Holocaust Research and Study at the University of Haifa

What do we do?

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Our international MA Program in Holocaust Studies

The one-year International Master’s Program in Holocaust Studies at the University of Haifa was inaugurated in 2012, the first and only program of its kind in Israel. Our students come from over 20 countries, such as the U.S., Canada, Australia, England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, Poland, Ukraine, Russia, Holland, Romania, Serbia, China, Albania, Cambodia and more. Our founding mission is to nurture and prepare students to continue their studies and attain a PhD in the field of Holocaust research or to educate about the Holocaust and genocide upon their return to their home countries.

The program focuses on Holocaust research and education with an exceptional, multi-disciplinary approach offering courses in history, psychology, anthropology, museology, education, international law, visual arts and literature; training in the European languages essential for the study of the Holocaust; excursions and visits to relevant sites, museums and institutions, and intense training in archival research. It also addresses the full range of ethical, moral and intellectual issues involved in the study of the Holocaust and genocide.

All students are offered internship positions in Holocaust-related institutions in Israel – among them Yad Vashem, The Ghetto Fighters House Museum, and the Combat Genocide Association – and abroad, such as the Jewish Museum in Berlin, the Jewish Museum in Warsaw, the Jewish Museum in Budapest and the Holocaust Memorial in Miami Beach, Florida. Students also volunteer with Holocaust survivors, probably the last generation to get a firsthand account of their stories.

Our program offers a meeting-place for students from diverse nationalities, ethnic groups and academic backgrounds. This structure creates opportunities for joint learning experiences, for intellectual enrichment and for the expansion of students’ perspectives through discourse. With Yad Vashem and the Ghetto Fighters’ House Museum – the leading Holocaust museums in Israel – as our partners, we offer our students a unique academic experience that involves opportunities for academic learning on the one hand with practical working experience on the other.
Meet a selection of our students

Lindsay Shapiro, Florida

Lindsay is 25 years old and is originally from Florida. She is a graduate of New York University and joined our program as a student of our third cohort. In her discussions with the academic advisor of the program, she spoke about her wish to become an educator and teach about the Holocaust in informal educational settings such as museums. Committed to helping her realize her goal, we encouraged her to take advantage of the internship opportunities our program offered: during the year she interned at Yad Vashem, and upon completion of her coursework, we granted her a scholarship to travel to Poland for a month and intern at the newly-opened Jewish Museum in Warsaw. She worked in the museum’s education department, gaining practical experience and networking. She was recently hired as an educator at Beit Hatfutsot, one of the leading museums in Israel. While doing that, Lindsay is also writing her thesis on the Jews of Poland who returned to their hometowns after the Holocaust. She is planning on continuing her studies and gaining a PhD in the field.

Chenda Seang, Cambodia

24-year-old Chenda was born twenty years after the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime, the genocidal government that was responsible for the death and murder of nearly two million people in Cambodia. His mother, who was 16 at the time, was enslaved by the genocidal government, losing her parents in the process. Strongly affected by his mother’s story, Chenda volunteered, and later worked, at the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), the world’s largest archive of photography and documents relating to the Khmer Rouge, dedicated to preserve memory and justice. Believing that only education can effectively bring the country into genuine reconciliation, Chenda initiated and facilitated high-school students’ debates in the DC-Cam’s Genocide Education Project. In his personal statement to the Academic Committee of the MA Program in Holocaust Studies, Chenda wrote: “As a member of the younger Cambodian generation, I feel an obligation to join forces with others to contribute towards a more peaceful Cambodian society... I believe education is the most critical investment for influencing the future of my country.” After spending a full year studying and researching the Holocaust, Chenda will return to Cambodia able to utilize the skills and knowledge gained in our program, committed to become an agent of social change, and educating young Cambodians about the history of mass violence and the prevention of mass atrocities.
Growing up in Northwest Serbia during the terrible years of the Yugoslav wars, Joavana witnessed the subsequent breakup of Yugoslavia. While studying for her law degree, she became interested in the complex history of Serbia and the multicultural nature of her homeland. Stating, "If I could make even a small contribution to this world that would teach that human life is greater than anything else, I would consider my work successful," she joined the educational program Education of the Culture of Remembrance, learning and researching war crimes committed in her region.

Learning about Jews and Jewish life living in her hometown prior to the Second World War, Jovana felt committed to learning more about their fate. She started conducting interviews with Holocaust survivors and other witnesses from the region, but, feeling her education in the field was lacking, she chose to join our MA Program in Holocaust Studies and utilize her experience as a lawyer and associate judge to work for human rights and fight inequality in Serbia.

Klodeta was born and brought up in Albania. As a child, she lived through the Kosovo war, when a great number of Albanians from Kosovo found refuge in Albania. Brought up as a Muslim, Klodeta found much interest in stories of Muslims who saved Jews during the Second World War, noting that Jews from Germany and Austria found a safe haven in Albania after Hitler’s rise to power. Klodeta is committed to creating bridges between Islam and Judaism and has chosen to study the Holocaust at the University of Haifa guided by the conviction that educating the population in both countries towards greater compassion and acceptance will lead to peace. During her time in our program, she is dedicating her research to Muslims who saved Jews during the Holocaust. Her aim is to translate these stories into Albanian as a way to connect Jews and Muslim in a shared history.
“Coming to Haifa once a week is a blessed break for me. The courses, the students, the overall atmosphere, it allows me to free my mind and truly learn something new. On the long drive home I usually organize my thoughts, process what I learned and think how to translate it into my teaching.”

Avshalom Nachmani, Israel

“The journey of finding myself at the University of Haifa changed my life. During this time, I was surrounded with people who inspired me, who challenged, understood, supported, encouraged me and from whom I learned my true value... the members of the Institute, professors, guest speakers, Holocaust survivors and last, but not least, my colleagues from the MA program.”

Ionela Dasclutu, Romania

“Our cohort comes from a variety of different backgrounds. Some celebrate Hanukkah and some Christmas, but we all celebrate together. This is one of the greatest perks of living in Israel. As a non-Jew studying the Holocaust, it was really important to learn about religion. I can’t think of a better place to do that than in Israel.”

Meredith Scott, United States

“We come from different places around the world. We come with different backgrounds, languages, worldviews and values. We come with varying degrees, specialties, hobbies and professional identities. But we came to the University of Haifa with one goal: we all look to the past because we want a better future. Our Holocaust studies MA program encourages us to grow academically and personally.”

Zahava Moerdler, United States

“Not only am I obtaining a degree, but I am also gaining valuable work and volunteering experience. Being a part of the program allows people from all walks of life access to a unique educational experience.”

Esther Selman, England

“Being a Holocaust Studies student changed my social life forever. Every conversation with a person I have just met now has a deeper meaning, a moral lesson needs to be provided, good and evil needs to be defined, spirits need to raise.”

Dorota Nowak, Poland
Meet our faculty

Our faculty is comprised of leading historians, sociologists, anthropologists, museum curators, psychologists, educators, and art researchers as a means of providing students with a more complete and deep representation of the Holocaust and truly utilizing multi-disciplinary methods in their research.

Here is a Taste of Our Multi-Disciplinary Courses and Faculty

Prof. Dan Michman, Chief historian of Yad Vashem, teaches Holocaust historiography with a focus on the Holocaust historian’s workshop: from raw documents to the shaping of historical interpretation.

Dr. Carol Kidron is an anthropologist studying Holocaust memory and commemoration. Her course guides students in their study of Holocaust memory and trauma in Israel in comparison with other countries that have known mass violence. The course critically evaluates a variety of forms of Holocaust testimony, representation and commemoration and Holocaust trauma-related therapy.

Dr. David Silberklang, a historian, teaches a course on the Final Solution to the Jewish Question and talks to the students about Nazi Policy of extermination. The course examines the development and implementation of the Final Solution and various historical theories regarding the Nazis’ decision-making process through reading and analysis of historical literature and key documents from the period.

Dr. Stephanie Shosh Rotem is an architect in her profession; an expert on the topic of Holocaust museums, who together with our students explores the history, exhibitions, and design of various Holocaust museums around the world within their social, cultural and political agendas.
Originally from Germany, Prof. Stefan Ihrig, a historian, examines the “long road to Auschwitz,” the prehistory of the Holocaust. He does so from within the context of German history, with a special focus on the colonial and imperial experience.

Prof. Hadas Wiseman is a psychologist who teaches about long-term psychological effects of the Holocaust on the survivors and their families (the second and third generations).

Dr. Nurit Novis, a psychologist, offers a course on the effects that the Holocaust had on post-WWII social psychology. In her course, our students familiarize themselves with different educational programs and curricula written about the Holocaust in different countries.

Dr. Rotem Giladi, an expert in International Law and Human Rights, has designed a course for non-lawyers that tries to answer how could, and how did, international law deal with such an exceptional phenomenon as the Holocaust? And, conversely, what imprint did the Holocaust leave on international law as it developed after 1945? Is international law today better equipped, as a result, to deal with genocide and mass atrocity?

Dr. Miryam Sivan, a literature expert and a writer herself, teaches about literature of the Holocaust. The students read authors whose work grapples with the multi-faceted implications of the war and its myriad of experiences. Through prose, poetry, non-fiction and play the course examines some Holocaust literature “classics” and lesser-known works by young European, American, and Israeli authors.

Dr. Shmulik Lederman, an expert in Political Philosophy, teaches about genocides in the modern era. By examining the specter of genocide and particular case studies, the students are familiarized with the history of the term, its ambiguities, its legal definition and the many controversies over what genocide actually means.
One of our primary aims is to involve our students in international academic discourse about the Holocaust, open the door for them to join the international community of scholars and help them expand their global world view. We do this by providing opportunities for internships, seminars, study tours and students exchanges in Israel and abroad.
Paul interned at Yad Vashem

“For my internship, I chose to develop my skills with Yad Vashem’s department of the Righteous Among the Nations. As the department does not have someone with Italian language capabilities it allowed me to flex my language skills while also assisting in the process of having Italians recognized and acknowledged for saving Jews. By undertaking this ‘detective’ work I found myself giving life back to, and a name to an individual. There is no better feeling, I believe, then recreating the life of someone who saved a Jew.”

Paul Howard, Ireland

Angel interned at the Jewish Museum in Budapest.

“In my 4-week intensive internship at the museum and archive, I focused on two projects. I conducted a visitor survey which aimed to gather comprehensive visitor feedback about their experience and interests within the museum for reconstruction purposes. I also worked on an online archive of artifacts from the Holocaust collection and added them to the online collection. It perfectly fused my interest in photography, history, archival research and museums together in a single project.”

Angel Noel, Philippines

Wei interned at the Jewish Museum in Berlin.

“As part of my internship I was working with a team for a new permanent exhibition. In addition, I also handled artifacts concerning the life of Jewish refugees in Shanghai. With my knowledge of the Chinese language and background, I found and corrected some inaccuracies in the description or dating of these objects. At Jewish Museum Berlin I was assigned the task of translating some Chinese texts formerly owned by the Jewish residents of Shanghai Ghetto into English.”

Wei (Aaron) Zhang, China

Hannah interned at the Ghetto Fighters House Museum.

“I was invited to work on a project in the art archives at the Ghetto Fighters House Museum. I was taken to the rooms where hundreds of pieces of art are stored outside of the existing exhibitions available to the public. When I examine each work, I am indeed tracing the past. I feel it there, within every line or sketch, each movement of a brush or carving. These pieces are a legacy, and in many cases the only remains of a life once lived.”

Hannah Wilson, England
Internship in schools

Students who are interested in Holocaust education are offered an opportunity to explore various approaches and perspectives toward teaching the topic and to create Holocaust education programs to fit the schools where they intern.

Anat interned at Nofim Elementary School in Haifa.

“We chose the theme “Children in the Holocaust” and focused on personal stories. Personal accounts allowed us to untangle the masses and focus on the individuals. The 28 sixth-graders who participated in the program had the opportunity to explore, discuss, and internalize issues that children had to face while living through the Holocaust.”

Anat Leviteh Weiner, Israel

Other students, such as Diana, chose to gain professional experience at the Walworth Barbour American International School (WBAIS) Middle School.

“We held a workshop with the students on preventing bigotry and being accepting of all, regardless of race, religion, gender or national origin. The students asked really emphatic and reflective questions.”

Diana Schuemann, Germany

Students interested in social activism are offered to intern at NGO’s such as The Combat Genocide Association, an Israeli nonprofit organization focused on providing aid to survivors of genocide, and preventing further genocides. Chenda, Anna and Yael are interning at the Association this year.

“I am assisting in publishing an anthology of genocide poetry. The collection of poetry is written by survivors, witnesses and children of survivors.”

Chenda Seang, Cambodia
Our students enjoy the program’s on-going collaboration with the Museum of the history of Polish Jews in Warsaw, which allows them to join on location seminars.

Such initiative is the POLIN Meeting Point Summer Seminar which includes workshops, lectures and discussions on historical narratives of the War in Germany, Poland and Israel as presented through individual accounts, social memory and artistic expressions.

“This topic sparked very interesting and illuminating discussions among the students and brought to light issues of national narratives and identity politics in Poland, Germany, and Israel. Through these discussions, our international group got the opportunity to really get to know one another and delve deeper into various narratives – personal, political, historical, and national – experienced by all the participants and their various home countries.”

Devra Katz, United States/Israel

Our program offers our students the opportunity to study abroad while they are in our program. One of our first such initiatives is a student exchange program with Southampton University in the UK where students from both universities are awarded academic credits for courses taken at the other university.

Our students join an annual study tour to Poland in which they visit the very places they study. Over 7-8 days, the students visit an array of historical sites, memorials, and venues of modern day Jewish life. The study tour includes visits to academic institutions where students attend lectures by prominent scholars and meet students from Polish universities studying similar topics.

“The comprehensive approach to our time in Poland really allowed us to frame the crux of our studies into the larger context of world history and Poland’s national historical narrative.”

Devra Katz, United States/Israel
The program is dedicated to creating and nurturing a new generation of Holocaust researchers and educators. For their research, students may write their thesis on topics relating to the Holocaust in all disciplines represented in the program. We are committed to supporting them and providing them with the necessary tools for their independent research, such as teaching of relevant languages and a meticulous guidance in research methodologies.

We encourage our students to publish their research in academic journals and become an active part of the international community of Holocaust researchers.

Here is a taste of our students’ innovative research:
Museums display their materials and subjects with unique perspectives, often influenced by the museum’s vision. Holocaust museums in Israel are no exception, and whilst the museums all explore the topic of Holocaust, they each present a different narrative. In turn, groups from different parts of society that endured the Holocaust will have had different experiences. Lisa’s study explores four different Holocaust museums in Israel (Ghetto Fighters’ House Museum, Yad Vashem, Testimony House (בית עדות) and Chamber of the Holocaust (מרתף השואה) and how they display and exhibit the experience of the Haredi communities during the Holocaust. This examination delves into the different ways that museums utilize artefacts, photographs and the written narrative, and to what extent these represent Haredi communities.

Lea presents the first in-depth study of the impact the Filmbühne (film stage) had in the lives of German Jews living under the systematic oppression of the Nazi regime. The Filmbühne was an extension of the Jüdischer Kulturbund, a Jewish organization which offered cultural activities for Jews between 1933 and 1941. The thesis analyzes the films screened to Jewish audiences, examine the way films were advertised/reviewed/discussed publicly (both in the Jewish press and the non-Jewish press), and consults letters and diaries of Jewish individuals who wrote about attending the cinema. The study reconstructs the ambiguous position of Jews as cultural consumers who were, on the one hand, excluded from attending film theaters together with Aryans and, on the other hand, allowed to watch many of the films that non-Jewish Germans watched. The extermination of the Jews in Raseiniai County.

Simon’s thesis explores the expressions of personal collapse articulated by Holocaust victims inside deportation trains. Looking at transport through both a historical and a literary lens, it examines letters written on trains to concentration and death camps alongside Israeli Dan Pagis’ “Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway Car.” The letters were taken from archives at Yad Vashem and the Ghetto Fighters House in Israel, the Center for Contemporary Jewish Documentation in France, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.
Aline Pennewaard, the Netherlands


Discipline: History

Three transport lists from the Netherlands were analyzed by Aline in order to determine a pattern in which the Nazis deported the Dutch Jews: the first transport on July 15, 1942; the first transport to Sobibór on March 2, 1943 and the last transport of 1943, the one on November 16, 1943. The transport lists were used for the book In Memoriam L’zecher (1995), which contains all the names of the 104,000 Dutch Jews who didn’t return from the concentration camps. The 102 transport lists have never been studied together as a whole.

Natali Beige, Israel


Discipline: History

Although an extensive historiography of the Holocaust in Lithuania exists, very little has been written about the history of the Jewish communities in provincial Lithuania. These communities are crucial to understanding the Holocaust as well as the development and implementation of the Final Solution in the area. Natali’s study examines the fate of small Jewish towns (Shtetlekh) in Raseiniai County through an integration of a variety of sources. Creating a synthesis of documents, testimonies and literature identifies the stages of persecution and extermination, the relationship between the Germans and the Lithuanians, the connection between bureaucracy and ideology, and the various groups of perpetrators involved in the extermination of the Jews in Raseiniai County.

Ronit Roth-Hanania, Israel

Title of thesis: “Concern for Others in Nazi Germany: Searching for Markers of Empathy in Germans’ Emotional Responses to the Persecution of the Jews, 1933-1945”

Discipline: Psychology

Ronit’s study focused on three historical periods in search of markers of empathy in the emotional responses of ‘ordinary Germans’ to the persecution of the Jews. Personal accounts of a 100 ‘ordinary Germans,’ including letters, memoirs, diaries, interviews, testimonies and surveys, were reviewed and analyzed in search of markers of empathy. These primary sources were compared and contrasted with the Nazi secret reports in order to uncover discrepancies, if they existed, between what the official documents suggest was the overall response of the German public and what individuals felt and experienced in response to the Jews’ maltreatment.
Ronen Harran, Israel
Title of thesis: "The Role of the Jewish Women in the 1944 Sonderkommando Uprising in Birkenau"
Discipline: History

Ronen's research attempts to delve into the details below the surface, both during the period preceding the uprising and the period following it. On the one hand, it traces the preceding events, the establishment and execution of the gunpowder smuggling activity and reevaluates them, and on the other hand it delineates the German investigation that followed the uprising, which led to the imprisonment of four Jewish women and to their execution – all while evaluating multiple testimonies and documents, some of which have not yet been subjected to research.

Shelby Weltz, USA
Title of thesis: Contextualizing Transformation: A Case Study of Pilgrimage to Poland"
Discipline: Anthropology

Shelby examines the effect of the Poland pilgrimage on a sample of Modern Orthodox American Jewish females. She begins the paper by exploring the conceptual framework of the Poland voyage as a pilgrimage. Thematic analysis was used to address which themes surfaced when recent and veteran participants spoke of their trips to Poland, with particular emphasis placed on how participants felt they were impacted and/or transformed by the journey. By exploring how six participants engaged with, interpreted and synthesized their experiences of Heritage Seminars, Shelby draws conclusions about the impact of the Poland pilgrimage on a sample of Modern Orthodox American Jewish females.

Audrey Zada, USA/Israel
Title of thesis: "A Comparative Analysis of the Discourse on the 'Bystander' in the United States and Israel"
Discipline: Education

This thesis asks how the term “bystander” is used in Holocaust discourse to reflect larger, national aspects of Israeli and American narratives of the Holocaust by closely analyzing the two national Holocaust museums from these countries, Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. It explores how the term “bystander” became popular in relation to the Holocaust by examining its development in social psychology, historiography of the Holocaust and practical applications in international law policy. This thesis argues that the idea of the “bystander” is, in fact, presented differently in Israel and the United States.
Museum work and training

Holocaust museums have become one of the most popular mediums of Holocaust commemoration. One of the program’s goals is to teach museum studies and curation by introducing students to museum spaces and historical representation in exhibitions, and by providing the basic curatorial skills for working in both Holocaust museums and heritage sites. Each year the program provides the students with the opportunity to curate special projects. Here is a taste of our creative curatorial experience:

Training in Curating
Developing an educational program and designing a new exhibition space for designated areas of a National Heritage Site.

The project took place at the Heritage Site of Atlit Detention Camp. It focused on developing practical skills needed in curating museum exhibition. First, students explored the historical background of Holocaust survivors’ struggle to immigrate and integrate into the Land of Israel after the war. Finally, each student created an exhibition-style poster, representing the key aspects of their project, which were presented in a daylong seminar.

A Long Way Home: Jewish Refugees After WWII
Exhibition on the journey of Holocaust survivors to the Atlit Detention Camp in British Mandatory Palestine.

The exhibition contained posters created by the students on the journey, arrival, camp life, return to life, and release of Atlit inmates. A series of posters placed a personal spotlight on the story of Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, the former Chief Rabbi of Israel who was briefly interned in Atlit with his brother. The exhibit was displayed at the University library and was open to the public. Rabbi Israel Meir Lau was the keynote speaker at the exhibit opening.

Traveling exhibit: The saving of Jews during the Holocaust
Students worked with the Carl Lutz Foundation to create a traveling exhibit, which presented different ways to teach the Holocaust to multicultural audiences around the world.

The students designed lesson plans and posters that told the story of Righteous Among the Nations, Swiss ambassador Carl Lutz who saved the lives of thousands of Hungarian Jews during the war. The students’ work was presented at an exhibit that took place at the university in the presence of the Swiss Ambassador, the Hungarian ambassador in Israel and the head of history for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Switzerland.
In 1978, Swiss art collector Dr. Oscar Ghez donated his collection of works created by artists who perished in the Holocaust to the University of Haifa. 130 pieces in total, by 18 different artists, consisted of oil paintings, watercolors and drawings. Arrested by the Nazis and their French collaborators, many of these artists were interned in the transit camps of Drancy, Gurs, and Compiègne before being deported East to death camps. Ghez conceived of the collection as a memorial to artists who perished in the Holocaust, but it is also an important record of their lives and creativity.

This year, the students collaborated with the Hecht museum on a unique research project revolving around the Ghez collection that culminated in an exhibition in which the class curated and created an extensive catalogue of the art collection. The last exhibition catalogue of the Ghez collection is over 20 years old. The time was ripe for a reassessment of the collection, relying on new scholarship and new methodological approaches. Little research has been done on these artists; for many, the dates and place of death is unknown. Like detectives, the students explored the archives and traced the provenance of the works of art before Ghez acquired them. The students’ research contributed to a fuller picture of the rich diversity of Jewish culture in the prewar period, when Paris was a magnet for Jewish artists across Europe.
Meet Jordanna Gessler, who graduated from our program in 2016 and is now Director of Education at Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust. “I truly enjoyed my unique experience studying the Holocaust in Israel and all the opportunities the program afforded me. The International MA Program at the University of Haifa allowed me to work intimately with the Ghetto Fighters House and Yad Vashem, visit memorial sites in both Germany and Poland as part of a moving, educational study tour, interview and bond with Holocaust Survivors, hear from researchers and activists in the field all while growing with an amazing group of people. While working on my degree in Haifa, I interned in the Righteous Among the Nations Department at Yad Vashem, where I analyzed, collected, and organized data and evidence in order to initiate potential righteous candidacy files. This research highlighted the few, but remarkable, benevolent moments that took place during the Holocaust; at such a horrific and abhorrent time in human history, people somehow mustered the courage and exhibited true heroism. This reminder remains with me. The work is additionally important to me on a personal level; my grandfather and his siblings were rescued by a non-Jewish Polish Volkdeutche.”

Upon graduating from our program, Simon Goldberg accepted the position of Director of Education at the Hong Kong Holocaust and Tolerance Centre. After completing a year in that position, he was accepted as a doctoral student at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University where he is currently studying.

Originally from Baltimore, Maryland, Ariella Esterson has decided to make Aliya and move to Israel upon completion of her studies in our program. After submitting her research thesis on the children of the Kindertransporte and their search for Jewish identity, she started working as a researcher at NGO Monitor, a research institute that promotes accountability and transparency of NGOs’ activities at the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Lisa Schulz, from Germany, is working as an educator at the Ghetto Fighters’ House Museum, developing programs and guiding young visitors through them. She was also recently hired by our own center in the capacity of Secretary of the Board of our academic journal, Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust.
Lorenn Peer, originally from New York, has decided to build a life in Israel. She has recently started working as an educator at Yad Vashem.

Mary Henri-Vrabecz, originally from the USA, moved to London after graduating from our program and started working as a researcher at the International Tracing Service at the Weiner Library for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide.

Zehava Moerdler, from New York, has continued on to write a PhD dissertation at Fordham University School of Law. She has recently published an article in the Fordham International Law Journal on Restituting Justice: Applying the Holocaust Restitution Process to Subsequent Genocides and Human Rights Violations.

Aline Pennward, from the Netherlands, is now a PhD student in Holocaust Studies at the University of Haifa writing under the supervision of Prof. Dan Michman, Chief Historian of Yad Vashem. Her PhD dissertation is an expansion of her MA thesis analyzing all transport lists of Dutch Jews deported by the Nazis.

While still a student in our program, Mickey Dror chose to fulfill a lifelong dream and intern at Yad Vashem. After the year was up, she was offered a job as archivist and data processor in that same department.

Phillipa Friedland, from Canada, is working as an educator at the Vancouver Holocaust Education Center responsible for out-reach programs and the museum’s community relations.
Our commitment to nurturing and disseminating innovative research on the Holocaust is carried out by our academic journal, Dapim – Studies on the Holocaust. This peer-reviewed, bilingual (English and Hebrew) journal is published by international publishing house Routledge, part of the Taylor and Francis Group.

Dapim is devoted to the interdisciplinary study of the Holocaust, its origins, and its aftermath. It features original articles in anthropology, education, museum studies, history, Jewish studies, sociology, literature, social psychology, film and media studies, cultural studies, and international law and forensic studies. Articles are written by leading scholars from all over the world.

Published three times a year, both electronically and in print, Dapim is made available to thousands of subscribing institutions, universities, libraries, and individuals around the world. The number of articles that are downloaded as well as the number of article submission grows tremendously year after year. This is a reflection of Dapim’s growing influence in the field of Holocaust studies.

In January 2015, our research forum on assessing survivors’ testimonies and trauma was included in a collection of the top 25 most-read history articles of all journals published by Taylor and Francis.

One of the features of Dapim is the publication of Research Forums and Special Issues, dedicated to current global debates about the Holocaust. In past years, these dealt with issues such as the debate about the relations between research of the Holocaust and research of other forms of genocide; the use and power of testimonies in research studies; the last days of the war as perceived by the different countries and agents of memory; the role of museums and memorial sites and more. These special features attract a wide range of readers and writers from all over the world.
Education Study:
Narratives, Attitudes, Challenges and Changes Among Middle and High School Holocaust Educators

Conducted jointly with The Sue and Leonard Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies at the University of Miami.

The goal of this study project is to investigate American teachers’ perceptions and experiences of Holocaust education and the manner in which they adapt themselves to the political and cultural changes that have taken place over the past decade.

A pilot study, conducted in Miami Dade County in South Florida, looked into the perceptions of middle and high school teachers who teach about the Holocaust, a state where Holocaust teaching in schools is mandatory by state law. The study included an online and in-person quantitative survey of Holocaust educators, as well as in-depth interviews with 32 teachers from Miami Dade County who are of African-American and Latin-American origin as well as Jewish and non-Jewish whites. The research findings will be published in two different academic articles. One will discuss the challenges of teaching about the Holocaust in marginalized minorities’ classrooms and the second will deal with teaching styles we identified in the research.

The second phase will be a larger study in which we will compare such narratives, both qualitatively and quantitatively, across several cultural contexts, in order to identify shared and distinct teaching styles, all pertaining to the same historical event. The comparison study will be conducted in Israel (Jewish and Arab cities), Europe (primarily countries where the Holocaust took place) and the U.S. (States where Holocaust education is or is not mandated). We have started interviewing German teachers attending seminars about the Holocaust at Yad Vashem in Israel.

History Study:
Holocaust Survivors in the Israeli Air Force

The research study focuses on Holocaust survivors who became air crew members and who served in the Israel Air Force, whose foundations were laid by members of the major pre-state Jewish underground, the Haganah; members of the Mahal (Hebrew acronym for Volunteers from Abroad) of the Israel Defense Forces and people who had previously served in the Royal Air Force. The infrastructure and overall structure of the IAF were built on those foundations.

Of the 300 air crew members who served in the IAF in the mid-1950s and during the Sinai Campaign of 1956, 120 were Holocaust survivors; the survivors filled various capacities: fighters, pilots, squadron commanders and air base commanders. They were present at critical decision-making junctions in the IAF. The “people of the rebirth,” as they were called then, are an integral part of the tradition and birth of the IAF. Today there are only a few dozen of these airmen who are still living among us. Some of the air crew members who were Holocaust survivors fell in combat; some of them died prematurely and others died of old age.

Most of the individuals who came “from there” (that is, who survived the Holocaust) never talked about their past. Most of them maintained absolute silence concerning their previous experiences “there” and wanted to be like their Sabra (native-born Israeli) comrades,
even if that meant not sharing their past experiences and instead constructing a new identity.

In the sixth and seventh decades of the lives of these air crew members – the survivors – some of them have begun to open up and to tell their stories; at the same time, Israeli society’s attitude toward the Holocaust, Holocaust survivors and the Holocaust’s images has changed and has shifted from arrogance to empathy. Their rebirth enabled these air crew members to reach for the sky and the contribution of Holocaust survivors to Israel’s security and to its national values constitutes an important chapter in Jewish history.

The study documents the experiences of Holocaust survivors who became airmen and who served in the Israel Air Force: their personal story, the story of the IAF and the national story from the standpoint of moral values. It offers an analysis of the contribution of these individuals to the IAF and to the State of Israel. The questions asked are what motivated these Holocaust survivors to volunteer to serve in the IAF and to be air crew members? Was the IAF’s flight training program and the meaningful period of service in the IAF, to some limited extent, consolation for the loss of their family members and their childhood? In what way did their experiences during the Second World War influence their decision to volunteer for the flight training program? How did their experience during the Holocaust determine the nature of their contribution to the IAF?

Psychology Study: Ageing Holocaust Survivors in Israel – Mapping out of Needs and Correlation to the Experience of the Holocaust

Today there are approximately 210,000 Holocaust survivors living in Israel, most of them in their 70s and 80s. While this phase of life is often characterized by loss, such as retirement from work, decline in health, loss of a life partner and of death growing closer, for some this period is a time of growth and satisfaction while others are finding it hard to adjust to old age. In the case of Holocaust survivors, traumatic memories from the past combined with the difficulties of old age, may present unique challenges that require special attention and awareness.

The aim of the study is to systematically map out and identify the special needs of elderly Holocaust survivors in Israel as well as map out the services provided to them by the state and NGOs. It also looks at the various ways the survivors and their families utilize these services. Another aim of the study is to look for a correlation between the distinct experience of the survivor during the time of the Holocaust and the needs reported by him/her in their old age, i.e. how do past events shape current challenges faced by survivors in their old age.

The findings of this study will enable the development of practical tools for identification of groups in risk among aging Holocaust survivors as well we to improving existing services for this population.
Here is what our students have to say:

"The teaching method here is absolutely different from the one I’m used to. Here the student’s opinion is important, and the classes are more discussion-based. We are helping each other learn, and all the professors are open to debates, questions and new ideas."

**Fruzsi Hoór, Hungary**

"In the research forum, every week I think I’ve met the most exciting person I could have imagined, and the following week just gets better and better...people like Dr. Efraim Zuroff of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, who actually prove to me that the subject of the Holocaust is as alive as ever, and here is someone who is actually hunting Nazis every day."

**Shira Griff, Israel**

My favorite course is the Yiddish class. It is an emotional experience learning the language that was spoken by my great-grandfathers. Coming from the field of sciences it was a big shift for me to have such meaningful experiences in the classroom.

**Máté Popovics, Hungary**