

## INTRODUCTION

The Jewish Studies Project at Central European University was launched in 1996 with the aim of revitalizing the study of Jewish history, culture and society in the region. Starting off as a public lecture series, the Jewish Studies Project has grown into a vibrant hub for Jewish Studies in Central Europe, attracting students and lecturers from the former Communist bloc, and also from Western Europe, North America and Israel. We now offer a teaching track for MA and PhD students, regularly organize international workshops and conferences, and more importantly, our alumni now constitute a local network of scholars teaching Jewish Studies at universities across Central and Eastern Europe. We are proud to be part of the revival of academic Jewish Studies in a region where this was previously unimaginable.

Central European University offers a Jewish Studies specialization within the broader framework of the Department of History, the Nationalism Studies Program and, more recently, the Department of Medieval Studies, thereby encouraging students to examine Jewish history, culture and society in a comparative context, using a wide range of theoretical approaches and methodological tools. Our students come from a diverse range of countries and educational backgrounds, allowing them to study in an open and highly international environment, in which no nationality – and no national narrative – is dominant. As such, the Jewish Studies specialization fits in perfectly with CEU's goal of fostering open and critical inquiry in an intellectual environment committed to multidisciplinary, non-sectarianism and tolerance. The focus on Central and Eastern Europe makes the Jewish Studies specialization one of a kind and has given CEU a vital role in the rejuvenation of Jewish Studies in the former Communist bloc and beyond.

The Jewish Studies Project has developed gradually, with an emphasis on academic quality, regional and international connections, and outreach to the local community. We began in 1996 with a *public lecture series*, which is widely attended by students, faculty, and members of the community at large. These lectures, and other articles on Jewish Studies, are published in our biannual *Jewish Studies Yearbook*. This is the seventh volume, which covers our activities in the 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 academic years. In 2001, we began offering the *Jewish Studies Specialization*, which provides our students with a wide range of courses that are cross-listed in various departments. In 2011, we introduced a 2-year MA degree (in addition to the 1-year MA degree). We have several ongoing *research projects*, and we regularly organize *international conferences and workshops* in cooperation with universities in North America, Israel and elsewhere in Europe.

The permanent faculty consists of Victor Karády, András Kovács, Michael L. Miller and Carsten Wilke, and we regularly invite visiting faculty, as well.

In the 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 academic years, courses were taught by Shlomo Avineri (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Ra'anan Boustan (UCLA), Zvi Gitelman (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), and Hanna Zaremska (Historical Institute at the Polish Academy of Sciences). A full list of courses can be found in Appendix 3.

In the framework of our public lecture series, we hosted Hamutal Bar-Yosef (Ben Gurion University, Beersheva), István Horváth (Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca), Liliane Weissberg (University of Pennsylvania), David Rechter (University of Oxford), Hillel J. Kieval (Washington University in St. Louis), Michal Bilewicz (University of Warsaw), Eleonore Lappin-Eppel (Graz University), Jason Wittenberg (University of California, Berkeley), François Guesnet (University College London), Peter Pulzer (University of Oxford), David Ruderman (University of Pennsylvania) as well as the filmmakers Eszter Hajdú (Hungary), Borbala Kriza (Hungary) and Lukas Přibyl (Czech Republic). Many of the articles in this volume are based on the lectures given at CEU. For a full list of public lectures, see Appendix 1.

In October 2009, we hosted a conference on "Schism, Sectarianism and Jewish Denominationalism: Hungarian Jewry in a Comparative Perspective," which was supported by the Institut für die Geschichte der deutschen Juden, Hamburg, Germany; Graduate Program in Contemporary Jewry, Faculty of Jewish Studies, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel; Cardinal Franz König Senior Lectureship in Austrian Studies, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel; Fritz Thyssen Stiftung für Wissenschaftsförderung, Germany; Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Budapest. For the full conference program, see Appendix 2.

In June 2010, the Jewish Studies Project organized a summer university course on "Messianism: Jewish and Christian Perspectives," together with the Religious Studies Program. We have also organized several workshops using the 52,000 testimonies available at the USC Shoah Visual History Archive, which is accessible at CEU.

The Jewish Studies Project has launched a major research project investigating Jewish issues in Communist party archives, with a focus on Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. The research aims to locate and publish documents detailing Communist policy toward Jews and Jewish institutions from 1945 to 1990, especially in the Politburo and Central Committee in each of these countries. Many of the documents have been published in previous volumes of the Jewish Studies Yearbook. This volume, contains particularly interesting documents concerning relations between Hungary and the State of Israel.

The Jewish Studies Project has emerged as the central hub in a ramified network of Jewish Studies programs in Central Europe, thanks in part to the placement of CEU graduates at universities in the Czech Republic and Romania, the organization of international conferences, and the high profile of CEU in Central and Eastern Europe. The Jewish Studies Project aims to strengthen this position by building a larger consortium of regional Jewish Studies programs and by cultivating robust institutional relationships with leading universities in Israel, Europe and North America.

We are grateful to the Rothschild Foundation Europe for supporting Jewish Studies at CEU and in the entire region. They have enabled students from Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Ukraine – as well as Canada, Israel and the United States – to pursue a specialization in Jewish Studies at CEU. Many other students – from Estonia, Holland, Mongolia, and Turkmenistan, just to name a few – have also had the unique opportunity to take Jewish Studies courses during their time in Budapest.

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Budapest, Hungary

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