

The Case for Support of Judaic Studies at Binghamton



JUDAIC STUDIES DEPARTMENT

State University of New York at Binghamton

To the Friends of the Judaic Studies Department...

It is our great pleasure to share with you the exciting news that in recognition of its extraordinary growth and development, the Judaic Studies Program achieved departmental status in 1991.

We have watched with pride its achievements since 1973 when the Judaic Studies Program was established by a core of concerned students, faculty, administrators, and community leaders. Over the past decade the Judaic Studies Department has:

- ◊ tripled its enrollment
- ◊ instituted a Bachelors degree granting program
- ◊ supported a faculty of national and international reputation
- ◊ organized two major international conferences on Sephardic studies
- ◊ established outreach programs which include:
 - monthly public lectures
 - quarterly newsletter
 - two major endowed lecture series
 - two major exhibitions

This is truly a critical juncture in the development of the Judaic Studies Department. It is a time of growth, accomplishment and recognition. Clearly, financial support from public funding sources is unable to meet the needs of an expanding department, and we turn to you for help. Without an infusion of major financial support from concerned alumni, friends, foundations, and the business community, the new Judaic Studies Department will be unable to sustain past accomplishments and fulfill future promising goals.

In an effort to strengthen and enhance the development of the Judaic Studies Department, we ask that you join with us in pledging your support. Your help is crucial to the maintenance of excellence and continued growth of the Department. Won't you join us in making a pledge to celebrate our past and ensure our future.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to the Judaic Studies Department. We look forward to the next decade with promise and pride.

Sincerely,

Phil Piaker
Phil Piaker, Distinguished Professor

Ted Sommer
Ted Sommer '58

History

Judaic Studies began as an academic field with Jewish intellectuals in Germany during the early years of the 19th century. As the Judaic Studies movement grew, numerous scholarly journals and learned societies were established and a number of modern rabbinical seminaries in Europe and the United States adopted its methodologies. The establishment of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1925 and the Nathan Littauer Chair of Hebrew Literature and Culture at Harvard University that same year marked the beginning of a new era for the growing field. Today Judaic Studies courses are taught on the campuses of more than 350 American universities and colleges and the International Association for Jewish Studies has over 1,200 members.



Growth

In 1973, upon the initiative of concerned students, faculty, administrators, and community leaders, the State University of New York at Binghamton established the Judaic Studies Program. This program was an interdisciplinary endeavor integrating faculty from different departments for the teaching and study of the history, culture, and languages of the Jewish people through the critical tools of modern social sciences and the humanities. From its modest beginnings as a certificate program with a first semester enrollment of 248 students, its growth was rapid, and by 1978, enrollments had tripled. Increasing student demand, growing enrollments, and expanding course offerings resulted in the institution of a Bachelors degree in 1979. Over the next decade, upon average more than 1,200 students (nearly 10% of the entire university student body) took Judaic courses each year, and over 60 BAs were awarded, including a significant number with honors. In 1991, in recognition of its extraordinary growth and development, the program achieved full-fledged departmental status.

The Judaic Studies Department offers a new three-track major. A student may concentrate in:

- ◊ Jewish history and civilization
- ◊ Hebrew language and literature
- ◊ Combined concentration in civilization, language and literature

The core curriculum includes a four-course sequence covering the entire scope of Jewish history from biblical to modern times, as well as Hebrew and Yiddish, and occasionally Ladino, with a rich variety of electives.

The Judaic Studies Department has been able to achieve all of this with a small, but outstanding and dedicated faculty, with national and international reputations.



Special Projects

The Department has organized two major international conferences on Sephardic studies, which has attracted more than 100 scholars from all over the world, as well as many members of the academic and local Jewish communities. Outreach programs to the general public are another important aspect of the Department's mission and include its monthly public lecture series, quarterly newsletter and two major endowed lectures. The Program has also mounted two major exhibitions with catalogues and in cooperation with the Jewish Federation of Broome County and local Jewish organizations, founded, organized and continued to help staff the College of Jewish Studies, a non-credit minicourse series aimed at the general community.

The Department of Judaic Studies and the Art Museum of the State University of New York at Binghamton collaborated on a joint project of eminent importance. Concluding an extremely successful, nationwide tour of Sigmund Freud's personal art collection, mounted and organized by the Art Museum, *The Sigmund Freud Antiquities: Fragments from a Buried Past*, traveled to the Jewish Museum in New York City where an additional special section was added to the exhibit on *Sigmund Freud's Jewish Heritage*.