

# FRANKELY SPEAKING

November 2013

Jean & Samuel Frankel Center for

## Judaic Studies

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**M** | **LSA** JEAN & SAMUEL FRANKEL  
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## Hello Gorgeous



**HARDLOX**

Asheville's Jewish Food & Heritage Festival

Sunday, October 17, 11am-4pm at the new Pack Square

Sponsored by Congregation Beth HaTephila.

## From the Director: **Jews Who Count**

*Deborah Dash Moore is the Director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies and the Frederick G.L. Huetwell Professor of History*

The recent release of a Pew survey of Jewish Americans has unleashed a flood of commentary from social scientists and journalists, rabbis and communal leaders. Most of them have taken a stand on the “Jews who count”: that is, the ones who matter. Those American Jews, unsurprisingly, identify as Jews by religion. They express abiding commitment to Israel, they affiliate with Jewish organizations as well as synagogues, they consider remembering the Holocaust critical to their Jewish consciousness. In addition, they fast on Yom Kippur and attend Passover seders. Most importantly, they marry other Jews and raise Jewish children.

Jews who don’t count, although they are counted in the survey, are Jews with “no religion.” These Jews distance themselves from Israel, don’t join synagogues, and believe that working for justice and equality and living an ethical life are key elements of Jewish identity. They have few close Jewish friends, and, not surprisingly, most of them intermarry. Hardly any of these Jews with “no religion” choose to raise their children as Jews.

What are we to make of these categories and their implicit valuation of Jews who count vs. Jews who don’t count?

Reading the survey as a historian with no mandate to predict the future, I find these distinctions disturbing. Historians

### **What are we to make of these categories and their implicit valuation of Jews who count vs. Jews who don’t count?**

of American Jews usually consider all of them worthy of study. Although one may decide to focus on urban instead of suburban Jews, or immigrants instead of the second or third generation, the key

focus should not be which Jews count. Rather one seeks to understand American Jews in their time and place.

For example, the notion of American Jews possessing a religious identity gained widespread appeal in the years following World War II. Jewish GIs discovered in the armed forces that the United States military classified them according to religion with an “H” on their dog tags. Ironically, the “H” stood for “Hebrew”—hardly a religious label. With over half a million American Jews in military service, the imprint of a government-sponsored identity proved enduring. When Jews returned to civilian life, they were ready to accept the idea that the category “Jewish” referred to their “religion.” Some of them, especially those who moved to the new suburbs of the 1950s, even decided that they wanted to join Jewish organizations. It seemed to be both a Jewish and an American thing to do, appropriate for the “greatest generation.”

The United States eliminated the military draft in 1973. Many baby boomers managed to avoid military service through deferments for education. (Jews, the Pew report tells us, are highly educated, and over half possess a college degree.) Without a government-issued dog tag (changed to “J” for “Jew” in the 1950s), religious identity gradually lost some of its salience. The 1970s saw the rise of white ethnics, along with black power, feminism, Holocaust consciousness, and identity politics. “Jew” now might refer to an ethnic identity, even a politicized identity, rather than a religious one.

Another advantage of reading the survey as a historian is that one can choose one’s point of comparison unlimited by previous surveys. As J. J. Goldberg noted in the *Forward*, comparisons of the Pew data with that produced by



Photo: Jean-Pierre Jans

a National Jewish Population Survey [NJPS] conducted in 2001 inevitably skews one’s interpretation. He proposes a comparison with the less contested and more reliable 1990 NJPS. That effort produces some remarkable continuity. I would like to suggest far more distant points of comparison, to add some historical depth to these debates.

### **I would like to suggest far more distant points of comparison, to add some historical depth to these debates.**

Let’s start roughly 100 years ago with the situation in New York City, when over a million Jews, most of them Yiddish-speaking immigrants from Eastern Europe, lived largely on Manhattan’s Lower East Side and in Brooklyn. In 1909 the New York Kehillah, a communal organization seeking to unite Jews across class, religious, geographic, ethnic, and ideological boundaries, sponsored a survey of Jewish education in the city. The results scandalized some New York Jewish leaders: a mere 25 percent of Jewish children received any sort of Jewish religious education, most of them only for a year or two, and many of them in a dismal *heder* taught by poorly trained and compensated teachers. How does this compare with American Jews today? Well, over 67 percent of Jews overall report receiving a Jewish education and roughly 60 percent of Jewish children are currently getting one.

*continued on page 5*

# Curating American Foodways: the Jewish Contribution

by Avery Robinson

In 1660, the first Jewish institution established in New Amsterdam was a kosher butcher shop, forever cementing the Jewish experience in America as one intimately connected with Jewish culinary practice. Even though Asser Levy's meat market no longer exists, he is memorialized throughout lower Manhattan (and Brooklyn) in parks, streets, and schools that bear his name. Mr. Levy was a pioneer; and it is due in part to his acumen and initiative that Jews, and their food, have had such an impact on American culture.

Before I began my research at the Janice Bluestein Longone Culinary Archive (JBLCA) at Michigan's Clements Library, I had never heard of Mr. Levy. I had learned about the 23 Brazilian Jews who were the first refugees to arrive in New Amsterdam in 1654, but I had no idea that there was a kosher butcher amongst them, not to mention that he was the first Jew to own property in America.

When I began my MA program in the Fall of 2012, Jewish culinary history interested me, but I didn't know how to address such a rich and storied past. I decided to limit my focus to Jewish food in America.

What Jewish foods have influenced American cuisine? How have American culture, cuisine, and society affected Jewish foods? And why were these changes taking place, or not? These are some of the questions I was working with as I undertook this research. And in so doing, I helped push the JBLCA to schedule the Archive's inaugural exhibit as part of the Special Collections Library on American Jewish foodways.

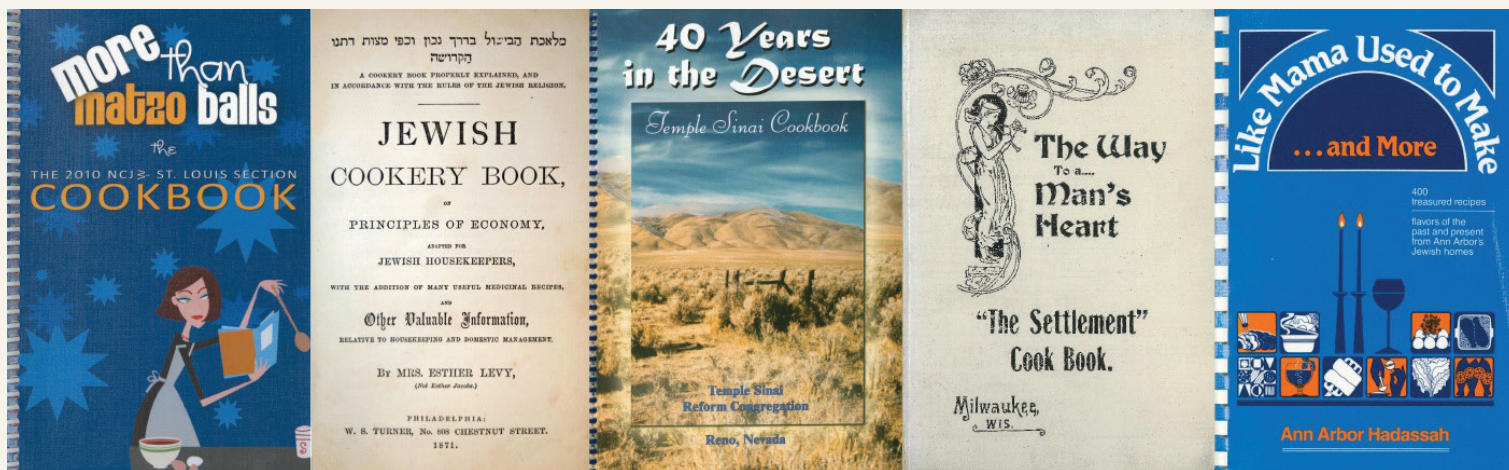
Being able to curate such a large exhibition is something I had not anticipated when considering the Frankel Center for graduate studies. I didn't think I would be part of creating such a comprehensive exhibit, with Jewish charity cookbooks from all 50 states (and Washington DC), a feat that has never been

accomplished by any other library or archive, not even the New York Public Library or the Library of Congress. I did not realize that I would be interacting with Jewish communities and congregations throughout the United States and learning about Jewish food festivals in places as far afield as Cheyenne, Wyoming; Asheville, North Carolina; and Boise, Idaho. Nor did I think that my proposed summer research in New York City would allow me to collect items for the JBLCA, such as menus from delis and appetizing shops. And, most surprising, I had no idea that I would be teaching myself how to put together a website and create a digital exhibit.

In addition, as part of the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies' theme year of "Gender," I was invited to create a complementary exhibit on the "Gendered Perspective" of American Jewish Foodways for exhibit in Thayer 2000. This has allowed me to explore some of the subtler influences that Jewish food has had in American culture. The exhibit includes items that range from books about daughters, mothers, and grandmothers to a charity cookbook from an LGBTQ community in San Francisco. Jewish cookbooks, it turns out, reflect Jewish gendered and sexual identities.

To be able to do all this, to be the co-curator of an exhibit that has received national attention, has been an incredible opportunity. This experience has proved to me not just how interested people are in Jewish foodways, but also how much more there is to study. I am excited to see where this research takes me.

The exhibit will be on display in the Hatcher Graduate Library until Dec 8, 2013 and in 2000 Thayer until the beginning of the 2014 Winter semester. You can also explore the exhibit online at [bit.ly/19QS1tl](http://bit.ly/19QS1tl).





# Anita Norich

**Tikva Frymer-Kremsky Collegiate Professor,  
talks with Logan Wall**

*Could you talk a little about Tikveh Frymer-Kremsky and your decision to name your Collegiate Professorship after her?*

Tikveh was a friend of mine who died much too young. When I first came to Michigan, she and her husband, then the rabbi of the Conservative synagogue, were incredibly welcoming. I wanted to name my Collegiate Professorship after a woman who had a strong commitment to Jewish scholarship, which she certainly did. She was also the kind of scholar I wanted to put forward to my students. Most graduate students think that there's a path to academic success which is pretty straightforward: you write the dissertation, you get a job, maybe you knock around for a little bit—but there's an academic path to follow to tenure and success.

Tikveh's path was more circuitous. She was a Yale PhD, learned in the ways you want a scholar to be learned: she had all the languages; she saw the broader picture. But she didn't follow the traditional academic path. She was married and had children and couldn't leave Ann

Arbor. But that didn't hamper either her scholarship or her mind. She was a model of someone whose academic work and whose scholarly life and whose mind flourished wherever she was. She was a committed feminist who wrote about the ancient Near East and about contemporary issues from a committed feminist and Jewish scholarly perspective. She was an impassioned and an inspired teacher, both informally as well as in the classroom. I wanted to honor her memory.

*How do you think of your work in relationship to her work?*

We're both committed to Jewish studies and feminism, but from different directions. Like hers, my work is also informed by the contexts and languages about which I write.

*Your current project, about the Yiddish writer Kadya Molodovsky, seems to go along with this.*

When I was researching my second book, *Discovering Exile*, about Yiddish writing in America during the Holocaust, I “found”—in quotation marks—this

novel, *Fun Lublin biz Nyu York (From Lublin to New York)*, published in 1942. I didn't use it in that book, but it stuck with me. It's written in the form of a diary of a young woman who comes to New York City. And it describes the difficulties of being an immigrant: finding a job, learning a language, dealing with the horror of what's left behind and what's happening to her family. At the same time, she's falling in and out of love. She's a 20-something young woman.

*After writing about translation, what has the actual process of translation (of Molodovsky's novel) been like for you?*

My last book was about translation, but actually doing it is a different kind of work, one that I've admired, and one that I'm enjoying tremendously. The truth is, only about two percent of Yiddish literature has ever been translated. So there's a world out there, waiting. Molodovsky is known and we have translations of her poetry and short stories, but I really thought this novel needed to be done and doing it feels constructive and creative.

□

# mazel tov!

## Faculty:

**Ryan Szpiech**, *Associate Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures and Judaic Studies*, has recently published two articles that reflect his ongoing engagement with Medieval anti-Jewish polemics:

“Rhetorical Muslims: Islam as Witness in Christian Anti-Jewish Polemic.” *Al Qanṭara: Revista de Estudios Árabes* 34.1 (2013): 153–185 and

“Preaching Paul to the Moriscos in the *Confusión o confutación de la secta Mahomética y del Alcorán* (1515) by Juan Andrés.” *La Corónica* 41.1 (2012): 317–43.

In October he also spoke at the University of Pennsylvania on “The Problem With Abraham: Questioning Comparative Religion through Medieval Polemics.”

**Mikhail Krutikov**, *Associate Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and Judaic Studies*, presented the Clara Sumpf Yiddish Lecture at Stanford University, titled “Reading New York in Yiddish: Time, Space, and Jewishness,” a lecture that reflects his current undergraduate course in New York Yiddish culture.

**Joshua Miller**, *Associate Professor of English Language and Literature and Judaic Studies*, received a grant from the Israel Institute for the Summer of 2014 designed to assist his professional development.

**David Caron**, *Professor of French, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures and Professor of Women’s Studies, Frankel Center Affiliate*, gave a public lecture at Wilfrid Laurier University last April. His lecture, “Beckoning as Testimonial Practice” was the inaugural lecture of the Center for Memory and Testimony Studies.

**Moshe Maoz**, *Visiting Schusterman Professor of Israel Studies*, recently gave two public lectures at Michigan State University in his area of expertise. One was devoted to Syria’s Civil War and the other to Muslim -Jewish relations. In November he will return to Israel to speak at the Hebrew University Conference on Strategic Developments in Eastern Mediterranean Region.

## Graduate Students:

**Sara Feldman**, *PhD Student, Department of Near Eastern Studies*, looks forward to defending her dissertation in December. She will also speak at a U-M symposium on “Advancing Omry Ronen’s Legacy in Russian Literary Studies,” and will present “Prosody in Hebrew and Yiddish: Translations of Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin*.”

**Benjamin Pollak**, *PhD Student, Department of English Language and Literature*, recently published an article “Reassessing A Walker in the City: Alfred Kazin’s Brownsville and the Image of Immigrant New York,” in the October issue of the journal *American Jewish History*.

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## Jews Who Count *continued from page 2*

Perhaps we should look at synagogue attendance. Statistically there have never been enough synagogues, congregations, *shtiebls*, and *minyanim* to accommodate all American Jews. When one turns to the local level, the results are clear. For example, a Sabbath survey of local Brownsville (Brooklyn) congregations in 1926 found roughly 5,000 Jews attending services, of whom 900 were women and 560 were boys aged ten to 16 (registering the impact of bar mitzvah observance). The conclusion: less than 10 percent of the neighborhood’s Jews attended weekly Sabbath services. And Brownsville was nicknamed “the Jerusalem of Brooklyn” for its vaunted piety. What does the Pew data tell us? That most Jews rarely attend services weekly, a few more go once or twice a month, but the majority (except for Orthodox Jews) only go a few times a year.

Lest one think that only urban comparisons count, let’s look at one of the most famous surveys of Jews living in a Chicago suburb in the 1960s. Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum’s study, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier*, discovered that ethical behavior and leading a moral life ranked at the top of Jewish suburbanites’ scale of what was critical to being a good Jew. The Pew researchers similarly found that 69 percent of contemporary American Jews consider ethics to be essential to Jewish identity.

### So, let’s stop counting only Jews who count.

Obviously there have been significant continuities in American Jews’ behavior and beliefs across almost a century, as well as changes as in the area of Jewish education. Two of the most important changes reveal how profoundly American Jews were affected by events happening outside of the United States and how successfully they integrated these epochal 20th-century Jewish historical events into their consciousness of what it means to be Jewish. I speak, of course, of the Holocaust and destruction of European Jewry, and of Israel and the establishment of a vibrant Jewish state. Although American Jews rank remembering the Holocaust the highest as an essential component of Jewish identity, over 40 percent also place Israel as essential (ranked after being intellectually curious). These attitudes point to important differences introduced by postwar Jewish Americans.

So, let’s stop counting only Jews who count. Pew’s “Portrait of Jewish Americans” gives us a valuable snapshot, one that should be viewed in the context of a timeline longer than a decade or two.

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# Spotlight on Poles and Jews

By Shayna Elizabeth Goodman

Throughout this academic year the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies will be co-sponsoring, together with the Copernicus Endowment for Polish Studies, a variety of events dedicated to exploring the experience of Poles and Jews in the present and past. This collaboration reflects the initiative of Genevieve Zubrzycki, Director of Polish Studies at the Center for Russian, Eastern European, and Eurasian Studies, and a faculty associate at the Frankel Center.

Much has happened in the world of Polish-Jewish relations in the years since 2001, when Jan Gross first published *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*, a controversial examination of a Polish-perpetrated massacre of Jews in a Nazi-occupied Polish town. In the years prior to and following Gross' analysis of Polish antisemitism, Jews and Poles have grappled with a difficult history of conflict, but have also engaged in cultural exchange. "The Jewish revival in Poland is one of the most significant cultural phenomena of the two past decades," observes Zubrzycki, "involving Jews and non-Jews in NGOs, state-sponsored institutions, and bottom-up citizens' initiatives. To bring that important movement closer to us, the Copernicus Program for Polish Studies and the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies co-organized a diverse series of lectures, concerts, and films on various topics related to Polish-Jewish themes."

The upcoming events at the Frankel Center reconsider the current state of Polish-Jewish relations by addressing the controversial history of Jews as victims of Polish antisemitism alongside Polish perspectives and the evolution of contemporary Jewish-Polish music, film, and literature.

## Highlights include:

A concert by Polish klezmer jazz trio, **Shofar**, at the Kerrytown Concert House on November 5 at 8:00 pm. In bringing the melodies of Hasidic *niggunim* together with Hasidic and free jazz, Shofar seeks to continue a Jewish-Polish musical tradition.

*Kerrytown Concert House, 415 N. Fourth Ave.*

On November 11 at 5:30 pm, **Jan Gross** presents this year's Copernicus Annual Lecture, "'Making History': A Journey into the Hidden Polish Past." Gross will discuss his own path into researching the past and what led him to write books on 20th-century Polish Jewry. He will reflect as well on the role he has played in shaping historical knowledge and public discourse on memory and identity in Poland.

*Helmut Stern Auditorium,  
U-M Museum of Art, 525 S. State St.*

On January 9, at 4:00 pm, **Genevieve Zubrzycki**, U-M associate professor of sociology, will address the topic of pluralism in contemporary Poland in her lecture, "'With One Color, We Cannot See': Building pluralism through Jewishness in Contemporary Poland."

*1636 International Institute, Social of Social Work Bldg.  
1080 S. University*

On February 10 at noon, **Karen C. Underhill**, assistant professor of Polish literature and culture at the University of Illinois, will speak about the legacy of the Polish-Jewish writer and painter Bruno Schultz in her lecture, "Bruno Schulz' Sanatorium: Reflections on the Uneasy Afterlife of National Literatures." Many consider Bruno Schulz among the finest Polish-language prose stylists of the 20th century.

*1636 International Institute, Social of Social Work Bldg.  
1080 S. University*

There will be a film viewing of *The Death of Captain Pilecki*, followed by a Q&A with the lead actor, Marek Probosz, on March 18 at 5:30 pm. The film tells the story of the trial of Captain of Cavalry Witold Pilecki, a Polish resistance organizer who informed the Western Allies of the existence of Auschwitz. Captain Pilecki was captured and tried by the communists in 1947 for his participation in the anti-communist underground.

*Helmut Stern Auditorium, U-M Museum of Art  
525 S. State St.*

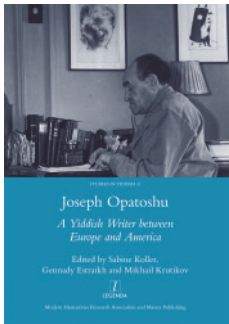
On April 7 at 4:00 pm, the historian **Dariusz Stola**, professor at the Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, and fellow at the Migration Research Center, Warsaw, will present a lecture on his recent scholarship. Stola has published extensively on such topics as the communist regime in Poland, Polish-Jewish relations, and the Holocaust and the subsequent Polish debates concerning the past. He will speak on: "A Country with no Exit? Migrations from Poland 1949–1989."

*1636 International Institute, Social of Social Work Bldg.  
1080 S. University*

The year's events illustrate the complex nature of Polish-Jewish relations under Nazi occupation, Soviet rule, and continuing in contemporary democracy. The variety of programs aims to illuminate both the legacies of Jews in Poland and the ways that a Jewish presence manifests itself in present-day Poland through arts, culture, and politics.

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# Book Notes

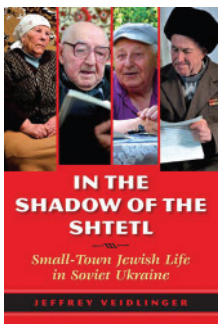


**Mikhail Krutikov**, Associate Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures and Judaic Studies, has co-edited a path-breaking collection of articles on the Yiddish American writer, Joseph Opatoshu (1886–1954), *Collection Joseph Opatoshu: A Yiddish Writer Between Europe and America*.

At the turn of the 20th century, East European Jews underwent a radical cultural transformation, which turned a traditional religious community into a modern nation struggling to find its place in the world. An important figure in this ‘Jewish Renaissance’ was the writer and activist Joseph Opatoshu. Born into a Hasidic family, he spent his early childhood in a forest in Central Poland; was educated in Russia; and then studied engineering in France and America.

Immigrating to New York in 1907, Opatoshu joined the revitalizing modernist group *Di Yunge* — The Young. His early novels painted a vivid picture of social turmoil and inner psychological conflict, using modernist devices of multiple voices and mixed linguistic idioms. He acquired international fame through his historical novels about the Polish uprising of 1863 and the expulsion of Jews from Regensburg in 1519. Though he was translated into several languages, Yiddish writing always fostered his ideas and ideals of Jewish identity.

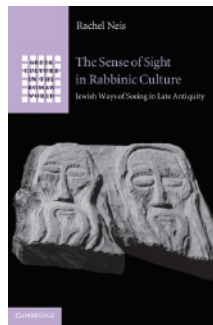
Although he occupied a key position in the transnational Jewish culture during his lifetime, Opatoshu has until recently been neglected by scholars. This volume brings together literary specialists and historians working in Jewish and Slavic Studies, who analyze Opatoshu’s quest for modern Jewish identity from different perspectives.



**Jeffrey Veidlinger**, Joseph Brodsky Collegiate Professor of History and Judaic Studies, has just published his third book. *In the Shadow of the Shtetl: Small-Town Jewish Life in Soviet Ukraine* (Indiana University Press) recounts previously unknown aspects of Soviet Jewish life. The story of how the Holocaust decimated Jewish life and culture in the shtetls of

Eastern Europe is well known. Still, thousands of Jews in

these small towns survived the war and returned afterward to rebuild their communities. The recollections of some 400 returnees to Ukraine provide the basis for Jeffrey Veidlinger’s reappraisal of the traditional narrative of 20th-century Jewish history. These elderly Yiddish speakers relate their memories of Jewish life in the prewar shtetl, their stories of survival during the Holocaust, and their experiences living as Jews under Communism. Despite Stalinist repressions, the Holocaust, and official antisemitism, their individual remembrances of family life, religious observance, education, and work testify to the survival of Jewish life in the shadow of the shtetl to this day.



**Rachel Neis**, Associate Professor of History and Judaic Studies, and affiliate of the University of Michigan Law School, has published her first book, *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture — Jewish Ways of Seeing in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge University Press). Her book studies the significance of sight in rabbinic cultures across Palestine and Mesopotamia

(approximately 1st to 7th centuries). It tracks the extent and effect to which the rabbis living in the Greco-Roman and Persian worlds sought to appropriate, recast, and discipline contemporaneous understandings of sight. Sight had a crucial role to play in the realms of divinity, sexuality and gender, idolatry, and, ultimately, rabbinic subjectivity. The rabbis lived in a world in which the eyes were at once potent and vulnerable: eyes were thought to touch objects of vision, while also acting as an entryway into the viewer. Rabbis, Romans, Zoroastrians, Christians, and others were all concerned with the protection and exploitation of vision. Employing many different sources, Professor Neis considers how the rabbis engaged varieties of late antique visualities, along with rabbinic narrative, exegetical, and legal strategies, as part of an effort to cultivate and mark a ‘rabbinic eye’.

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SAVE THE DATE

**Monday, February 3, 2014  
9 AM - 5:30 PM**

**Symposium:  
Gender and Sexuality in  
Law and Religion**

Rackham Graduate School, Assembly Hall  
915 East Washington St., Ann Arbor, MI

This symposium explores the complex intersections  
of religious norms and values as they confront  
both religious and secular legal frameworks.

Sponsors:

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