



# SCHUSTERMAN CENTER *for* JUDAIC *and* ISRAEL STUDIES *The* UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

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## Celebrating Noam Stillman: Founding Director of Judaic and Israel Studies Program Retires

*The following remarks were delivered by Robert Griswold, former Chair of the History Department (1997-2013), at Noam's retirement party on April 28th. Other speakers included Lynn Schusterman, Chair of the Schusterman Family Foundation, and OU President David Boren.*

I am delighted and honored to offer some comments about Noam, with whom I worked closely. It was my great pleasure to watch the Judaic Studies Program grow and prosper under Noam's guidance. As Chair, I also played a role in hiring the wonderful colleagues in Judaic and Israel Studies who have all brought so much to the History Department and to OU.

Noam joined the OU faculty in 1995 as the Schusterman/Josey Chair of Judaic History and served as the Director of the Schusterman Center for Judaic and Israel Studies. He is an internationally recognized authority on the history and culture of the Islamic world and Sephardi and Oriental Jewry. Stillman received his doctorate in Oriental Studies from the University of Pennsylvania and was a post-doctoral fellow at the Jewish Theological Seminary. He is the author of seven books and has published an astonishing number of articles in several languages. He is currently writing a book on the Jews of North Africa for the University of California Press and is the executive editor of Brill's five-volume *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*. He was the editor of the *AJS Review*, the premier journal of the Association for Jewish Studies, for ten years.

I promise not to read his CV — it is long and includes articles in at least five

different languages — but I can assure you that it bears that mark of an astonishingly productive scholar and teacher. There are the awards for his scholarship, the grants for research in Morocco, the National Endowment for the Humanities grant, fellowships from the American Philosophical Society, funding from Hebrew University and from Tel-Aviv University, grants from the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilization in Paris. The list goes on and on. There is the dedicated administrative work, work that takes precious time from teaching and scholarship but work that also makes places like OU function. At the top of this list is his two-decades-long commitment to building the OU Judaic Studies Program from scratch.

Noam's courses over the years — and, I might add, the courses he and his colleagues in Judaic Studies have offered over the years — have deeply enriched the curriculum of the University of Oklahoma. The list of what he has taught is incredibly impressive, but what I want



*Professor Noam Stillman*

you to think about as I read a few examples, is the impact these courses have on our students, many, perhaps most, of whom have little prior knowledge of the world Noam explores. With Professor Stillman, a student from Ardmore, Tulsa, Tuttle, Ponca City, or Oklahoma City can explore "Christians and Jews under Islam," "Israeli Culture through Film," "Jewish Travelers and Adventures," "Spain under Islam," and "Jerusalem: Holy and Contested." We all believe that one purpose of a university is to broaden our students' understanding of the world, and I submit that Noam has done more than his fair share to make this hope a reality.

## Retirement Party Photos



**Professor Rob Griswold**



**President David L. Boren**



**Lynn Schusterman**



**Dinah and Noam Stillman**



**Noam with Judaic Studies' Graduate students**



**OCU President Robert Henry,  
President Boren, Noam**



**Noam, Professors Charles Kimball, Shmuel Shepkaru,  
Alan Levenson, Michael Alexander, Robb Young**



## Professor Alan Levenson Named as New Director

Professor Alan Levenson, incoming Director of the Schusterman Center for Judaic and Israel Studies writes:

*"I am thrilled to continue the tradition of fostering Jewish studies among the students at the University of Oklahoma. The heart of any program is its academic faculty. Ours is extraordinary. It is also substantial – thanks principally to the support of the University and the Schusterman Family Foundation. We can claim to be the largest and best Judaic and Israel Studies program without a major Jewish metropolis in its home state. We have seven core faculty, fifteen associated faculty who contribute greatly to our program, highly engaged graduate students and many undergraduates of all backgrounds in our classes. I look forward to continuing support of the faculty's work, our students' learning, and the OUs community's enjoyment. In addition to the programs you've come to appreciate, I expect more cultural offerings, biennial symposia, and continued collaboration with programs at OU, the greater Oklahoma City community, the other Schusterman Centers in the United States (we are one of only three), and universities abroad, especially in Israel.*

*If we haven't met yet, please say hello. And if you'd like to share your ideas, please contact me at [alevenson@ou.edu](mailto:alevenson@ou.edu)."*

Levenson edited a special issue of *Shofar* 32:4 (Summer 2014): *New Approaches to Teaching Jewish Studies*, to which he also contributed an entry. He published a review essay of *City of Promises: A History of the Jews of New York* (3 vols.); "Anti-Apostasy Rhetoric in Imperial Germany: Three Case Studies," in *Konversion in Räumen jüdischer Geschichte*, eds. Przybiski and Schapkow (Wiesbaden: Reichert Publishers, 2014): 123-134; and "Orthodox Judaism" for the *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Religious Practices* (Thomas Riggs, 2014): 588-597. He served as chair/commentator at the annual Association of Jewish Studies.



*Alan Levenson*

Levenson lectured on Bible translation at the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley and at the University of Tennessee. He was named Section Editor for *Wiley Compass*, an on-line religion journal. Levenson's forthcoming book, *Joseph: Portraits Through the Ages* (Jewish Publication Society), will be published in 2016. This book stages a dialogue among the text of Joseph in Genesis 37-50, traditional rabbinic commentary and modern scholarship. This coming year, he will be presenting at the German Studies Association, Jewish Studies Association and The Jewish Museum of New York.

He will be a keynote speaker at a conference "Biblical Studies and Jewish Studies" at Florida Atlantic University.

### Congratulations to Scholarship Winners for 2015-16

The **Rosalyn W. Price Memorial Scholarship** of \$500 was awarded to **Heath Rosenberger** who is pursuing a dual bachelor of arts degree in Economics and International Studies, with a minor in Hebrew. He is active in the OU Hillel.

The **Zarrow Family Scholarships** of \$3,000 each were awarded to **Tryce Hyman** and **Leah Pace**. Hyman is working toward a dual master's degree in Middle Eastern Studies and in History with a focus in Judaic and Israel Studies. Pace is working toward a master's degree in History with a focus in Judaic and Israel Studies.

The **Esther Rose Shnier Scholarships** of \$3,000 each were awarded to **Sylvienne Staines** and **Alex Brodsky**. Staines is a senior majoring in International Security with minors in Hebrew and Arabic. Brodsky is a junior working toward a bachelor of arts degree in Psychology with a minor in Hebrew. He is active in the OU Hillel.

The **Schusterman Study in Israel Scholarships** of \$5,000 each were awarded to **Christian Allen**, **Rebecca Eden**, **Sarah Ex**, **Matthew Merideth** and **Ciara Ray**, all of whom went on the Jezreel Valley Dig featured on page 10.

**Mariel Bednarek**, **Dylan Karpel**, **Hannah Kindle**, **Melodie Lance**, **Kaitlynn Maddox** and **Jiyoun Yoo** also received \$5,000 each to study at the Hebrew University during the summer. **Rachel Hernandez** received \$15,000 to study at Hebrew University during the summer and fall of 2015. **Jesse Weinberg** received \$15,000 to study at Hebrew University during summer 2015 and spring 2016.

## New Schusterman Professor of Jewish Intellectual and Religious History



*Shmuel Shepkaru*

Shmuel Shepkaru has recently been named the new Schusterman Professor of Jewish Intellectual and Religious History. He needs little introduction to the OU community, as he has been with the University of Oklahoma since 1997, shortly after the establishment of the Judaic Studies Program. "It has been a privilege to join an embryonic program and be part of its growth and meteoric success," Shepkaru says. Before coming to Oklahoma, he taught at Binghamton University while completing his doctorate from NYU.

Shepkaru has published and taught on Jewish and Christian martyrdom, the history of heaven and hell, Jewish-Christian relations, Israeli cinema, and Jews and Arabs. He recently co-edited with colleagues Alan Levenson and Carsten Schapkow the festschrift *Darkhei Noam: The Jews of Arab Lands* in honor of the exiting director of the Schusterman Center, Noam Stillman. Shepkaru has been invited to present his research and teach at institutions in the United States, Canada, Europe and Israel.

He has also established a close and flourishing relationship between our Schusterman Center and the Judaic program at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany. "These are exciting times for the Judaic Studies

## Professor Rhona Seidelman Joins Our Faculty

Professor Rhona Seidelman joins the Department of History and the Schusterman Center of Judaic and Israel Studies as Assistant Professor and holder of the Schusterman Chair in Modern Israel History. Seidelman is a scholar of Israel, immigration, public health and medicine. Born and raised in Canada, after high school Seidelman moved to Israel, where she completed all of her university training. She holds a doctorate in history from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, a master of arts degree in Literature and a bachelor of arts degree in History (with minors in art history and literature), both from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Seidelman comes to Oklahoma from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, where she had been a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Program in Jewish Culture and Society. Previously she taught at Ben-Gurion University on the faculties of health sciences and humanities and in the medical school for international health, in collaboration with Columbia University Medical Center.

Her recently completed book manuscript, *Under Quarantine: The Story of Israel's Ellis Island (1949-1952)*, argues that a fuller understanding of the controversial period of Israel's founding can be reached through a medical history of Israel's central immigration processing camp, Shaar Ha'aliya.

In addition to her book manuscript, Seidelman has authored and co-authored several articles in the fields of

health and immigration in Israel. Her articles have been published in: *The American Journal of Public Health*, *The Journal of Israeli History*, *AJS Perspectives*, *Korot: The Israel Journal of the History of Medicine and Science*, *The Mount Sinai Journal of Medicine*, *Canadian Bulletin for the History of Medicine*, *Hagar* and *Ha'aretz*.

Seidelman's new research project deals with patients' experiences with tuberculosis in Palestine/Israel from 1882 until today. The book will analyze the ways that tuberculosis in Israel became a "social actor and mediator" in the age of Ebola and resurgent infectious disease, how it was a social actor and mediator at the beginning of the bacteriological era, and what this evolution tells us about Jewish, medical and 20th century histories.

Seidelman is thrilled to be at OU and is eager to meet colleagues, students and community members. She is particularly proud of becoming a part of a university culture where intellectual excellence merges so beautifully with creativity, diversity, and a commitment to accessible public education.

Seidelman moved here with her husband, Yair Pincu, their son Shalev, and their dog Benny. Yair (a native of Beer-Sheva, Israel) is an exercise physiologist who studies diabetes and metabolic disorders. Shalev (a native of Urbana, Illinois) is a fabulous 3-year-old who loves sports and cupcakes. Benny (also a native of Beer-Sheva, Israel) is a sweet mutt who loves Shalev and barking at squirrels.



*Rhona Seidelman*



## Cellar of the Holocaust



*Janet Ward*

### Beyond Yad Vashem: Exploring a Neglected Holocaust Memory Site in Jerusalem By Janet Ward

This summer, as a Brandeis Schusterman Institute for Israel Studies (SIIS) participant, I visited Israel's official Holocaust museum, Yad Vashem. I

found its sleek museal landscape on West Jerusalem's Mount of Remembrance rather reminiscent in its overall aura of the Getty Center on its similarly shaped Los Angeles hill. I'm currently writing a book on Holocaust commemoration, and I found myself asking if perhaps Yad Vashem, despite or rather because of its almost encyclopedic mission, was suppressing some key experiential aspects about Shoah memory. I found that the same city offers smaller, more localized, if less well-known and less "perfect" sites of Holocaust memory that can enable the visitor to more fully situate, in an urban-tactile way, how the Holocaust became commemorated in Israel.

One such place is on Mount Zion, just outside the Old City's Zion Gate: the quirkily named Cellar (or Chamber) of the Holocaust (Martef HaShoah). This local Museum — very close, coincidentally, to Oskar Schindler's grave — consists of a Crusades-era cavern, a courtyard and garden, and is run by the nearby coeducational Diaspora Yeshiva. It was first authorized by the Ministry of Religion after the 1948 War as Israel's first Holocaust museum, serving a dual purpose of representing sanctity and national identity. Even before the armistice, Mount Zion had been under Jewish control and had



been secretly linked to the St. John Eye Hospital (now the Mount Zion hotel, where I and other SIIS participants stayed) via a nighttime cable car across the valley in between. The Holocaust Cellar museum, opened by survivors from Bergen-Belsen in 1949-50 and designed as a spiritual partner for the site of David's Tomb on the other side of the narrow street on Mount Zion, was configured as a Zionist mausoleum of Holocaust victims' ashes and artifacts. It has remained a straightforward and immediate post-WWII cry of anguish for the dead of Europe, yet it was a cry that was nonetheless wholly dedicated in its purposes for the needs of the city of Jerusalem and for the fledgling state of Israel. In this museum's early decades of the 1950s and '60s, thousands at a time would

gather over a mourning period of three weeks per year around the fast day of the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tevet to say the Kaddish and to mark the destruction of European Jewish lives, synagogues, Torah scrolls, and yeshivas. Holocaust victims' ashes were even enshrined here.

The museum courtyard's walls



have 1,300 tombstone-plaques for the lost Jewish communities of Europe. Not surprisingly, this chamber was held in particularly high esteem by Holocaust survivors; they came from far beyond Israel to visit it as a pilgrimage destination. It was, as the Holocaust Cellar's current curator Ilan Goodman asserts, the "Tomb of the Unknown."

Yet from the 1970s and '80s on, until the recent financial assistance of American-born Elly Merenstein helped stop the damp and mold that were taking over, the Cellar museum had been in a trajectory of neglect. The decline of this essentially religious memorial mirrors the changing valuations of other Jewish heritage sites across the Holy City. The major reason is not even the most obvious one, namely, the increasing national significance of Yad Vashem (opened in 1953, redesigned in 2005), which along with the National Cemetery on the Mount of Remembrance (Mount Herzl) became the

*Continued on p. 7*

## KUDOS and CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to **Carsten Schapkow**, who co-organized with Lorne Richstone from OU's School of Music, a concert on the Sulzer family in January. Schapkow also delivered lectures on *Jews and the Great War* and *Commemorating the Holocaust* at Volkshochschule Munich, Andrassy University Budapest, Queen Mary University London and at the German Studies Association in Kansas City. He also gave two invited talks at the University of Graz and Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich on the *Perceptions of Iberian-Sephardic Culture among German-speaking Jews in the 19th century* based on the English version of the book, which will be available December 2015 (Rowman and Littlefield).

Congratulations to **Ronnie Grinberg**, who was elected to the Academic Council of the American Jewish Historical Society by members of its Executive Committee. Her article "Neither 'Sissy' Boy nor Patrician Man: New York Intellectuals and the Construction of American Jewish Masculinity," published in the July 2014 issue of *American Jewish History*, was awarded the prestigious Wasserman Prize for most outstanding article in 2014 by the American Jewish Historical Society. She also was selected as one of six emerging scholars to participate in the Paula E. Hyman Mentorship Program, an initiative sponsored by the American Jewish Studies Association's Women's Caucus.

Congratulations to **Ori Kritz**, who received the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) 2015 John H. and Jane M. Patten Award of \$5,000 in recognition of outstanding teaching in the traditional humanities discipline. Kritz continues to lead the Hebrew program here at OU.

Congratulations to **Gershon Lewental**, whose article on the religious rhetoric of Saddam Husayn appeared in *Middle Eastern Studies* (2014). Articles on Iranian identity in early Islamic historiography and the religious rhetoric of radical Islamists are forthcoming in other leading journals. His translation of Yaron Harel's *Zionism in Damascus* was published in Jan. by I. B. Tauris. He presented papers at a number of conferences, including: the Association for Jewish Studies, American Oriental Society, the Middle East Studies Association, the International Society of Iranian Studies and the Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa, where he also organized two

panels. He gave several public lectures at Cornell University and Tulane University; for the Jewish Federation of Oklahoma City; and on the OU campus.

**Noam Stillman** published a number of articles, including "How Mediterranean was Goitein's Mediterranean Society?" in *Jews, Christians and Muslims in Medieval and Early Modern Times* (Brill, 2014); "Les Juifs du Maghreb confrontés à la Shoah: synthèse historique" in *Juifs du monde arabo-musulman à l'ombre du nazisme et de la Shoah 1933-1945*; and "Homosexuality: Medieval Judaism" in the *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* (De Gruyter, 2015). He edited 135 entries for the online edition of the *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, for which he is Executive Editor. He was named to the Academic Committee of the International Institute of Jewish Genealogy in Jerusalem, the Academic Council of the Association of Scholars of the Middle East and Africa, and the Governing Board of the Academic Council for Israel. He gave several distinguished invited lectures and the keynote address at an international conference at the Goethe University in Frankfurt.

Congratulations to **David Chappell**, who published *Waking From the Dream: The Struggle for Civil Rights in the Shadow of Martin Luther King* (Random House, 2014).

Excerpts of the book ran in *Salon*, *National Memo*, and *We're History*, among other places. Reviews appeared in publications ranging from the *Washington Post* to *Vigntieme Siecle* (Paris). The Washington History Seminar and the Annapolis Book Festival featured the book in sessions that were broadcast on C-Span. Chappell has an article forthcoming in the *German Historical Institute Bulletin*. He gave papers at the conferences of the Society for U.S. Intellectual History and the Southern Labor Studies Association. He co-taught, with David Ray and Kyle Harper, a Presidential Dream Course on the roots and consequences of the recent economic crisis titled "America Renaissance or Decline?"



**For news and event reminders go to [judaicstudies.ou.edu](http://judaicstudies.ou.edu)**



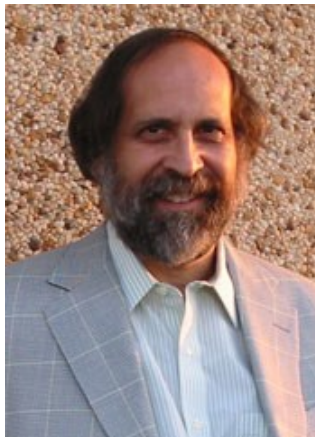
## KUDOS and CONGRATULATIONS (continued)



Congratulations to **Misha Klein**, who published the article "Teaching about Jewishness in the Heartland," as part of the special issue of *Shofar* on "New Approaches to Teaching Jewish Studies," edited by Alan Levenson. The article discusses her course on the "Anthropology of Jews and Jewishness,"

which she has offered at OU. In June, she participated in the International Research Conference of the Latin American Jewish Studies Association in Miami. At the conference, she was part of a roundtable on Jewish language use in Latin America, and she chaired and participated in a seminar about anthropology's contributions to Latin American Jewish Studies.

**Stephen H. Norwood** published the article "Forging Friendly Ties: American Universities and Nazi Germany" in *Alma mater antisemitica: Akademisches Milieu, Juden und Antisemitismus an den Universitäten Europas zwischen 1918 und 1939* (New Academic Press, 2015). He also presented an invited paper on "American Responses to the Cold Pogrom" at the Allied Powers' Response to the Holocaust Conference at the Menachem Begin Heritage Center in Jerusalem, Israel.



Congratulations to **Dinah Stillman**, who published an interview with Israeli writer Ronit Matalon in *World Literature Today's* special issue on new Hebrew literature. She also published three articles in the *Encyclopedia of the Jews in the Islamic World* (online edition) and a film review of Egyptian-French movie *La Vierge, les Coptes et moi* (The Virgin, the Copts and Me, 2013) for *The Review of the Middle-East Studies*. She presented multiple talks, including "Israelis and Palestinians through French Cinematographic Lenses" for the JuSt Lunch lecture series at OU and "Quand le rire des femmes renverse les codes de la société française" (*When Female Laughter Reverts French Society's Codes*) at the Conseil International d'Etudes Francophones convention in San Francisco. Dinah also organized the interdisciplinary French Film Festival at OU in April, at which two of the four films were cosponsored by the Schusterman Center. She taught three courses in the Osher Lifelong Lecture Series during the academic year.

During the summer **Janet Ward** was a funded participant in the Brandeis Summer Institute for Israel Studies (in Boston and Israel). She also received OU funding from both the Ed Cline Faculty Development Award and the Presidential International Travel Fellowship to visit Serbia, Austria, and Hungary, where she will conduct research for her book project on the spatial and geographical memory of the Holocaust. This fall she will present a paper on "Web-Sites of Holocaust Memory" at the German Studies Association conference in Washington, D.C. See featuring article on page 5.

## Cellar of the Holocaust continued from page 5

Israeli government's (secular) Zionist sites of national commemoration and pushed the Chamber out of the limelight. The most urgent reason for the Holocaust Cellar's decline was more one of sudden urban re-mapping: as historical geographer Doron Bar has pointed out, the Cellar began to lose its function once access to the Old City was re-opened in the wake of the 1967 Six Day War. This gave rise to a concomitant decline of the museum's once-important neighbor, David's Tomb, once the Western Wall could be repositioned on the Jewish religious heritage-scape of Jerusalem. As a result,

most tourists today – Jews and non-Jews alike – have never even heard of the Cellar museum. Yet after the tourist rush of Yad Vashem, one can encounter a far simpler and far more localized spirituality of Shoah remembrance here. The Holocaust Cellar constitutes a tangible, more literally urban "rooted" memory link – not just to Jerusalem's history, but to the physical sites of mass atrocity across continental Europe, to the survivors' and victims' families who sought solace here, and to the origins of the Holocaust in Israeli statehood.

## Dinah's Journey from Morocco to Norman

*We wish Dinah Stillman all the best as she retires from OU, and thank her for her many contributions over the years. We sat down with her to reminisce about her time at the University of Oklahoma.*



### **What brought you to OU?**

I married Noam Stillman in Paris in August 2001, and came to OU in August 2002 with an invitation to join the faculty of Modern Languages, Literatures and Linguistics to teach French. I am also an associate member of Judaic Studies.

### **What has your teaching and research focused on over the years?**

I have developed and taught a wide variety of courses, including French Literature, French Culture, French Language, French Phonetics, French Culture through Cinema, French Culture through Songs, and even Business French for the School of Business. At first, my research focused on France, but the Maghrebi-French (called Beur in backslang) cultural phenomenon fascinated me, and I soon expanded my research and teaching to include Beur and Francophone cultures, literatures and films in North Africa, West Africa and Quebec. I delved into Jewish life in France and wrote articles on North African Jewish writers, intellectuals, and film and theater personalities living in France for the new *Encyclopedia of the Jews in the Islamic World* (2010). I still contribute to the online edition.

In 2006, I started lecturing at conferences in French about French phonetics, about using songs in language classes, about Francophone female writers and movie directors. I did not dare yet lecture in English, but as I reviewed many francophone movies for the Annual Middle East Studies Association Conferences as a member of its FilmFest Board, I became more knowledgeable in that field, and I was invited there three times to present the pedagogical uses of film in Middle East Studies classes. No choice, in English. It emboldened me to speak at the Association for Jewish Studies conferences and conferences in England and Israel, too. These talks focused on Jewish Francophone literature, on Jewish and Muslim relationships in recent French movies, on WWII movies

in France and the part the Vichy government played in helping the Nazis deport French Jews to their death. Eventually, the lectures became articles, the majority of which are in English.

### **What are you most proud of during your time at OU?**

I am proud of having joined this university, and of all the opportunities given to me for professional growth. I am proud of having organized successful French film festivals at OU, always with the collaboration of several departments and programs, including Judaic Studies. I am so happy that my students could be exposed to such rich cultural events. I also am proud of having contributed articles to *World Literature Today*, a world-class literary magazine that brings writers from the entire world to OU, and organizes literary festivals. Since last year, I have been serving as a contributing editor.

### **What have you most enjoyed about teaching at OU?**

I have enjoyed teaching all of my classes, and having had the immense pleasure of seeing many of my former students become exceptional graduate students and pursuing academic careers. A special joy has been teaching adults through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, something I have done almost every semester since 2007. Their suggestions for more classes made me scramble for topics I had no idea I would teach one day, including: "Absolute Monarchy and French Revolution in French Cinema"; "Love and Politics in French Films"; "French Comic Cinema"; "Children and Education in Film"; "Paris, I Love You in Films and Songs"...

### **What will you miss most about OU?**

Everything! The fruitful interaction with students and colleagues, the innumerable researchers, writers and lecturers from all over the world who are invited each year, the thriving intellectual life that is part and parcel of this rich university. I also will miss the excellent plays, ballets, musicals, concerts and operas organized by the schools of Drama, Dance, Musical Theatre and Music that I have regularly attended over the years. As an avid theatre-goer in Paris, I did not expect students here to reach such professional quality in so little time.

### **What is next on your agenda?**

Aha! Time to change and engage in a new chapter in my life: I will still write and do some research, but most importantly, I will have time to read more (fiction) books, to travel for pleasure, to spend quality time with my family and friends, to paint (a hobby that I sadly have neglected during my time at OU)...AND TO RELAX!!



## Our Core Faculty and a Few of Their Classes



**Norman Stillman**  
Emeritus Professor and  
Founding Director



**Alan Levenson**  
Judaism: Religious History  
Genesis Through Jewish  
Eyes



**Shmuel Shepkaru**  
History of Heaven and Hell  
Evolution of Martyrdom



**Rhona Seidelman**  
Debating Israel's History  
Tuberculosis:  
Death/Discovery



**Carsten Schapkow**  
Jews and Other Germans  
The Holocaust



**Ronnie Grinberg**  
American Jewish History,  
1654-Present



**Ori Krutz**  
Hebrew 1 & 2  
Jewish Literature



**D. Gershon Lewental**  
Visiting Israel Institute Prof.  
Arab-Israeli Conflict,  
Religion & Minorities in Israel



**Lea Reches**  
Advanced Hebrew

## Associated Faculty

**Benjamin L. Alpers**, Honors College  
**Eve Bannet**, English  
**David Chappell**, History  
**Rangar Cline**, Religious Studies  
**Sara Coodin**, Classics  
**Luis Cortest**, Spanish  
**Misha Klein**, Anthropology  
**Nina Livesey**, Religious Studies  
**William H. McDonald**, English  
**Stephen H. Norwood**, History  
**Andrew Porwancher**, Classics  
**Karin L. Schutjer**, German  
**Daniel C. Snell**, History  
**Dinah Stillman**, French  
**Janet Ward**, History

## Back by Popular Demand!

Gershon Lewental will continue to teach as the Visiting Professor of Israel studies for a fourth year in both the Department of History and the Department of International and Area Studies. Lewental earned his bachelor of arts degree (magna cum laude) from Cornell University and his doctorate from Brandeis University. In 2012, his doctoral dissertation received international recognition when he won the Foundation of Iranian Studies' Best Dissertation Award. His fields of specialization include Iranian history, early Islamic history and historiography, the Baha'i faith and Israeli society. He currently is preparing two book manuscripts, one on the interplay of religion, nationalism and memory in the modern Middle East, and the other on the role of narrative in early Islamic historiography.

Since coming to OU in the fall of 2012, Lewental has actively participated in the academic life of OU and the Schusterman Center for Judaic and Israel Studies. He has given numerous public lectures — for the JuSt Lunch lecture series, the Department of International and Area Studies, the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, and the Center for the Study of Nationalism—in addition to talks at the Norman Public Library, the Jewish Federation of Oklahoma City, the Norman and Edmond Baha'i Centers and more. An avid follower of Israeli politics, Lewental has spoken often on the subject, explaining and interpreting the complexities of the Israeli political arena. Lewental also has worked to bring interesting speakers to OU, co-coordinating two visits by Ambassador Meir Shlomo, the Israeli consul-general in Houston, and the recent visit by Mohammed Wattad, who talked about the Islamic State before an overflowing audience.

At OU, Lewental has taught a wide variety of courses relating to Israel, Islamic history and the broader Middle East, including "Religion and Minorities in Israel," "Early Islamic Empires," "Religion and Society in the Middle East," "Political Islam," and the "Arab-Israeli Conflict." among others. In the 2015–2016 academic year, he will assume one of retiring Professor Noam Stillman's courses, "Jews and Christians Under Islam." Additionally, Lewental teaches very popular Osher Lifelong Learning Institute courses — his recent course on Islam attracted over a hundred students. He and his wife, Sitora, are looking forward to another exciting and fulfilling year at OU, where they enjoy interacting with students, colleagues, and other community members.



## Armageddon Again: OU Students Dig at Legio Camp

*University of Oklahoma students and Professor Rangar Cline returned to Israel in summer 2015 to work with the Jezreel Valley Regional Project (JVRP) for a second year. In summer 2014, our students excavated at Tel Megiddo with the JVRP and Megiddo Expedition. This summer, a new group of students excavated at Legio, the camp of the Roman Sixth located next to Tel Megiddo. Eight OU students participated in the program in 2015 – five of them supported by scholarships from the Schusterman Center for Judaic and Israel Studies. Following is an in-field report from Professor Cline:*

Prior to excavating, we spent a week visiting archaeological sites in northern and central Israel, along with JVRP staff members and volunteers from other universities. Some of the highlights of the tour included a visit to Sepphoris and its Byzantine-era synagogue, where students were guided by one of the site's excavation directors, Oren Gutfeld, and our guided tour of ancient Hippos by the site's current excavation director, Michael Eisenberg.



**Oren Gutfeld & students at Sepphoris**



**Michael Eisenberg & students at Hippos**



**Professor Cline and OU students**

The archaeological tour concluded with a visit to Beit Shean, where I guided students through the Roman remains of the city and convinced them to briefly pose for a group picture.

At the time of writing, the students and I are staying at the lovely Kibbutz Mizra and beginning our excavation of Legio, the site of the camp of the Roman Legio VI Fretensis. The Sixth Legion was stationed in Jezreel Valley following the Bar Kokhba revolt (132-135 CE); its camp is the only one of its kind that can be excavated in Israel. We hope that our excavations this summer will clarify the relationship between the legionary camp, the late-Roman Jewish village of Kefar Otnay, a Christian prayer hall, and the Byzantine city of Maximianopolis – all located adjacent to biblical Megiddo. The excavation of the Sixth Legion's camp should also help archaeologists better understand the camp of the Tenth Legion, which was stationed at Jerusalem and whose camp is inaccessible due to its location beneath Jerusalem's Old City.

We are just beginning to uncover the Roman camp in this summer's excavations and we eagerly anticipate the discoveries to come, about which I will report in the next newsletter!



**Students discover drainpipe**



# The 2,000 Year Old Student

by Walker Robins

While teaching the course “Jews in Hollywood” in fall 2014, I had the pleasure of introducing (or, in more hopeful cases, reintroducing) my students to the careers of Mel Brooks and Carl Reiner. In being asked to write about my time at OU, I was reminded of the pair’s famous routine, the “2,000 Year Old Man.” As I enter what will be my 10th and final year at OU and complete my third and final degree here, I feel a bit like the 2,000 Year Old Student—I’ve spent enough time in Norman to see it all.

I took my first Judaic Studies class as an undergraduate elective in the fall of 2006 (for those who follow the Sooner calendar, that was when Paul Thompson was our starting quarterback). That class — “Judaism: A Religious History” — and that professor — Noam Stillman — would prove more important to me than I could have imagined at the time. I was a Film and Video Studies major, but had always been interested in history and religion. Taking classes with Stillman and, later, Carsten Schapkow, convinced me that I wanted to study history and that I wanted to study it with them. It wasn’t until my last semester as an undergrad, though, that I really got to know either professor. I’m not sure if Stillman remembers it, but our first “non-academic” conversations centered on my attempts to make peach wine from a recipe in one of his textbooks—*The First Jewish Catalog*. Actually, the conversation turned academic pretty quickly, as I remember telling him I wanted to make kosher wine and him replying, “Well, it’s not kosher if you’re not Jewish.”

So, the wine wasn’t kosher—and it wasn’t good — but it started a series

of conversations that eventually led to me entering the graduate program in history under Stillman’s tutelage. Such are the effects of alcohol on impressionable college students. I joined the program in the fall of 2008, fortuitously at the same time that Alan Levenson came to campus. The rest, as they don’t say, is historiography.

With guidance from Stillman, Schapkow and Levenson, I began research on the interactions between American evangelical Christians, specifically Southern Baptists, and Jews. My master’s thesis looked at the Southern Baptist Convention’s only missionary to the Jews of the South from 1921 to 1949, a convert and immigrant named Jacob Gartenhaus. Out of that research came an essay for Schapkow’s co-edited 2014 volume, *Konversion in Räumen jüdischer Geschichte*. I was lucky, too, to be able to convert non-academic interests in movies and, yes, alcohol into academic interests, publishing entries on “Jews in Arabic Cinema” and “Wine and Alcoholic Beverages” in Stillman’s *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*.

Like most other Okies, though, I have found the Southern Baptists difficult to elude. My doctoral dissertation, “Between Dixie and Zion: Southern Baptists and the Palestine Question,” looks at the different ways in which Southern Baptists encountered the land, the people, and the politics of Palestine between World War One and the armistices that ended Israel’s War of Independence in 1949. Between these two wars, Britain governed Palestine through a League of Nations Mandate that called upon Britain to build institutions in preparing the country for eventual self-government. What this government would look like —

whether it would favor the Zionists or the Palestinian Arabs — was a matter of public debate frequently referred to as “the Palestine question.” “Between Dixie and Zion” looks at how Southern Baptists, who in recent decades have come to be



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seen as staunch supporters of Israel, navigated this question during the crucial years of the Mandate. Focusing on the different ways that Baptists encountered Palestine — rather than on whether they took sides in the Arab-Zionist conflict — the work includes distinct chapters on travelers, missionaries, Arab Baptists, Hebrew Christians, premillennialists, political commentators, and more, as well as a conclusion that looks at the role President Harry Truman’s Southern Baptist faith may have had in his decision to recognize Israel in May of 1948. God willing, I’ll defend it this December (the dissertation—not Truman’s decision, though I think it was a good one).

What has been most exciting for me in recent years, though, has been getting to start teaching. This fall it will have been two years since I taught my first course, “How the Holy Land Became

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## 15TH ANNUAL YEDIDA STILLMAN MEMORIAL LECTURE

Enan Stillman of Atlanta and Mia Taback-Stillman of Chicago travelled to OU to attend this year's memorial lecture, the last lecture before their father, Professor Stillman, retires. Both Enan, an attorney specializing in transportation and logistics, and Mia, a Human Relations Director at Kindred Health Care, spoke movingly of their mother's legacy as a scholar, parent and mentor. (Mia's husband, Michael Taback, sat with two supremely well-behaved children). The Sam Noble Museum, for several years the venue for this event, was packed with an audience estimated at 127. This lecture, always well-attended, and despite the upbeat title "How Islam Saved the Jews," was necessarily bittersweet.

Professor David Wasserstein of Vanderbilt University delivered the lecture to a rapt audience. Wasserstein, educated at Oxford University, taught for fifteen years at Tel Aviv University before coming to Vanderbilt. He is a historian of Islam and of Judaism in Islam in the medieval world. His major publications include *The Rise and Fall of the Party-Kings: Politics and Society in Islamic Spain 1002-1086* (Princeton, 1985), *The Caliphate in the West: an Islamic Political Institution in the Iberian Peninsula* (Oxford, 1993), and *The Legend of the Septuagint from Antiquity to Today* (Cambridge, 2006), written together with his father, the late Abraham Wasserstein.

The Stillman Memorial Lecture was established through the generosity of family, friends and colleagues to honor the memory of the late beloved teacher and world-renowned scholar Yedida Kalfon Stillman, who died in February 1998. The first Stillman Memorial Lecture was given in February 2001 by Paula Sanders of Rice University, who was introduced by OU President David Boren, who shared his personal reminiscences of Yedida Stillman. The Stillman Memorial Lecture has since become a major campus event. The lecturers all have been distinguished scholars in fields related to the late Professor Stillman's wide-ranging interests in Middle Eastern and Sephardic history and culture. In his opening remarks, Noam Stillman expressed gratitude that every memorial lecturer not only worked in his late wife's field, but also were colleagues and friends.



David Wasserstein

## 2,000 Year Old Student continued from page 11

Holy," with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at OU, I've kept busy since then — this October I will teach my 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> OLLI courses, "The United States and Israel" in Norman and "Americans in the Holy Land" in Oklahoma City. I've had an absolute blast teaching these classes. I've also been lucky enough to teach a couple of undergraduate courses, an intersession version of "How the Holy Land Became Holy" and the aforementioned "Jews in Hollywood" (fall 2014). It has been a thrill to build these courses from the ground up — to pick the readings, organize the lectures, and write the assignments — and then watch what students do with them. As I look toward the next phase in my career, this is what I am most excited about.

Of course, I cannot write about my experiences at OU without taking a moment to discuss my mentor, Noam Stillman, who retired this past semester. Having spent nine years, more or less, as his student, I've had a lot of time to think about what sets him apart as a teacher and a scholar. I think I've figured out at least part of it. Noam Stillman simply delights in the world, delights in the

differences that make it interesting, and delights more than anything else in sharing his delight with others. I have no better example of this than the eclectic march of treats and candies that he inevitably trots out each semester for his seminar students, each offering accompanied by the benevolently forceful prodding — familiar to anyone who knows him — that "You *must* try this...They don't make anything like this here." He has been more than a teacher to me and others, but instead, a tour guide to worlds that are very real and, yet, often unimaginable. And he is the *best* tour guide. Knowing him has enriched my life in ways that are difficult to articulate. I shudder to think of the foods I love that I never would have tasted, the books I cherish that I never would have read, the songs I sing that I never would have heard, the places I have been that I would have never dreamed of going had we never met. What do you say to someone like that? I can only think of one thing. Thank you for the wine recipe, Dr. Stillman — I think it turned out good after all.



## Why the 18s?

### YOUR SUPPORT IS WELCOME AND NEEDED: BUT WHY THE 18s?

18 is the numerical value of the Hebrew word “life”, and it is customary to donate in multiples of 18. It’s a toast to life (l’hayim) and a harmless bit of folk belief. (It’s also a good way of keeping tabs on charitable donations – when the Police Benevolent League says you gave \$36 last year (not \$35) you can believe them.) The following are some of your favorite JUST events and what they cost.

Please let us acknowledge your support in our next newsletter

\$18 To Show Your Support of Judaic Studies at OU

\$36 To Sponsor a JUST Lunch Event

\$54 To Buy A Movie

\$360 To Sponsor a student’s travel to a conference

\$1,800 To Be Honorary Host for an Invited Speaker

\$3,600 To Sponsor next year’s JUST Newsletter

\$18,000 to sponsor a Graduate Student for a 2-year Degree in History/Judaic Studies

**We welcome all ideas to promote Judaic and Israel Studies at OU! Please call our office at (405) 325-6508 or email us at [vharshaw@ou.edu](mailto:vharshaw@ou.edu).**

### Osher Lifelong Learning Institute: Schusterman Center faculty courses

#### **Creating Biblical Biography: The Case of Joseph (Genesis 37-50)**

Alan Levenson

Mondays, Oct. 12-Nov. 2, 2015, 9:30-11:00 a.m.

CCE Forum Building, Room A-3

\$35

#### **Arab-Israeli Conflict**

Gershon Lewental

Tuesdays, Oct. 13-Nov. 17, 2015

CCE Forum Building, Room A-Conference

\$35

#### **The U.S. and Israel: A Special Relationship**

Walker Robins

Wednesdays, Oct. 7-28, 2015, 9:30-11:00 a.m.

CCE Forum Building, Room A-Conference

\$35

#### **Americans in the Holy Land**

Walker Robins

Thursdays, Oct. 1-29, 2015, 9:30-11:00 a.m.

Samis Education Building, Children’s Hospital, OKC

3<sup>rd</sup> floor Conference Room

\$35

For more information about these and other OLLI courses please visit their website at [www.ou.edu/outreach/olli.html](http://www.ou.edu/outreach/olli.html)

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## OUR GRADUATE STUDENTS



*Morgan Creek-*

**Morgan Creekmore** completed her master's degree in history and Judaic Studies in May under the direction of Noam Stillman. Her thesis, "It's All in the Stars: The Zodiac in Jewish Thought," explored conceptions of the zodiac through the late antique and early medieval period. In the spring she researched the Jewish Renewal Movement at the Zalman M. Schachter Shalomi collection at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

She plans to continue this research and is applying to Ph.D. programs next year to focus on modern mysticism and American Jewish history.

**Jacob Lackner**, a third-year doctoral student completed his coursework last spring and will be taking his doctoral exams this fall. He presented a paper at the 24<sup>th</sup> annual Texas Medieval Association conference titled "Medieval Jewish Women as Stalwarts of the Faith: Fact or Fiction?" He was awarded a Hadassah-Brandeis Institute Research Grant for his doctoral dissertation, which will examine the role of gender in the conversion of Jews to Christianity in the Middle Ages. He also received the Robert E. and Mary B. Sturgis Scholarship from the College of Arts and Sciences.



*Jacob Lackner*



*Leah Pace*

**Leah Pace** is a second-year master's student in history and Judaic Studies. Her current research focuses on American religious history. She is revising a recent research paper about Franklin Delano Roosevelt's religious rhetoric in his fireside chats into a conference paper. She also is beginning work on her master's thesis, which will focus on the role and participation of American Jewish women in the modern civil rights movement.

She was awarded the Zarrow Family Scholarship to support archival research in New York, Atlanta, and New Orleans.

**Jesse Weinberg**, a second-year doctoral student, is exploring Middle Eastern antisemitism in the 19th and 20th centuries. During the 2014-2015 academic year, he studied Islamic Spain's intersection of politics and tolerance; Israel's New Historians; the antisemitic writings of Syrian Defense Minister Muṣṭafá Ṭalās; and the memory of anti-Jewish violence in Iraq. He also interned in OU's History of Science Collection, where he focused on astronomical works in Hebrew and Arabic. He was awarded a Study in Israel scholarship to attend Israel's Hebrew University of Jerusalem this summer and during the Spring of 2016, and currently is examining trial transcripts of terror financing cases in the United States.



*Jesse Weinberg*

## Undergraduate Student News

**Charles J. Mays** completed his bachelor of arts degree in Judaic Studies in the spring. He is going to The University of Reading in Great Britain to pursue a masters' degree in Public Policy and he holds a conditional offer for the Ph.D. program there.

**Andrea Pemberton**, who earned her bachelor of arts degree in Anthropology, with a minor in Hebrew, published her article "The ART of Producing Responsa: Feminist Critiques of Rabbinic Law through the Lens of

Assisted Reproductive Technologies" in *The Undergraduate Honors Research Journal* (THURJ), and submitted her honors thesis "Building Shared Society": Experiences with Bilingual and Multicultural Peace Education in Israel. For her presentation at the Undergraduate Research Day in April, based on her honor thesis research, she was awarded the Roland Lehr Phi Beta Kappa Award for Distinguished Undergraduate Research. She completed all of this research under the supervision of Misha Klein.





*Lee Green-Hall*

Congratulations to **Lee Green-Hall** for teaching her first class for Judaic and Israel Studies, "History of Heaven and Hell," during the summer semester. Green-Hall is working on her dissertation for her doctorate in history and is Administrator of Religious Studies. We thank Lee for all of her support to our program.

**Tryce Hyman** just completed the indexing on *Role-Model/Counter-Model* by Carsten Schapkow. Hyman earned his bachelor of arts degree in Judaic Studies in spring 2014 and is working toward two master's degrees: one in History with a focus in Judaic History, and the other is in Middle Eastern Studies with the College of International Studies.



*Tryce Hyman*

**Watch your mailboxes and check our website often for these and other upcoming events.**

**Nov. 3, 2015** — Music program and roundtable talk, in conjunction with Lorne Richstone of the School of Music and Professor Carsten Schapkow of our Schusterman Center, featuring **Professor Natalia Aleksium** from the Graduate School of Jewish Studies, Touro College, College of New York City and **Elizabeth Shammash** who serves as cantor at Tiferet Bet Israel in Blue Bell, PA .

**Feb. 19, 2016** — **Professor Mark Wagner** of Louisiana State University will deliver the 16th annual Yedida Kalfon Stillman Memorial Lecture.

**March 2, 2016** — Brownbag lecture, "Jews and Christians in Medieval Spain: Symbiotic Society or Parallel Cultures?" by **Rabbi Leila Berner**, Scholar in Residence at the Department of Philosophy and Religion at American University, Washington, D.C.

**March 13-14, 2016** — Evening lecture and Brownbag lecture the following day by **Professor Jeffrey S. Gurock**, Libby M. Klaperman Professor of Jewish History at Yeshiva University.

## **2015-2016 Brown-bag Lecture Series Continues Diverse Offerings**

**JuSt Lunch Brown-Bag Lecture Series**, our monthly lecture series, captures the program's ethos: informal, diverse and high-quality. This event has been drawing students, scholars and OU community members since its inception. Please join us on the first Wednesday of the month at noon.

- Oct. 7**      **Zionism, Tuberculosis and the Making of the 20th Century**  
Rhona Seidelman, OU Schusterman Center for Judaic and Israel Studies
- Nov. 4**      **Goethe's *Faust* and the Hebrew Bible**  
Karin Schutjer, OU Dept of Modern Languages, Literatures and Linguistics
- Dec. 2**      **Theologizing the First Crusade: A Jewish Response**  
Shmuel Shepkaru, OU Schusterman Center for Judaic and Israel Studies

### **NEW LOCATION FOR OUR BROWNBAG LUNCHEES THIS FALL**

The JuSt Lunch Brownbag Lectures will be held in Gould Hall, room 330. Gould Hall is directly west of the Gaylord Family Oklahoma Memorial Stadium and there is visitor parking in the parking facility under the stadium off of Asp Avenue. Complimentary same-day parking passes may be obtained by contacting Valarie Harshaw at (405) 325-6508 or by email at [vharshaw@ou.edu](mailto:vharshaw@ou.edu)

**MAP ON THE REVERSE**

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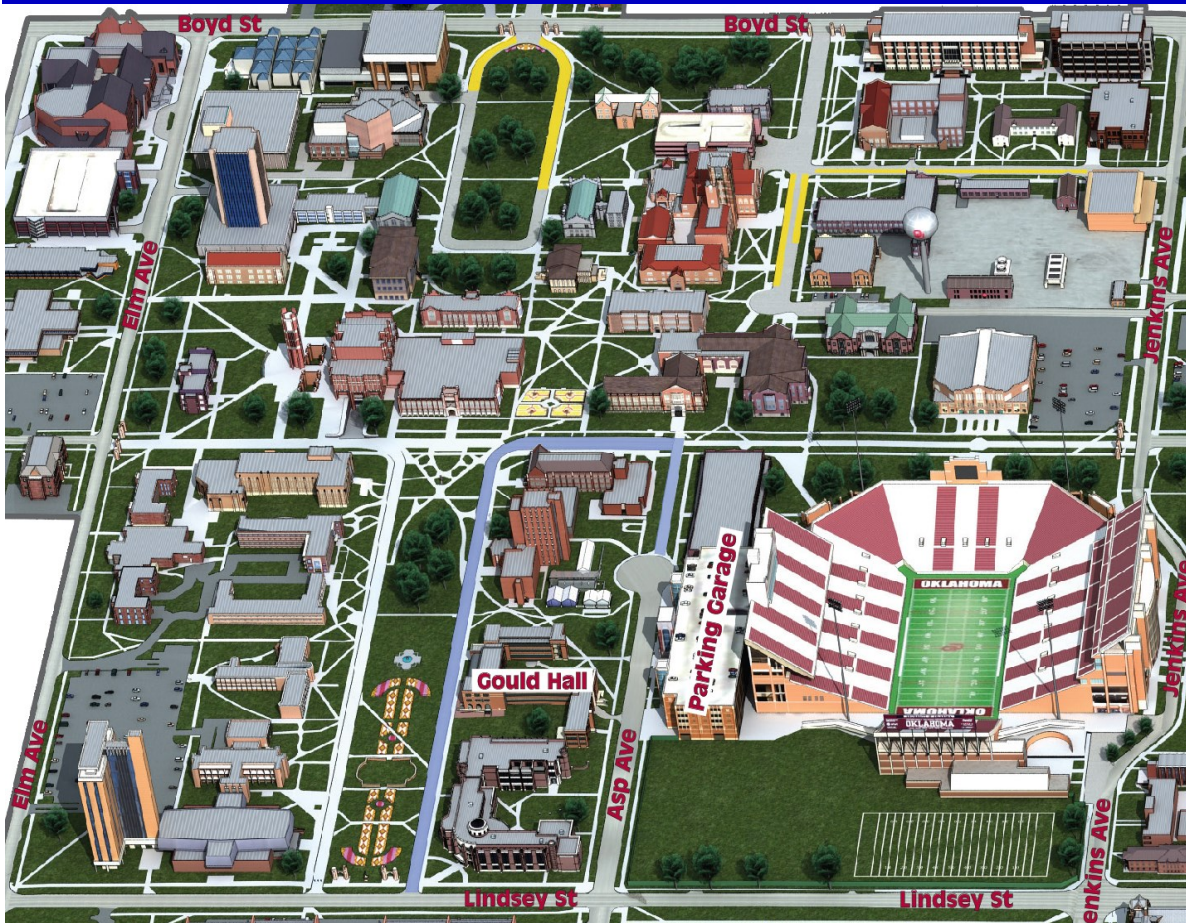
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The Parking Facility is on Asp Avenue going north from Lindsey Street. The parking facility is to your right under the football stadium.

**Gould Hall is directly across the street.**

Contact Valarie Harshaw at 325-6508 or [vharshaw@ou.edu](mailto:vharshaw@ou.edu) for a **complimentary one-day parking pass** to be sent to you. The parking pass allows you to park in any spot in the facility; without the pass you will need to park at a meter and feed it.

We look forward to welcoming our faithful regulars from Oklahoma City and new friends too!