

FRANKELY SPEAKING



Jean & Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies • December 2014

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COVER PHOTO: "Chene Street" by Marian Krzywowski

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Exploring the Diversity of



The class poses in front of the Diego Rivera mural at the Detroit Institute of Arts. L to R: Kristen Anderson, Chris White, Deborah Dash Moore, Vishnu Venugopal, Marian Krzyzowski, Justin Rhee, Kelly Onickel, Brendan Rand, Emily Zussman, Grace Judge, Jordan Smith, Ben Schechter.

By focusing on a single area in Detroit, Chene Street, this course provided a lens into Detroit's complex racial, religious, and ethnic conflict, competition, and cooperation during the 20th century.

On a Tuesday afternoon at Mason Hall, you just might enter a classroom in time to see a video of Martha Reeves and the Vandellas singing "Dancing in the Streets"—and Deborah Dash Moore, director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, dancing along to the music.

Suffice it to say that "Detroit: Race, Religion, and Ethnicity in the 20th Century" is clearly not your average Judaic Studies course. Offered jointly last fall by the Frankel Center and the Department of History, it was taught by Dash Moore and Marian Krzyzowski, director of the Institute for Research on Labor, Employment, and the Economy. By focusing on a single area in Detroit, Chene Street, the course provided a lens into Detroit's complex racial, religious, and ethnic conflict, competition, and cooperation during the 20th century.

"What's exciting is the entire experiential learning aspect of the course," said Krzyzowski. "The

trips into Detroit, particularly into less-known and -visited neighborhoods; the interaction between the students and a wide range—ethnically, racially, and religiously—of Detroiters who directly experienced and contributed to the history of the city; and the access we provide to the city's culture and music, that allows for a more intimate and personal experience of Detroit."

The day that "Dancing in the Streets" was playing was one such example. The class was discussing how Motown affected the cultural politics of Detroit as well as the world's image of America, and the music introduced students to the Motown sound. On another day, students were treated to guest speaker Tommy Stephens, owner of the Raven Lounge, Michigan's oldest blues bar.

"For many of the students, this is their first real engagement with the city and its history," Krzyzowski

noted. In addition to reading diverse texts in the history and politics of Detroit, and seeing films, "we want to give students a sense of what it felt like to live in the city during this time period."

The course itself is a living lesson in diversity and cooperation: between the two departments who jointly offer it, between the two instructors who jointly teach it, and in the range of students who participate in it.

"I hope that the class contributes to the development of students' critical thinking skills to allow them to work with existing narratives of Detroit and assess them from their own personal and direct experience of the city," said Krzyzowski. "The hope is that they then will take away this experience and apply it to other situations and narratives that they confront in their lives." ■

Photos courtesy of Marian Krzyzowski



The class with Rev. Kenneth Davis of Detroit's New Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, the former site of B'nai David Synagogue.

From Our Students

"The use of archives, media, and visits to the city make it one of the most engaging classes I've ever taken!"

— Grace Judge, politics, philosophy, and economics junior

"I have felt a certain heartbreak about Detroit because of the decay of the city with all the burnt down and abandoned buildings, as well as the high poverty rate. I wanted to have a deeper understanding of how this city came to be."

— Jordan Smith, history minor

"I hope to gain a more holistic understanding of why and how Detroit has developed the way it has, as well as how the city can continue rising into a thriving city once again."

— Vishnu Venugopal, economics and history senior

"We have been able to access the city in many different ways through tours, trips to the DIA, and guest speakers. I really enjoy the diverse curriculum of the course."

— Emily Zussman, first-year MSW student in the Jewish Communal Leadership Program

Belin Lecturer to Speak on Detroit



On March 12, Lila Corwin Berman will deliver the 25th David W. Belin Lecture in American Jewish Affairs on "The Jewish Romance with the Modern City: Loving, Leaving, and Reforming." Corwin Berman is associate professor of history at Temple University, as well as the Murray Friedman Chair of American Jewish History and director of the Feinstein Center for American Jewish History.

"I'd like people to puzzle with me over the entanglement of 20th-century American Jewish life with urbanism, on one hand, and de-urbanization—or suburbanization—on the other," she said. "Detroit's history provides a rich and complicated view into these two impulses: loving the city and leaving it. In my research, I've explored how Jews and Jewish institutions made sense of their move away from Detroit within a liberal framework. I'll draw our attention to narratives of return to the city and ask in what ways these stories of Detroit rising or being revitalized reflect liberal sensibilities, and in what ways they are evidence of a very different political and economic approach to urban life characterized by increasing privatization." ■

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Save the Date!

- **February 5, 12, 19, and 26:** Frankel Institute Detroit lecture series on **Jews and Empires**
7 pm at the Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit, 6600 W. Maple Rd., West Bloomfield.
- **February 9:** Frankel Institute Symposium on **“Jews and the Roman Empire: Beyond Resistance/ Accommodation Paradigm”**
2–6 pm at Kelsey Museum, Newberry Building, Room 125.
- **February 17:** Author Alan Rosen will speak on **“Killing Time, Saving Time: Calendars and the Holocaust”**
4 pm at 202 S. Thayer St., Room 2022.

For more information about our events, visit www.lsa.umich.edu/judaic or like us on Facebook (UM Judaic Studies)

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