential: ideally, material including available course options would be updated to reflect what can and cannot be scheduled. Once updated, faculty might consider using Freeman Witthoft's guerilla enrollment technique to encourage greater participation in the minor, which pairs well with many majors.

The greatest risk for the program right now comes from WCU's changing general education structure. Students might once have taken courses because they combined interest and program completion requirements, but general education distributive requirement options have narrowed substantially. An additional risk is the absence of faculty in place to continue offering courses listed as minor options, especially when current professors retire. Dr. Foster's retirement eliminated The Bible in History as an elective option, and no faculty member has taught the course in nearly a decade. The tiny size of the minor and the limited number of engaged professors gives the impression of thinness and fragility. In combination with continuing administrative pressure to demonstrate quantitative value with robust enrollment, the minor appears to be at risk even though all courses can meet major and elective requirements for many

students, resulting in the capacity to retain the availability of the minor at no additional cost to WCU.

**Recommendations: Ethnic Studies Jewish American Concentration**

WCU would lose something of value if the Ethnic Studies minors were to fade into obscurity. Rather than focus on weaknesses in the program, with little additional investment, WCU could craft a robust, interdisciplinary Jewish Studies (JS) minor. As the name implies JS would study Jewish civilization, not only Jewish American experiences. A JS minor would have the virtue of clarity of purpose and could be formed almost entirely with existing courses and faculty. JS would complement WCU’s commitment to diversity and potentially attract more Jewish students, which a number of institutions have worked deliberately to do over the past decade. Additionally, a JS minor encourages disciplinary coherence by potentially including the totality of Jewish experience, which neither HGS nor the Jewish American focus provides. JS avoids the content-area fragmentation of those narrower subjects.

Dr. Jonathan Friedman proposed a JS program to begin in 2010 (Interview, Aug. 2014), but for unknown reasons, the proposal never made it past the initial committee review. In any case, it never reached the Provost’s desk, and Dr. Linda Lamwers indicated she would certainly have evaluated the proposal if she had seen it (Interview, Sept. 2014). Students in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education have no access to JS programs although there are programs regionally at Gratz College, University of Pennsylvania, and Temple University (Friedman, 2008). Simply put, many of the regional institutions which offer JS cost considerably more than WCU; consequently, students at WCU might be deprived of JS based on their socioeconomic status and capacity to pay tuition.

At the time, Friedman wrote “The only two courses dealing with Jewish history in the minor are HIS 349, Jew in History, and HIS 332, The Holocaust. The fact that Jewish Studies is filtered through a prism of destruction is problematic at best” (2008). He equated JS with minors focused on other specific cultures, such as Latin American Studies and African American Studies (2008), but his complaint that Jewish American studies did not even have a course devoted specifically to that subject has since been addressed with a class he himself developed and taught. In addition, Friedman noted a JS minor would respond to specific needs of the community and interests of the students (2008). Chester County Jewish communities have grown tremendously in the past two decades, for example, Keshet Israel had 90 families when I was a child and has over 300 now. WCU provides local, affordable access to potential Jewish learning. To gauge student interest, Friedman and his co-author, Dr. Marita Boes, surveyed students in the History Department and discovered an interest and willingness to commit to a minor focusing on a “living civilization” (Proposal, 2008).

Echoing Shur, Friedman wrote, “By addressing the needs of a Chester County minority which has experienced a significant degree of discrimination in the past [nationally and globally], a Jewish Studies minor will help fulfill the University’s mission to effect a more educated and cosmopolitan citizenry” (Proposal, with Boes, 2008). Importantly, JS is the study of a people, not of a religion. Thus, it would have a clarity of purpose which improves upon the currently ambiguous Jewish American concentration. A student with a JS minor would be equipped to follow up with a graduate degree in Jewish history and potential “careers in academia or public history” (2008). Could the minor deepen the engagement of Jewish students with their religion? Perhaps, but that is not its purpose. Further research is needed to determine the long-term impact of academic Jewish studies on Jewish identity and on non-Jewish advocacy

and alliances on behalf of Jews, especially among students in public institutions. However, those do not make up the primary rationale for offering academic Jewish civilization courses. WCU must fully embrace the diversity it endorses and acknowledge the unique experiences of this minority group with a substantial but often anonymous regional presence. The University already possesses the tools in place to offer JS to students who might otherwise not be able to afford exposure to academically meaningful and rigorous programs on the subject.

### **Holocaust and Genocide Programs: Conclusions**

Holocaust and Genocide Studies at WCU emerged organically, driven by faculty and student concern. The program is healthier than its small size indicates because many more students enroll in the courses than matriculate specifically in the program. Indulging curiosity or driven by compulsion to understand, many WCU students take more than one of the HGS courses as electives even if they cannot fit the minor or Master's into their academic plans. In reality, the classes are overfull every single semester they are offered, so program size cannot be the only effective measure of its success. Instead, consideration must be given to the overarching goal of the program: to ensure the truth is known about the Shoah and other genocides, to refute those who would deny the horror, and to prevent future genocides. By those measures alone, the programs have successfully educated hundreds of students, many of whom are additionally equipped to validate history and further the mission of the program.

WCU currently evaluates programs using more business-like metrics, such as number of degree-seeking students in the programs, number of graduates, grant dollars awarded, and other quantifiable measures. HGS is certainly not the only program to experience this type of scrutiny; in fact, it has become the operating perspective of state-funded higher education. By those

measures, HGS is small and in danger of having its value minimized or vanishing altogether. This is even more true since the program is interdisciplinary and straddles departments, with few willing to commit additional, hard-won resources. Dr. Hanley, Chair of the History Department, described the administrative burden of providing one specific Holocaust course and one potential HGS elective every semester, noting that the requirement frustrated “many of our traditional History graduate students because they did not necessarily come here to get a degree in Holocaust-Genocide” (Interview, June 2014). In other words, the History Department has too few resources to satisfy all its constituents. In addition, Friedman’s isolation, work load, and necessary scholarship and service further curtail potential program growth. Therefore, administrative pressure to increase enrollment in the HGS program is both futile and disingenuous without additional institutional support. Considering that students are already unable to enroll in oversubscribed classes and the infrequency of course offerings because of severely circumscribed faculty time, additional faculty hires would be the least and first step toward increasing enrollments. The program has a great reputation, a committed student body, and excellent faculty, so potential growth already has a solid foundation.

HGS lives in the interplay between student enrollment and expectations, faculty teaching and scholarship duties, departmental obligations, administrative resource allocation and attentiveness to political winds, and community desires for enrichment and acknowledgement. It is a difficult, but also rewarding, place to exist. The great variety of stakeholders and the emotionally fraught content wrestle to establish their own priorities, but often, there is no real conflict between contexts. Everyone involved embraces the value of HGS. Tension emerges from students’ preference for more course options, which clashes with faculty already stretched thin and departments with no more to give. Those groups experience external pressure when

broad administrative goals call for enrollment increases in programs that may be small, but which host overlarge courses. It is past time for all involved to recognize the wonderful, successful program already in place.

What HGS does not provide is Jewish education. However, that was never its goal or purpose. It does address a critical, determinative period in Jewish history, so students and community members develop a fuller understanding of Jewish experiences in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Many HGS courses can certainly hold a place in any Jewish Studies minor offered by WCU, but if another program were to make enrollment demands on HGS, more course sections would have to be offered. Additionally, HGS does address Dr. Shur's lifelong concern regarding the legitimacy of Jewish history and rights, and it does prepare students, not only those in the minor or Master's but also those taking a course or two, to confront issues of social justice, recognize discrimination, and refute denial.

### **Recommendations: Holocaust and Genocide Studies**

Students in the HGS Master's raise legitimate concerns about the over-enrollment of courses and about the absence of specific career preparation. In the current academic and administrative environment of WCU, perhaps little can be done regarding the number of students in classes and the number of classes which can be offered. However, it should certainly be possible to provide students with a variety of applied experiences if HGS cultivates direct connections to employers and graduate programs for its Master's graduates. Internships can be cultivated at museums, libraries, and other institutions.

First, students would like to acquire practical skills beyond the museum design projects they have to do in some of Friedman's courses. In addition, students spoke about the Holocaust

Conference hosted by Millersville University, and several students noted that “we could do something like that.” The burden of organizing such a conference could lie primarily with second-year students in the HGS Master’s program. Having students accomplish the bulk of the organizational and outreach work associated with housing a conference affords WCU the prestige of hosting, allows the students to gain valuable experience, enhances the service and scholarship of WCU faculty, and continues the essential work of alerting the world to the horror of the Holocaust and other genocides. The presentations and scholars currently scheduled and offered in the past are excellent, but WCU can collaborate naturally with Gratz College and the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey to host a regional conference. Let students begin the exploratory process.

Finally, WCU must recognize that overfull classes represent a missed opportunity. Faculty are encouraged to develop hybrid and online classes, but producing polished, effective courses requires resources not currently available. To offer online HGS program options WCU must hire additional faculty. Development of online HGS courses should be a priority, and successful models, such as Gratz College’s, exist. Like Gratz, WCU could offer the bulk of HGS online and require students to be in residence for at least one course per year, often a summer class. A number of HGS Master’s students came from the mid-west and southwest, so unknown potential exists in those regions which have a complete absence of graduate HGS-specific opportunities. Since the expense associated with uprooting one’s life to move to West Chester may inhibit potential students, WCU can remove those barriers with an online program option. Again, HGS online cannot possibly grow without the commitment of additional resources from the University since current faculty simply do not have the time to undertake large new projects.

WCU has small programs of great value in its Jewish American focus within Ethnic Studies and in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Perceptions of the programs often depend on the contextual position of the observer, but no one disputes their worth and scholarship. Jewish students at WCU, often secular or marginally affiliated, sometimes take academic opportunities to learn more about their own history and people. In this, they are no different from many other minority groups seeking to fill in gaps and bask in the validation of academic focus on their collective experiences. Thus, the programs are worth the additional resources required to help them grow.

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## Appendices

### APPENDIX A: CATALOG ARCHIVE

The total list of available catalogs can be found online at the following website:  
<http://subjectguides.wcupa.edu/content.php?pid=84315&sid=3111850>

West Chester University was established in 1871 when the West Chester Normal School “by special Act of the Legislature, succeeds to the property and franchises of the West Chester Academy, founded in 1812” (West Chester Normal School, 1871, p. 7). The 1871 Circular describes a curriculum intended to produce graduates prepared to teach in “Common or Classical schools, or to enter the first Colleges and Scientific Schools in the land” (p. 8). The four original departments were Preparatory, Elementary, Scientific, and Classical and the course of study took two or four years, determined by the departments in which students enrolled (p. 8). The next available Circular, 1873, lists the Course of Studies and the Schedule of Courses (p. 13 – 15), but since electives were not offered, students apparently took what they were told to take when they were told to take it. By 1878, students could substitute Latin, Greek, French, or German for specific math or science courses. While Latin was required for students since the founding of the Normal School and Greek was also taught, Hebrew was not offered despite its comparable status as a classical language. All students were required to attend chapel daily and church weekly. By 1923, the school ceased the quaint practice of listing enrolled students’ names and hometowns in the catalog.

The first courses with potential for inclusion into something like a Jewish Studies program did not appear until 1956, when History of the Middle East and India was offered. The course, HIS323, was renamed in 1959, but the description is identical to the earlier class, so we may posit the change accompanied departmental restructuring reflected by subheadings including History and Social Science. In 1960, an addendum attached to the course description indicates it will be offered fall semester of even

years, which suggests a need to manage low enrollment, but the frequency doubled in 1966 when the class listed as being offered simply in fall semester.

The course description changed dramatically and focused more narrowly in 1965: “A study of the history of the major Middle Eastern countries since 1900. At the beginning of the course some emphasis will be placed on the geographical, social, economic, and religious factors affecting the recent history of the area. Special emphasis is placed on Middle East problems which affect the international relations of the world” (1965 Catalog, p.256). For the first time, the course lists prerequisites, and also for the first time, Philosophy emerged from the chrysalis of serving education students to form its own department.

The special interest surge of the 1960s and 1970s also fertilized West Chester State College, but some of those courses were short-lived. North Africa and the Middle East was a Geography course which bloomed in 1972 and which never appeared again. Departmental reorganization may have motivated other shifts: the History of Hebrew Thought, offered for the first time in 1970, was removed by the Philosophy department in 1980 along with the History of Islamic Thought. The Philosophy faculty may have rationalized that Comparative Religion would cover the basics. The chart below does not indicate when courses are no longer offered, in part because mothballed courses can be resurrected.

Courses are listed in order of appearance. They are relisted when designations or departments change, ex. Bible as Literature changed from Eng 349 to Lit 349 in 1966.

Year	Jewish Topic Course	Department
1871-1955	None	
1956	History of the Middle East and India	Social Studies
1959	History of the Middle East, His 323	Social Studies/ History
1963	Bible as Literature, Eng 349	English
1966	Philosophy of Religion, Phi 486 Bible as Literature, Lit 349	Philosophy English
1967	Racial and Cultural Minorities, SOC335	Sociology/ Anthropology
1968	History of Philosophy, Medieval, Phi 471 History of the Middle East, His 323	Philosophy History
1969	Minority Cultures in American Literature, Lit 340	English
1970	History of Hebrew Thought, Phi 463	Philosophy
1971	Sociology of Religion, Soc 345	Sociology/ Anthropology
1972	Near Eastern Art: Ancient Antiquity, Art 381 Religion in Culture, Phi 320 Comparative Religion, Phi 466 North Africa and the Middle East, Geo 304	Art Philosophy Philosophy Geography
1973	Missing	
1974	American Jewish Novel, Lit 343 God in Literature, Lit 392 Critical Language I – II, Lan 191-192 (Hebrew) Critical Language III – IV, Lan 193-194	English English Foreign Languages Foreign Languages
1975	Introduction to Religious Studies, Phi 120	Philosophy
1976	American Jewish Novel, Lit 304 Ethnic Studies certificate option Biblical Hebrew, Modern Hebrew, Lan191-194 (Additional Languages) Studies in the History and Culture of the Non-Western World (Middle East and Latin America), His131 The Jew in History, His 210 The Arab and the Jew, His 324 Introduction to Religious Studies, Phi 102	English Ethnic Studies Foreign Languages  History  History History Philosophy
1977	Ethnic Cultures Workshop, SSC 480 The Jew in History, HIS 145 History of the Middle East, HIS 309 The Arab and the Jew, HIS 310 Ideas of the Bible, PHI 349	Ethnic Studies History History History Philosophy

<b>Year</b>	<b>Jewish Topic Course</b>	<b>Department</b>
1978	Cultures of Ethnic Groups in America, ANT 120 Certificate of Jewish-American Studies in Ethnic Studies The Holocaust, HIS 146 The Bible in History, HIS 348 Comparative Religion, PHI 278	Anthropology/Sociology Ethnic Studies  History History Philosophy
1979	American Jewish Novel, LIT 304	English
1980	No new courses	
1981	Certificate of Holocaust Studies in Ethnic Studies Holocaust Workshop, SSC 385 Religions of the West I, PHI 202 Religions of the West II, PHI 203	History Ethnic Studies Philosophy Philosophy
1982	No new courses	
1983	Holocaust Studies Associate of Arts American Religions, HIS 474	Liberal Studies History
1984	No new courses	
1985	Minor in Holocaust Studies	Ethnic Studies
1986	Biblical Hebrew, Elementary and Intermediate HEB101 – 202 Race Relations, SWO225	Foreign Languages  Social Work
1987	No new courses	
1988	Middle Eastern Politics, PSC319	Political Science
1989	No new courses	
1990	Middle East to 1700, HIS411 Middle East Since 1600, HIS412	History History
1991- 1993	No new courses	
1994	The Holocaust, HIS332 The Bible in History, HIS348 The Jew in History, HIS349 A History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, HIS375	History History History History
1995	No new courses	
1996	The History of US Involvement in the Middle East, HIS380	History
1997- 2001	No new courses	
2002	The Politics of the Holocaust and Genocide, PSC330 Impact of the Holocaust on Literature and Film, GER413/ EGE403	Political Science Foreign Languages
2003- 2005	No new courses	
<b>Year</b>	<b>Jewish Topic Course</b>	<b>Department</b>
2006	Intercultural Communication	Communication Studies
2007	Ideas of the Old Testament, PHI 351	Philosophy

2008	Multicultural Psychology, PSY120 Outcasts in Early Modern Europe, HIS317	Psychology History
2009	No new courses	
2010	Jewish History, HIS440	History
2011	No new courses	
2012	American Jewish History, HIS440	History
2013		

**Appendix A References**

West Chester State College. (March, 1965) *Bulletin West Chester State College, West Chester, PA 93:* no. 1. West Chester, PA: The College.

West Chester State Normal School. (1871) *Circular of the West Chester State Normal School of the First District consisting of the counties of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery.* West Chester, PA: Republican Book, Card and Job Printer.

West Chester State Normal School. (1873) *Circular of the West Chester State Normal School of the First District consisting of the counties of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery.* West Chester, PA: Republican Book, Card and Job Printer.

West Chester State Normal School. (1878) *Catalogue of the West Chester State Normal School of the First District at West Chester, Chester Co. PA.* West Chester, PA: F.S. Herman, Steam-Power Book and Job Printer.

## **APPENDIX B: Interview Instrument**

### **Interview Instrument**

Intended for use with University faculty, former students, and West Chester community members, this set of interview questions is a starting place for exploration of Jewish Studies and the Holocaust and Genocide Studies program at West Chester University.

Participants were selected because they were known, or described by other sources, as being involved in Jewish Studies, Jewish programming of some kind, or Holocaust and Genocide Studies at WCU.

Interviews will be transcribed and analyzed for themes and connections; as a result, they will contribute to this qualitative case study by providing overlapping narrative and thick description. I am also looking for metaphors that encapsulate participants' perceptions, experiences, and hopes. Interviews will last approximately one hour.

One of the essential participants in creating the Holocaust and Genocide Studies program at WCU, Dr. Irene Shur, died in 2003. I knew her as a community member, a matriarch of the local Jewish community, and as a tremendously dynamic professor. I anticipate that many interview subjects will also discuss Dr. Shur and her vital contributions to Jewish Studies, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, and Jewish community life in the West Chester area.

Because this case describes an existing program, university, and community, participants are known and will be named in the research. To ensure their understanding of the potentially public nature of their contributions, the interviewer will describe the goals and purpose of the paper and obtain their consent in writing.

### **Interview Questions**

1. Describe how you became involved with West Chester University/ with Jewish programming in the community.
2. Have you participated in academic Jewish content courses or in Holocaust and Genocide courses?
  - a. Which ones?
  - b. In what way? (instructor, student, guest presenter, etc.)
  - c. What, or who, interested you or motivated you to participate?
  - d. Describe your experiences.
  - e. What is your overall impression?
  - f. What do you believe was/ is the primary purpose of the course/ program?
  - g. Are you satisfied with your experience or would you like to see course/ program changes?
    - i. If you'd like changes, what form should they take?
    - ii. Why those changes? In other words, what is your ideal vision for Jewish Studies at WCU?
3. Have you participated in other types of Jewish Studies or Holocaust and Genocide Studies programming/events?
  - a. Which ones?
  - b. In what way?
  - c. What, or who, interested you or motivated you to participate?

- d. Describe your experiences.
  - e. What was your overall impression?
  - f. Were you satisfied with the experiences, or would you have done things differently?
    - i. How?
4. What do you feel you learned or gained as a result of your participation in this class or program/event?
5. Reflecting on your experiences, what do they mean to you now?

**Appendix C: CONSENT FORM**



7605 Old York Road, Melrose Park, PA 19002

**Gratz College  
Consent to Participate in a Research Study - For Adult Participants only**

**Current date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Study to take place during the following term (put in the year):**  
**Academic Year: spring 2014 through fall 2014**

**Title of Study: Jewish Studies at West Chester University: Programs and Potentials**

**Principal Researcher:** Ann Lieberman Colgan

**Additional Researcher(s)** None

**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Michael Steinlauf

**Faculty Advisor's Email:** [msteinlauf@earthlink.net](mailto:msteinlauf@earthlink.net)

**Research Study Participant(s) Name(s) and Address:**

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**Research Study Participant(s) Phone Number:**

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**Research Study Participant(s) Email Address:**

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## **Information for Research Study Participants**

### **What are some general things you should know about research studies?**

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to join, you may withdraw your consent to participate, and you may decline to answer specific questions, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from participating in the research.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about participating in this research study.

You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask Ann Lieberman Colgan, or faculty members who may assist her, any questions you have about this study at any time.

### **What is the purpose of this study?**

- To craft a current and historic portrait of Jewish Studies and Holocaust and Genocide Studies at West Chester University.
- To understand the programs' goals and origins and the personnel who participated now and in the past.
- To evaluate the impact of the programs on the University and on the larger West Chester Jewish community.

### **Are there any reasons you should not be in this study?**

It is the intent of the researcher to name the participants who agree to be interviewed because of their known connection to the programs under review and/or to other essential participants. Many studies use pseudonyms, and you may be provided with one upon request, but doing so may diminish the value of your contribution.

If being named poses a risk to you, please say so. You may determine whether you would prefer not to participate or would like to be assigned a pseudonym. Your preferences will be completely respected.

### **How many people will take part in this study?**

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 15 people interviewed for this study.

### **How long will your part in this study last?**

If you decide to participate in this study, the interview will last approximately one hour.

### **What will happen if you take part in the study?**

You will be asked to do the following:

- Review and sign this consent form.
- Agree to have the interview recorded for accuracy and distillation of themes among interviews

- Participate in a one hour interview, answering questions frankly and as fully as possible.
- The interviewer may request clarifications later and would like you to be available for that purpose.
- You may request to review your contributions and to ask that specific statements be reframed or stricken.
- The interviews will be woven into research written and published by Ann Lieberman Colgan as her capstone/ dissertation for Gratz College's EdD program.

**What are the possible benefits from being in this study?**

The West Chester region and West Chester University have vibrant, though small, Jewish communities. This study will generate a portrait of a key component of those communities. Since you have been a participant in both the research and the broader community, you will have contributed to an increased understanding of the issues and persons involved. It is hoped that you will gain a more complete understanding of both the programs under study and of your own role in those.

**What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?**

Since it is the intent of the researcher to name the speakers and participants, potential risks to you include coping with some individuals who may disagree with your statements or with your perceptions of events or people. If you recall events and people as accurately as possible, this risk is minimized by virtue of your veracity.

**How will your privacy be protected?**

Your privacy and confidentiality will be protected in the following ways:

If you have requested a pseudonym, every effort will be made to keep research records private, but there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, Gratz College will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information.

This study involves video or audio recording, so to insure your privacy and confidentiality, check the line that best matches your choice:

- OK to record me during the study
- Not OK to record me during the study

**Will you receive anything for being in this study?**

You will not receive any monetary compensation for taking part in this study.

**What if you have questions about this study?**

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researcher listed on the first page of this form or her advisor.

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**Title of Study: Jewish Studies at West Chester University: Normal School to University Transitions to Inclusion**

**Principal Researcher(s):**  
**Participant's Agreement:**

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent