

How Religious Studies Came to Buffalo State College

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Religious Studies at State University College Buffalo developed in the mid-1970s almost by accident, mainly from the confluence of two lines of academic activities, one within the Greater Buffalo Jewish Federationⁱ and the other within the College. Their aims were not always clear, even to themselves, and they were not always identical. It is essential to understand something of the nature of the two institutions.ⁱⁱ

The Jewish Federation of Greater Buffalo began first under the title, United Jewish Federation of Buffalo, Inc. according to Selig Adler and T. Connolly's *From Ararat to Suburbia: The History of the Jewish Community of Buffalo*.ⁱⁱⁱ

"It all began with the consolidation, in 1903, of the old German philanthropic societies; gradually, as the community matured and as the old [German Jewish immigrant or second wave]^{iv} stocks mingled with the new [Ashkenazi Eastern European Jewish immigrants or third wave], almost all non-synagogue functions in Buffalo were united under the leadership of a single organization."^v

One of the great achievements of this organization was the coordinating of the Jewish education programs of the various synagogues and other Jewish institutions of greater Buffalo.^{vi} Both adult education and the training of children were of great concern to the leadership of the Federation.^{vii}

Herman Wile^{viii} represented the best of the classic German Jewish leadership, which was a special group dominating the politics and moral leadership of the Buffalo Jewish community.

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He was a prominent community leader and President of Temple Beth Zion, the flagship temple of Buffalo and then and now one of the largest and most important congregations in the worldwide Reform movement.

Wile's family was part of the so-called "Third Wave" or German wave of Jewish immigration to America, after the Sephardic immigrations of the pre-Revolutionary period that came in the 1600's which are the "First Wave", and those often upper class Sephardim who came in the 1700's who are the "Second Wave", and before the "Fourth Wave" or the massive Eastern European immigration which outnumbered all the others combined and which lasted until World War I. This fourth wave came here fleeing persecution and seeking a better life.

The German wave, however, coming after the failed 1846 revolutions against monarchical and aristocratic oppression, was in notable part made up of people concerned about freedom and justice and civil liberty, often from relatively well-off layers of society, people who were frequently comfortably integrated in their native culture.^{ix}

The German Jews became the leaders of the American Jewish community. The name lists of the founders and leaders of the most important Jewish institutions, religious, civil, cultural, financial, and political, abound in German names from such families. The Weils—in Herman's case the name was Americanized to Wile—were raised with a sense of noblesse oblige, obligation to guide the community. The leadership list of Beth Zion—and of the whole Reform movement—is rich with names from this relatively wealthy and powerful subgroup up to the present day.

Wile was impressed by the alarm raised in the Jewish Federation about the diminishing numbers of children receiving a Jewish education, and he promoted a survey to determine the problem. This house-to-house survey of many thousands of people revealed reasons for denying children a Jewish education which included in no particular order a lack of interest, a lack of time, a feeling that Jewish education might present a barrier to full "normalization" or integration of children into the dominant WASP culture, anything that would cause a Jewish child to stick out or be seen as different, and an unwillingness to bear the expense of Jewish education.

Sensing a community need, Wile became the founder of the Bureau of Jewish Education and its long-time President (1928-1942).^x

Under the Bureau of Jewish Education, the College of Jewish Studies was instituted with the initial purpose of training a generation of teachers of Judaism and Jewish studies that would serve the children and secondarily the adult programs of the community's institutions.^{xi}

Being under Germanic leadership, they had in mind a systematic, disciplined, formal, and highly supervised training program, leading to proper certification of teachers and community-wide controls in place of the uncontrolled and chaotic result of each institution going its own way.^{xii}

When the State of New York Department of Education raised an objection to the name "College of Jewish Studies" on the grounds that they were not—or not yet—a "College" as the Department of Education used the term, able to grant or participate in the granting of baccalaureate degrees, the name was changed to "Institute of Jewish Studies." The purposes and functions remained unchanged. But the seed was planted in the minds of the board of directors that perhaps they should be thinking on a larger scale than merely teacher training for local schools.^{xiii}

The Bureau of Jewish Education formally appointed Paul Verret as its paid full-time Director in October 1937,^{xiv} at a ceremony in the prestigious Montefiore Club,^{xv} across Delaware Avenue from Temple Beth Zion and the social home of many of the most influential members of the Jewish community, who were commonly Beth Zion members as well.

The College of Jewish Studies was founded in 1931 by many of the same people who served on the Bureau.

By 1974, The College had 74 tuition paying students and offered 17 courses and 7 teacher training programs.^{xvi} Often the congregations paid the tuition.

By the early 1970's the Board of Directors of the Bureau had long been thinking about seeking accreditation and enhanced prestige for the program of the Bureau through some sort of formal affiliation with one or more Buffalo area institutions of higher education.^{xvii}

The records of the meeting of 28 January 1974 read like a listing of the politically prominent members of the community.^{xviii}

Dr. Shabatay and Professor Dickson as Chair of the College of Jewish Studies Committee renewed negotiations with Buffalo State College and UB that had been in the works irregularly for a number of years. A sizeable sum, estimated at over \$80,000, had been earmarked for promoting formal Jewish studies at Buffalo State College.^{xix}

The Roman Catholic Diocese

A similar arrangement was undertaken in connection with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Buffalo. The Diocese undertook to subsidize a program like that for Jewish studies and noted that some courses were already offered at Buffalo State College that would fit in such a program.

In a letter dated 1 May 1968, Acting Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Philip Bonner at Buffalo State College wrote to the Very Reverend Monseigneur Leo Hammerl, Superintendent of Schools in the Department of Education of the Diocese of Buffalo, then located on South Elmwood Avenue. Bonner referred to the committee which was discussing relations of the Diocese and Buffalo State College, together with other colleges with which the Diocese might want to engage.^{xx}

The group in addition to Bonner included President E. K. Fretwell, Dr. Robison, Dr. Sengbusch, Dr. Fotion, Dr. Cantrick, and Dr. Stewart. Summarizing agreements, Bonner confirmed discussions with special reference to St. John Seminary.

Three alternatives for relations of the Diocese and Buffalo State College were discussed, together with the possibility of accepting course credits for a degree to be offered by St. John Seminary.

With regard to degree requirements for Buffalo State College in conjunction with St. John Seminary, Bonner noted that Buffalo State College already offered Sociology of Religion, the Bible as Literature, and the Philosophy of Religion. "We would anticipate," Bonner added, "that within the next two to three years [!] these offerings will increase to include such courses as Comparative Religion (2 semesters), Sacred Music, Non-Western

Religion, History of Judaism, and the History of Christianity.”

Bonner stressed that students should make sure that any courses elected would fit the particular degree pattern desired. “This can be easily programmed with adequate academic advisement from the Office of the Liberal Arts Dean.” That is, the Liberal Arts Dean of Buffalo State College.

Bonner added that department chair Dr. Fotion had studied the St. John Seminary catalog and would recommend to the Liberal Arts Dean that certain St. John Seminary courses would be acceptable to Buffalo State College for credit. Special note was made of Philosophy 305 – History of Philosophy, Philosophy 702 – Epistemology, and Philosophy 401 – Epistemology. Other courses might also be acceptable after discussions between Father Puehn of the Diocese and Dr. Fotion.^{xxi}

The question was who would be the Diocesan choice—and the Buffalo State College choice—as professor. The perfect candidate was Sister Marianne Ferguson, with a Ph.D. from McMaster University in Canada. Dr. Ferguson had studied also at the Pontifical Institute in Rome, and was by temperament and personality ideally suited to deal with young students.

Her training was impeccable, her approach to sacred texts thoroughly objective and academic, her views of religions extremely sensitive, and she had been teaching at Buffalo State College for several years. She was thus a known quantity. Also, she had been associated with the campus Catholic Newman Center for some years and was known to many students already.

Above all, she was not only academically superior, but she was kind and supportive, no small matter in dealing with young students in religion.

With regard to UB, the Board of Directors of the Bureau was told at the January 1974 meeting that it had taken a number of years to establish a Judaic Studies Program there. These efforts had resulted in the regular establishment of a full-time tenure track professorship 14 years ago.^{xxii} Reports on the development of the Program were not particularly encouraging.^{xxiii}

Buffalo State College

Already by the late 1960's an interest in a recognized, formally structured program in Jewish studies was being discussed at Buffalo State College.^{xxiv} It was a period in American academia when college courses and programs in Jewish Studies, long present on the campus, were increasing in number rapidly.

Whether this had anything to do with the rise of Black Studies courses in the 1960's is debatable. It was thought that the sensitivity to minority studies that showed itself in the growth of Black Studies made it an auspicious time to pursue Jewish Studies in the University.

Hebrew studies had of course always been academically acceptable as part of a long tradition of scholarship in both secular and religious institutions. At one time Harvard reputedly required baccalaureate or magisterial degree papers in Hebrew. Hebrew was considered one of the three classical languages mandatory for study of the Holy Scriptures, along with Greek and Latin.

In December 1971 Dr. Justin Hoffman, Rabbi of the UB and State University College Hillel Foundation, submitted to Dr. Robert Schoenberg, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs at Buffalo State College, a detailed course proposal for a course at the 400 level entitled Introduction to Judaism, for both graduates and undergraduates.^{xxv}

And later in 1971 at Buffalo State College, a group of professors, mostly Jews, noted that there were at least 350 known Jews in the student body, and agreed to establish a committee—the ad hoc Committee on Jewish Studies—in 1971 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Gerhard Falk of the Sociology Department, and with the support of Dr. Herbert Auerbach, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.^{xxvi}

The Committee consisted of Dr. Bernard Ansel who was at the moment in Costa Rica; Dr. Herbert Auerbach; Dr. Walter Drzewieniecki; Dr. Ernest Falbo; Dr. Gerhard Falk; and Dr. Samuel Stern. It will be noted that the Committee was not limited to Jewish professors. The Committee proposed to Dean Joseph Hichar^{xxvii} a curriculum on Jewish Studies by 19 April 1971.

The core of existing courses for such a curriculum, as proposed by the Committee, was very carefully put together, and was indeed an impressive effort that well justified the request. There were 10 courses.^{xxviii}

The plan included a program of ten proposed courses to flesh out the offerings.

1. Judaism: Introduction to Judaism.
2. Introduction to Jewish mysticism.
3. History: History of the contemporary Jews.
4. Sociology: The American Jewish Community.
5. Judaism: Jewish Law.
6. English: Hebrew Literature in English translation.
7. Music: Music of the synagogue and of Israel.
8. Chassidic [sic] music as literature.
9. Art: Synagogue architecture and the Art of Israel.
10. Sociology: A sociological study ;of the Chassidim [sic].

The proposal listed resources of the College and UB, including the substantial Professor Milton Plesur Library at the Institute of Jewish Studies, that would support the program, and listed the faculty who would make themselves available, along with their degrees, universities, and number of years of service, in most cases at Buffalo State College.

Dr. Bernard Ansel of History, 7 years.

Dr. Gerhard Falk of Sociology, 4 years.

Dr. Justin Hoffman of Education, 14 years.^{xxix}

Dr. Isaac Klein, 20 years.

Dr. Samuel Stern, Mathematics, 14 years.

Rabbi Noson Gurary, Director of Chabad with 4 years of lecturing experience on Talmud and Jewish philosophy, was added later.

Also in 1971, Dr. Falbo of Foreign Languages approached the Jewish Federation through Joseph Bronstein about Hebrew courses.

Falbo noted that Hebrew was initiated at Buffalo State College back in 1969 with an enrolment of 40 students per semester for both first and second year levels.

The funding was from a Carnegie grant plus Buffalo State College funds. College funds had now fallen victim to the budget cuts from Albany, and the grant had run out. Falbo appealed to the Federation to join with the College in funding the program, since the College had in the interim hired an Israeli teacher for the post who had moved with her family from Brooklyn to Buffalo for the job, with the support and approval of Rabbi Tuchman for the Federation.^{xxx}

In December 1971, the Chancellor of the State University of New York in Albany—"SUNY Central"—established a Task Force on Israeli Studies mandated "to ascertain the status of Judaic [sic] studies in the State University of New York, to examine SUNY interests and to explore possibilities for greater collaboration with Israeli universities...."^{xxxii}

Dr. Ivan Putman, Jr., Director of the SUNY Central Office of International Programs, noted that the Chancellor's task force was meeting, headed by Dr. Don Peretz, Director of the SWANA program at SUNY Binghamton. Recently Dr. Nathan Back, Professor of Biochemical Pharmacology at UB and, with Rabbi Dr. Isaac Klein, founder of Kadimah School, was named the Chairman to succeed Dr. Peretz.

In a pressing memo to Buffalo State College Associate Vice-President Schoenberg and the SUNY Directors of International Education, Putman said he urgently needed for the Task Force information on resources and faculty interests regarding Israeli cooperation, extending "to both graduate and undergraduate studies in areas such as the natural and social sciences, arts and letters, law, engineering and health sciences."

He also wanted names of faculty possibly interested in such areas and program proposals.^{xxxiii} The exchange of views would certainly have encouraged the Jewish Studies Committee.

Putman set a target date of 25 January 1972 to get back all this information. The task force was to meet in early 1972 and Putman wanted project and program proposals in proper order to be set before them at that time.^{xxxiiii}

In Spring 1972, UB was offering Jewish studies courses as so-called “Bulletin Board” courses. These were all 4 credit hour courses.^{xxxiv}

At Buffalo State College, Rabbi Dr. Isaac Klein, an eminent scholar and professor, author of a number of well-respected books on Judaica, was already in 1973 teaching a course in Comparative Religion. Dr. Charles Olton of Academic Affairs and Dr. Gerhard Falk of Sociology, both members of the Jewish Studies Committee, met with Dr. John Minahan, Chair of Philosophy, to try to find further funding for the course. The course was originally proposed on 6 July 1972 to Vice President for Academic Affairs Donald Schwartz by Gerhard Falk in Buffalo State College’s full formal 15-copies manner, as an “interdepartmental” offering, noting the following Committee members who would be willing to teach in such a course:

Dr. William Donnelly
Sr. Mary Ann [sic] Ferguson
Dr. Herbert Ferster
Dr. Albert Grande
Dr. S. James Jakiel
Miss Estelle Kane
Dr. Isaac Klein
Dr. John Minahan
Dr. Robert Schoenberg
Dr. Edward Smith
Rev. Perry Smith
Dr. I. Joyce Swartney
Rev. John Weimer

On 13 September 1972 Olton sent Falk a memo regarding the continuation of Klein’s “Comparative Religion” course noting that Schwartz and Minahan and Olton were “pretty sure” they could come up with the funding, \$1,000, perhaps more. There was apparently no concentrated oversight at this point, and it was a struggle to bring things to fruition.

Olton quoted a memo “left behind” by Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Schoenberg on this subject. It said “[t]he course was approved by the Phil.

Dept., but never approved beyond there. I [Schoenberg] have sent Dr. [Victor] Balo-witz [Chair of Philosophy 1971-1972, before John Minahan, 1972-1972] a copy of the course outline and asked that some judgment be made on it so that full approval may be sought in time for a spring semester offering.^{xxxv}

Olton then asked Falk if there is anything he should do to expedite “full approval”?

Falk turned to the Jewish Chautauqua Society of New York, an academic arm subsidized by the Reform Movement which has often funded lectures and sometimes courses in Jewish studies. They said they could provide a visit of a rabbi and also books, but said nothing about funding a course.^{xxxvi}

In 1973, however, Rabbi Robert Alper of Temple Beth Zion, sometimes called the “Cathedral synagogue of Buffalo,” sent a letter to Dr. Schwartz noting that he had spoken with Tillie Ginsberg of the Jewish Chautauqua Society in New York, and she had said that, although the current budget for 1973-1974 was closed, the JCS “would be delighted to entertain a request for a Chautauqua endowment of S.U.C. for the 1974-75 academic year.”^{xxxvii} A JCS lectureship to augment a Jewish studies program was also a clear possibility.

As for Schoenberg, he had already sent letters to interested Jewish studies committee members Falk, Auerbach, Falbo, Stern, Simmons, Schwartz and Hichar responding to a suggestion for a special listing in the catalog for Jewish studies. His letters seem discouraging.^{xxxviii}

In 1973, the Board of the Bureau of Jewish Education included Dr. Sol Messinger, M.D., together with Dr. Yehuda Shabatay, and on 22 January 1973 a subcommittee of the High School and College Committee of the Board began a survey of Jewish studies in greater Buffalo area colleges and universities.^{xxxix} The intent was that “proposals will be made to State University College to implement a more ambitious program of Judaic studies.”^{xl}

As part of the ongoing Jewish studies program development, discussions were held with Dr. Donald Schwartz, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Charles Olton and Dean Theodore Kury as to the requirements for a professor to head the Jewish studies program for Buffalo State College.

Dr. Stanley Dickson of Exceptional Education headed the Search Committee for a Visiting Professor of Jewish Studies, a subcommittee of the Committee on Jewish Studies. Dr. Dickson states that at this point there was no comparable effort towards a Jewish Studies program or department, let alone Religious Studies, at UB.^{xli}

Part of the thinking, noted in a report by Dr. Stanley Dickson to the Board of the Bureau of Jewish Education, was the matter of transfer credits. Reporting on negotiations with Buffalo State College, he stated that “transferring credit from our College of Jewish Studies to Buffalo State College and from Buffalo State College to our own College of Jewish Studies is being considered.” The report said further that “The possibility of accreditation is a reality owing to the efforts of Dr. Dickson and Dr. Shabatay and the appointment of Dr. Podet.”^{xlii} Memos and comments indicate that while the Jewish Studies program had wide and serious support at the highest levels—including the President—it was hoped that Dean Kury would be point man for the administration in seeing this to completion.^{xliii}

The problem was that whoever was to be engaged would have to be qualified in Jewish studies to meet the high standards of the Bureau, which included expertise in Hebrew, Bible, Jewish history, Jewish philosophy, and Jewish customs and ceremonies. The members of the Board, as has been noted, represented a variety of philosophies and orientations from Orthodoxy to Reform, including Conservatism and Reconstructionism.^{xliv} All would have to be satisfied with the credentials presented.

Moreover, a significant segment of the Board, which would also have to agree or at least go along with the final decision, was concerned for those whose commitment to Judaism was altogether cultural, which is to say, outside of the formal religious streams.^{xlv}

Finally, the professor to be engaged would have to have a Ph.D. or equivalent degree and be fully acceptable on rigid academic terms to Buffalo State College. This was particularly important because discussions of the program, especially on the part of the professors on the Board, had frequently noted the allegedly poor academic reputation earned by some college-level Black Studies programs.^{xlvi}

If the proposed Jewish studies program were to go anyplace, that is, were to become a permanent, respected part of the college curriculum, it had to be from the outset beyond criticism on academic grounds. This first professorial appointment would be closely scrutinized and credentials examined.

The opening was publicized to the academic community^{xlvii} and through other sources^{xlviii} and 26 qualified applicants responded. The lead in this search was assumed by the Institute of Jewish Studies.^{xlix}

The financial arrangements were a sticking point, but were eventually worked out to everyone's satisfaction. The initial appointment would be for two years, renewable. It was a joint effort by Humanities and Social Sciences, Dean Kury as Project Director, Vice President for Academic Affairs Donald Schwartz on behalf of Buffalo State College, and Dr. Yehuda Shabatay for the Bureau. It stated that "[t]he first year will be half time at SUCB [State University College at Buffalo, that is, Buffalo State College] and half time at the College of Jewish Studies, providing that a person can be found who meets the requirements of both groups."^l

The Bureau would give Buffalo State College a grant of \$8,500 each year for three years, or total \$25,500. In addition, the half-time post at the College of Jewish Studies would have a maximum salary of \$10,000 per year. The figure was set at the request of the school; the Federation had been prepared to do more.^{li}

Buffalo State College would assume "all fringe benefits for the first year and the total cost for the second and third years."^{lii} This is the first mention of a third year.

In addition, besides the \$8,500 from Buffalo State College for fringe benefits, the College of Jewish Studies would provide \$8,500 for the second and third years for "program support for Jewish Studies."^{liii}

Four candidates were brought to Buffalo for further interviews. The interviews were conducted by members of the Committee, most often by Dr. Shabatay, sometimes with others sitting in. At the Board Meeting of the Bureau of Jewish Education of 28 January 1974, Dr. Stanley Dickson, Professor of Exceptional Education at Buffalo State College and Chair of the College of Jewish Studies Committee, announced that "Dr. Alan [sic] Podet has been hired as Assistant Professor at State University College where he will teach Jewish History and Philosophy. He will also teach half-time at our College of Jewish Studies."^{liv}

Allen Podet

I was teaching at the University of Washington in Seattle in 1974, a full professor in the Department of Near East Languages and Literatures. I was one of two Hebraists, the other being Dr. John Clear, of the University of Toronto.

The offer from New York and the telephone conversations which followed were filled with promise. When I received an invitation to come to Buffalo for an interview, I was happy to accept.

There followed a week of becoming acquainted with the Buffalo Jewish community and its institutions under the guidance of Dr. Yehuda Shabatay, of the Jewish Federation.

One discovers that it is a New York provincialism to name its colleges in a particular manner. The State University of New York is not a university but an umbrella organization, under which are Colleges and research Centers. The former are four-year undergraduate institutions—some courses go to the M.A.—and the latter are Ph.D. granting schools that include law and medical schools, like the University of Washington. My offer was from the State University College, with 12,000 students, rather than from UB, or SUNY Center at Buffalo, with 35,000 students, a law school, and a medical school.

The people I met, both from the Jewish community and from the school, were unfailingly friendly and encouraging, even though there were some surprises.

When Yehuda Shabatay and I met the Dean under whom I would be serving, Ted Kury, Dr. Kury made it plain that Buffalo State College with its current student body, could be perhaps thinking of a Jewish studies major, although that was not a near term possibility.

Instead, they were looking at a religious studies program, which did not at the moment exist. I would be the sole full-time person committed to this effort, but I could count on the support and cooperation of a large number of faculty who were interested in helping.

Especially encouraging were the Chairs of History, Edward Smith, and of Philosophy, John Minahan.

The possibilities were favorable, and I made the move. The only difficulty lay with my library. As students at Hebrew Union College, we were encouraged to think that our personal library might wind up being the only Jewish reference library in a community. Our student bookstore provided very good discounts, and in five or six years one could acquire a substantial library.

Both History and Philosophy offered me office space, and my appointment was a dual one. I took, for the time being, a room in History.

I set to work creating courses which I would teach on a rotating basis, three courses per term, which over several semesters would allow for more than I could do.

Creating courses was my priority.

More critical, I set to work organizing a committee for religious studies. There was already a core of professors who had devoted years to bringing about the commitment of Buffalo State College to religious studies, actually mainly to Jewish studies. It was essential to recruit them in order to promote a serious program.

In this I had the advice and assistance of Ed Smith, Chair of History, and the members of the erstwhile Committee on Jewish Studies, which as Dean Kury had made clear, would operate only as religious studies, of which Jewish studies would be a part. That was, clearly, the only way Jewish studies would operate. I felt I could live with that arrangement.

With the advice and help of Minahan and Smith, I dealt with the question of opting for one department or continuing to hold a dual appointment. Smith finally clarified the matter: for survival—I was only on a two-year appointment, renewable—the dual department might be better, but for advancement, he advocated picking one department.

Both departments were welcoming, but the folks in Philosophy, under Minahan (1972-1974) and Ron Roblin (1974-1977) were more than welcoming, they were enthusiastic.

The philosophers proposed to change the name of the department to Philosophy and Religious Studies. And the office was larger than that in History. I opted for Philosophy.

What was involved in this offer was explained to me much later by John Carbonara, Chair in 1970-1971 and in time a good friend.

It seems that New York State, because of its odd and casual planning, is commonly near financial difficulties. From time to time—it feels like about every fifteen years—this becomes a financial crisis, and SUNY Central in Albany talks about financial cuts in the budget, and the word “retrenchment”, meaning layoffs of professors and staff, is heard in the land.

President D. Bruce Johnstone came up with an ingenious way to avoid such layoffs: if two departments were combined, an office and the accompanying support structure could be eliminated. Not only would it save money, it would look good to Albany. Thus we saw History joined with Social Studies Education to become the Department of History and Social Studies Education.

The philosophers were considering what would happen if Philosophy with a staff of about ten were joined, say, to English, with a staff closer to fifty. All departmental decisions would be carried by, and presumably would benefit, the English people.

It was proposed that creating a combined “Philosophy and Religious Studies” Department would look like joining two departments, as President Johnstone desired, but in fact would mean accepting only one additional professor.

The Philosophy community was a disparate group of people. There were three Jews in the small department. One was a senior gentleman, Victor Balowitz, Ph.D., Chair in 1971-1972, apparently a yeshiva graduate and reputedly a superbly trained philosopher albeit light on publications, who seemed to avoid contact with me for some reason. Perhaps because it was known I was a rabbi, and that may have made him uncomfortable.

In any case, when asked if he was acquainted with me, he answered that he himself was one who did philosophy, and he had no idea what I did.

Another gentleman, former Chair James O. Grunebaum, was a key influential figure in the department. He made it a point to inform me on our first meeting that his parents had belonged to a Reform congregation, and he had, as he put it, been bar mitzvah, but he had no use for religious matters and he had avoided any contact with a synagogue since.

This was, together with the previous encounter, exemplary of what I came to recognize as a kind of arrogance regarding the academic field of philosophy encountered in some philosophers. There was in some of my colleagues a palpable kind of resentment that they were compelled, as noble sons of Socrates, to be linked with a religionist. The descriptive term “mumbo-jumbo” was heard. This resentment, or this intellectual arrogance if you will, was not blatant, and it was certainly not in everyone, but it was there. Later I discovered that this observation was not mine alone, but was shared by some colleagues including Sr. Marianne Ferguson, Professor of Religious Studies.

I moved part of my library into my office. At Hebrew Union College, a postgraduate institution, students for the rabbinate were encouraged to imagine that their personal libraries might well be the only Jewish library for a whole community, and we became over a five or six year period great book collectors. My office library ran to about 90-plus linear feet, and moving it from Seattle had put an unexpected burden on the Jewish Federation,^{lv} but I felt unable to function without having it closely accessible.

Settled into a “home”, the first priority for me seemed to be to convert the faculty committee which had been working for so many years on a Jewish studies program into a standing Religious Studies Committee. Not all the members of the first group would be interested in joining the second, and the purposes would be different.

I had in mind a group of department heads and specially interested persons who could advise and perhaps assist in establishing the Religious Studies program, and maybe something more: a minor, perhaps a major—my friend and colleague Professor Sefton Temkin, JD, PhD, a licensed barrister of the Middle Temple and fellow rabbi, was even then in process of establishing a Jewish Studies major at SUNY Binghamton—and there was no comparable major offering in SUNY anywhere near us. I was bursting with enthusiasm

It was still a honeymoon period and the departmental heads and representatives whom I recruited were more than willing to help get religious studies firmly established and functioning well. It would be well, I thought, to harness this enthusiasm, for who knew how long it would last? The people I had in mind were all busy and there were many demands on their time.

I am amazed that I was as successful as I was.

It was my intention to assemble representation—preferably chairpersons—from all those departments that could be helpful to us, or that might be expected to have an academic interest in our work.

The group was congenial, they pretty much all knew one another and worked reasonably smoothly. They were happy to suggest courses, existing or proposed, that would fit appropriately into the Program. In some cases, they thought a section germane to Religious Studies could effortlessly be added to a present course.

Part of the thinking of some of the group members was that involving their discipline in this effort was, immediately, excellent publicity for their course, because we—mainly I, but I could get help—planned to publicize religious studies in a major effort.

Moreover, attracting more students to one's course was in a time of budget threats very desirable. Attendance of students in Buffalo State College was measured in FTEs, Full-Time Equivalent students, and it seemed the Administration monitored those FTEs closely. In other words, it was in their interest to be cooperative.

On 4 June 1975 President Fretwell sent Barbara Frey and Theodore Kury a memo expressing his delight [his term] at the progress of the Religious Studies Committee, and encouraging Kury to follow up in appropriate ways.^{lvi}

This was in response to a report on the Religious Studies Committee actions dated 23 May 1975 sent by me to Dean Kury, and forwarded by him to the President:

We have been able to lay out an overall plan this year and to accomplish it. Our major achievements have been in six areas, and I think we have good reason to be pleased with our accomplishments. In Bibliography, we have set bibliographical priorities for many thousands of dollars worth of books in Religious Studies generally and within that field we have prioritized purchase lists for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish studies. We have established a master plan for reference materials acquisition, partly with the help of outside professional bibliographers who were persuaded to volunteer their time and expertise. We investigated the use of public funds to aid our growth in this area.

In Curriculum, we undertook a survey of the teaching of religion at the undergraduate and graduate levels at various schools, and took the time to familiarize ourselves with what was involved. We set limits for what we could and could not reasonably undertake at SUCB, based on carefully discussed realistic goals. We encouraged new courses relevant to this field.

In Scholarship, the Committee undertook to investigate speakers of eminence in the field of Religious Studies who could be brought to SUCB in connection with the Dean's Lecture Series and/or other programs. We planned to have Dr. N. Kirschenbaum, the jurist specializing in religious law, but the Committee has plans now to invite the noted historian, Dr. Ellis Rivkin, next fall. We plan to make this scholarly opportunity available to the public in part, and to preserve aspects of the professor's visit on videotape.

The College of Jewish Studies relationship was a subject of much concern and interest to the Committee. We analyzed 15 courses of the College of Jewish Studies and evaluated them in terms of how useful they would be to SUCB students. Our recommendations were submitted to the Dean, and were important in setting up final working arrangements with the College of Jewish Studies.

A close working relationship was set up between us and the College of Jewish Studies academic administration and their library staff, as a result of which their library of over 8,000 volumes, many of them specialized reference useful and important to some of our students, will be made accessible to us and cross-listed here. Our students will be able to take courses there, and their students will be encouraged to study here in areas of mutual benefit.

Two formal concentrations have been established and are now being publicized for students interested in Religious Studies. One, consisting of some 26 courses, is in Humanities and leads to the B.A. The other, which also leads to the B.A., is in Social Science and consists of over 30 courses. Brochures were prepared, corrected, and are now in train for distribution. An inquiry has been received soliciting help from us for another SUNY institution (Brockport). Students are becoming aware of our existence and are asking for advisement. Faculty, too, are soliciting advice about possible course offerings in this area or marginal to it.

In Community Relations, our efforts have come to some degree known in the Buffalo community, and are appreciated.

It has been a busy and constructive year for us all, and we are very grateful for your participation. We consider that you have contributed in an important way to the service of the SUCB community and to the welfare of the community at large. We hope that we can count on you to be with us again in the Fall.

Yours truly,
Allen H. Podet, Chairman
Religious Studies Committee

Just before her retirement in 2013, Dr. Marianne Ferguson, realistically fear-ful of what might happen to the program when she and I both retired, prepared a full report that laid out fairly and honestly what she had been doing in her 24 years as Religious Studies coordinator, since I relinquished the job to her after my doing it for 16 years:

Report of Religious Studies Coordinator The Religious Studies Program is an integral part of our college with a vi-brant Religious Studies Minor.

It contributes to the college mission of “in-spiring a lifelong passion for learning and empowering a diverse population of students to succeed as citizen of a changing world”, by encouraging students to understand the advantages and disadvantages of religious pluralism that can either increase or deter the effects of bigotry, prejudice and discrimination. We encourage students to continue to explore the influence of religion on politics, society, education, economics, history and culture.

We aim to do this by teaching students to analyze complex religious and historical texts, including the sacred and primary texts of major religions and to reflect critically, converse constructively and write clearly regarding the similarities and differences in various religious traditions and belief systems. By studying the history, principal problems, traditions, and religious beliefs that shaped major world religion, one can detect the forces behind the strong influence these religions have on society today.

We have two full time Religious Studies faculty, Dr. Allen Podet and Dr. Marianne Ferguson. Podet teaches Intro to Jewish Thought, Intro to Religious Studies, World Religions, Old Testament, and Holocaust. Ferguson teaches Intro to Christian Thought, World Religions, Women and Global Religions, New Testament, Writings of John, and the Internship. Three adjuncts, Elizabeth Lenegan, Ph.D., Jean Thompson, M.A., M.S., and Andrea Tyrpak-Endres, M.A., teach World Religions and New Testament.

Because our minor is interdisciplinary, students have access to a variety of professors who are experts in their fields. The interdisciplinary faculty teach Religion, Myth and Magic, Literature of the Bible, Art History, Greek and Roman Mythology, Politics and History of the Middle East, Philosophy of Religion, Zen Buddhism, and Sociology of Religion.

Students seem pleased with our course offerings and continue their education in graduate school. At present, two students are pursuing doctoral degrees at University of Toronto and one at McMaster University. Two students are at Colgate Rochester seminary and one at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore. One student is attending the masters program at Canisius College and one is a member of the Jesuit Volunteers and another is joining the Peace Corps.

Recommendations for the Future

Given the previous information of the status of the Religious Studies Minor, some serious recommendations for the future must be made. The most pressing recommendation concerns the status of the faculty. The two full time faculty members have been on campus over thirty years each and are well past retirement age. If the Minor is to continue, or if religion courses are to be taught at Buffalo State College, new faculty must be hired. We have been fortunate to rely on part time faculty, but they only teach one course each.

Because we offer twelve courses in the intellectual foundations program, including our commitment to BSB 101 [Critical Thinking], the number of students in most of the classes fill at the 45 cap. This is a challenge to our adjuncts who complain about the difficulty of reaching all the students effectively.

A concern revolves around the role of the coordinator of Religious Studies who receives no compensation (neither monetary nor course reduction) for carrying out the following duties:

- Scheduling and monitoring the quality of course offerings in conjunction with Anthropology, English, Fine Arts, Foreign and Modern Language, History, Philosophy, and Sociology Departments;
- Recruitment and advisement of Religious Studies Minors (currently 35 students) including providing them with information for graduate schools;
- Working with adjunct faculty to determine text books, syllabi, assessment of student outcomes, and scheduling of classes;
- Teaching an extra course, REL 488, Internship, each Spring semester, which includes meeting with the supervisors of the students and evaluating their work.

The present coordinator [Dr. Ferguson] has served in that position for 24 years and is fearful that future retirement will cause the Religious Studies program to cease unless new hires occur immediately. With both full time Religious Studies professors looking forward to retirement soon, it is imperative that they must be replaced for the program to continue.

The job is enormous and can be consuming. It is not only unremunerated, and carries no released time, but it is to an extent thankless, at least as far as the administration and the powers of the institution are concerned. After 16 years, I relinquished the job because Professor Ferguson was willing to assume it, and because I felt that 16 years was an adequate investment of time and energy.

And my decision was partly underscored by the sense, over some years, that Religious Studies as a discipline and as a bona fide permanent commitment of the Department and my efforts for Religious Studies were not always valued as I thought they might be. The struggles to maintain Religious Studies at the forefront of administrators' attention and commitment were ongoing and unrelenting.

What Ferguson does not mention is that she never declined a job, never hesitated to take on more and more responsibility, and volunteered to carry far more than her weight with cheerfulness and even eagerness. I admire her greatly, even though I feel that her great willingness can lead to being abused. I am certain that she does not share this judgment. A brochure celebrating Dr. Ferguson's accomplishments, with illustrations, was prepared for a special edition of Franciscan Spirit. Her book on women in religion has been adopted by several universities. At the point of her and my retirement, 2013 and 2014, the Religious Studies program remains a minor within the Philosophy and Humanities Department. With a staff of two full time regular professors and a number of adjuncts, we are able to offer a total of 27 courses for prospective minors, drawn from Religious Studies (13), Anthropology (1), English (2), Fine Arts (3), Modern and Classical Languages/Foreign Languages (1), History/Political Science (2), Sociology.

There are numerous other courses, such as Modern Jewish Thought, that were taught at one time but have been dropped for one reason or another, most commonly lack of student interest. The program, with 35 minors currently, is in constant review for improvement.

Thus far, the two Religious Studies professors have not been replaced, and it is not clear that they will be in the near future. Members of the administration, especially Dean Ben Christy and Department Chair Kimberly Blessing, have indicated interest and invested effort in continuing the program, but funding for the program competes with the needs and priorities of other programs.

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Her close reading of this dense MS was a generous scholarly gift of great value; Librarian Albert Riess, MLS, the savior of the researcher when he hits a dead end; Dr. William Sedlacek, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus at the University of Maryland, developer of the self-correcting bias analysis device described below, whose latest book is *Beyond the Big Test: Noncognitive Assessment in Higher Education*; Dr. Yehudah Shabatay, Ph.D., Master of Jurisprudence, now Professor at UC San Diego, a man of great kindness and a good shepherd to a stranger in a strange land; Dr. Sheldon Tetewsky, Ph.D., Senior Research Analyst at the Center for Health and Social Research, who prepared the statistical analyses of the anti-Semitism experiment; Dr. William Wieczorek, Ph.D., Director of the Center for Health and Social Research, who helped plan the experiment.

Every historian or researcher knows and dreads the vast amount of material that is never saved or is lost or misfiled, the memo that isn't there, the critical—or complimentary—assessment that is in some file someplace but not where it is supposed to be, the deliberate omissions, the forgotten or misremembered, the proverbial buried bodies. I am grateful to all who helped pull this material together.

ⁱ From The Jewish Archives of Greater Buffalo, Jewish Federation of Greater Buffalo Records, 1902-1979 (bulk 1930-1975), Collection MS150. In: State University of New York at Buffalo, University Archives. Hereafter UB Archives.

The collection was transferred from the State University of New York College at Buffalo (Buffalo State College) Archives in 2006 to the State University of New York Center at Buffalo (UB) in Amherst, N.Y., by the Jewish Federation of Greater Buffalo, under the auspices of the Bureau of Jewish Education.

ⁱⁱ Dr. Kotzin suggests that there were, of course, other factors at play: local concentration of academics and...Rabbis with specific expertise; State pressures from Albany—SUNY Central—on the State University Center At Buffalo (UB) and Buffalo State College, as will be discussed below; interplay between local Jewish institutions other than the Bureau of Jewish Education (BJE) and the Jewish Federation, for example Temple Beth Zion. Although the Federation was providing the funding, the role of the Bureau, especially through the work of Dr. Shabatay, was critical. (Note to the author, 9 January 2014, filed in Buffalo State College Archives at Butler Library, Buffalo State College, *s.v.* Podet.)

ⁱⁱⁱ Chap. 7, p. 227. In Butler Library, State University College Buffalo, Jewish Publication Society of America. Phila.:1960.

^{iv} So called commonly but actually third wave. The first Jews date from the 15th and 16th Centuries, the second wave was in the colonial period.

^v Professor Adler refers to the Federation. Dr. Kotzin notes that this coordination work was done through the Bureau of Jewish Education.

^{vi} UB Archives, MS150.1, Box 1, folder 3-1.4, 1.10.

^{vii} UB Archives, MS 150.1, Box 1, folder 1.19.

^{viii} UB Archives, MS150.1, Box 3, folder 17.

^{ix} Still, as Dr. Kotzin notes, “many in Buffalo started as peddlers, even families like the Fleischmanns, Barmons, Weils, etc. True they were fast successful, but they started modestly. They just had a lot less competition and they were immersed in German culture which worked out well in many of the new cities as German Christians had already made their mark. E.g., Baltimore and Buffalo.” (Note to the author, 9 January 2014, filed in Buffalo State College Archives at Butler Library, Buffalo State College, *s.n.* Podet.)

This rapid financial success of the German immigrant Jews may have something to do with the fact that they were often not poor in the old country. The middle class Jews who fled Cuba for Miami, for example, had to leave behind all their property and funds and tangible resources, but they had largely regained their middle class standards in a short time, perhaps because they expected to be in and live like middle class people.

^x JBIC253 Buffalo Jewish Archives Project
LIB UA 013 1953

^{xi} UB Archives MS150, 3.8-3.15

^{xii} UB Archives MS150, 150.1, Bx. 1, folder 19.

^{xiii} UB Archives MS225

^{xiv} Dr. Kotzin notes that “the Bureau of Jewish Education was actually functioning from 1928/1929 from after the Wile survey. It is true that it had limited oversight by a consistent administrator, but it was founded prior to 1937.” (Note to the author, 9 January 2014, filed in Buffalo State College Archives at Butler Library, Buffalo State College, *s.n.* Podet.)

^{xv} MS203, Bx1, folder 2

^{xvi} MS203, Bx1, folder 20. See Minutes of 23 Sept 1974.

^{xvii} *Ibid.*, minutes of 28 Jan 1974.

^{xviii} Mrs. Samuel Ablove; Morton Brooks; Bertram Chalmer; Norman Fertig; Martin Garfinkel; Harold Halpern; Mrs. Lawrence Itzkowitz; Lawrence Levin; Max Mandelbaum; Mrs. Joseph Merrick; Rabbi Shay Mintz; Professor Milton Plesur (for whom the community’s Milton Plesur Library, the main Jewish library resource of the Jewish community, was named); Dr. Yehuda Shabatay, now full-time Director of the Bureau; Isadore Snitzer; Mrs. Cyrus Trossman; Haskell Penn; Clarence Wertheimer; guests Professor Stanley Dickson of Buffalo State College; and Irving Shuman; Samuel Blinkoff; Mrs. Jacob Goldstein; Rabbi Justin Hoffman, Hillel Director at Buffalo State College; Sanford Lottor; Dr. Abraham Monk; Mrs. Max Spitalny; Paul Swados; Arnold Weiss; Rabbi Robert Bronstein; Rabbi Leonard Buchen; Rabbi Martin Goldberg; Rabbi Joseph Herzog; Rabbi Herman Horowitz; Rabbi Daniel Kerman; and representatives of temples and Jewish organizations. One notes that Buffalo State College had then enough Jewish students to merit a Hillel Foundation with its own Director and a house on Elmwood Avenue.

^{xix} Personal communication from Dr. Shabatay, December 1975, who very kindly helped with this history, January – March 2014. Notes on Dr. Shabatay’s personal communications are on file in the Buffalo State Archives, Podet file. Professor Shabatay is now at the University of California at San Diego.

^{xx} State University of New York College at Buffalo Archives, University Archives, Accession number 84-A3, Box 7. Vice President for Academic Affairs, Office Correspondence 1960-1976, Community Action to Criminalistics, Religious Studies unit.

See also Accession number 83-C1, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Curriculum Committee, Courses and Programs – approved/rejected, 1976-1983, General Studies, Philosophy. Home Ec to Mission. Hereafter Accession number 83-C1.

^{xxi} Accession number 83-C1.

^{xxii} But not in Jewish Studies. Courses of Jewish Studies interest were thus available.

^{xxiii} MS203, Box 1, folder 20. Board of Directors.

^{xxiv} Personal communication from Dr. Shabatay, January 1975.

^{xxv}BSC Archives 84-03, Bx 4., 1971-1975.

^{xxvi} BSC Archives 84-03, Bx 4, Auerbach

^{xxvii} BSC Archives 84-03, Bx 4.

^{xxviii}

1. English 333, Yiddish Literature in Translation, dealing with Sholom Aleichem, I. L. Peretz, Sholom Asch, I. J. Singer, and others. Relationships to East European; and American Literature and culture.
2. English 401, Literature of the Bible. Selected readings of the Old and New Testaments studied as literature; Biblical poetry and prose; influence of Bible translations on the English language.
3. Hebrew 101. Elementary Hebrew. Fundamentals of Hebrew with emphasis upon speaking. Available on self-study basis only. The term is not defined, but presumably the student would receive guidance and examination by a faculty member, but the work would have to be done as an Independent Study course.
3. Hebrew 102. Continuation of Hebrew 101. Available on self-study basis only.
4. Hebrew 201. Intermediate Hebrew. Further development of the basic skills with emphasis on reading and writing. Available on self-study basis only.
5. Hebrew 202. Intermediate Hebrew. Continuation of Hebrew 201. Available on self study basis only.
6. History 212. History of the Jews in Europe. A history of European Jews from 70 A.D. to the end of the Nineteenth Century. Considers Jewish communities in Roman and Byzantine Empires, in Reconquest [sic] Spain and feudal Europe, and during the Renaissance, Enlightenment and post-Napoleonic periods. Analyzes patterns of religious intolerance in European history.
7. Fine Arts 453. Art of the Ancient Near East. A concentrated study of the art and monuments of Mesopotamia and Persia from ;the time of the Sumerian culture of ca. 3500 B.C. to the period of Persian domination and the conquest of Alexander the Great. The relationships of the art of Egypt and the Aegean area will also be considered; lectures, discussions and extra class assignments.
8. Political Science 314. International relations of the Middle East. Study of the patterns or interactions with in the Middle East and with other states. Problems of security and peace in the region; ideology, nationalism, and economic interests as factors influencing the behavior of the states.
9. Education 409. Practicum in the teaching of social studies in the secondary school. Teaching under supervision at least five days per week; group and individual conferences at college two days during each of two eight-week assignments; individual and group instruction; daily and long-view planning; unit teaching; classroom management and routine procedures; audio-visual aids; community resources; record keeping; evaluation procedures; participation in total school program.
10. Education 413. Practicum in the teaching of foreign languages in the secondary school. Teaching under supervision at least five days per week; group and individual conferences at college two days during each of two eight-week assignments; individual and group instruction; daily and long-view planning; unit teaching; classroom management and routine procedures; audio-visual aids; community resources; record keeping; evaluation procedures; participation in total school program.

^{xxix}Director of the Buffalo State College Hillel Foundation.

^{xxx} BSC Archives 84-03, Bx 4, Falbo.

^{xxxi} BSC Archives 84-03, Bx 4. Putman.

^{xxxii} BSC Archives 84-03, Bx 4. Schoenberg, p.3.

^{xxxiii} Ibid.

^{xxxiv} BSC Archives 84-03, Bx 4. Note: not UB. Schoenberg

1. Sociological Study of Chassidism.
2. Introduction to Judaism.
3. History of the Old Testament.
4. Chassidic Music as Literature (proposed).
5. Jewish Mysticism and Religious Practice (proposed).
6. Modern Jewish History (proposed).

^{xxxv} Not found.

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- xxxvi BSC Archives 84-03, Bx 4.
- xxxvii BSC Archives 84-03, Bx 4. Alper.
- xxxviii BSC Archives 84-03, Bx 4. Schoenberg.
- xxxix Bureau of Jewish Education, Executive Files, 1935-2009.
Series II, sub series C. Correspondence.
- xl UB Archives, Bureau of Jewish Education Collection, Box 1, folder 19.
- xli Personal communication from Dr. Dickson, 26 March 2014. Memo at Buffalo State College Archive, Podet files, file 4, drawer 4.
- xlii UB Archives, Bureau of Jewish Education Collection, Box 1 folder 19.
- xliii BSC Archives 84-03, Bx 4. Dickson.
- xliv UB Archives, Bureau of Jewish Education Collection, Box 1, III, Office Administrative Files 1973-2006.
- xlv UB Archives, Bureau of Jewish Education Collection, Box 1, folder 19.
- xlvi A number of rabbis could be found in the local community, and in fact local Chabad rabbis and others had offered Jewish Studies courses at UB in the flexible “alternate curriculum” programs, the so-called “bulletin board” programs, but these were treated as regular, established, and supervised courses, and those who offered them often had questionable academic credentials, meaning PhDs.
- xlvii Chronicle of Higher Education.
- xlviii Jewish Studies Association, Society for Biblical Literature, American Academy of Religion.
- lix UB Archives, Bureau of Jewish Education Collection, Box 1, folder 19.
- ¹ BSC Archives 84-03, Bx 4. Kury.
- li Note from Dr. Shabatay. The Federation had been prepared to provide more money, but Dean Kury, speaking for the Buffalo State College administration, insisted on the lowest possible figure. Buffalo State College Archive, Podet files, file 4, drawer 4.
- lii Ibid., p.2.
- liii Ibid., p.3.
- liv UB Archives Box 1, folder 19, minutes.
- lv Note from Dr. Shabatay. Buffalo State College Archives, Podet file.
- lvi BSC Archives 84-03, Bx 4. 1971-1975 – Jewish Studies. Fretwell.