

The Centre for Jewish Studies



THE FIRST SEMESTER



DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY



From the Director

The Centre for Jewish Studies at Dalhousie University is Atlantic Canada's first academic unit dedicated to the study of Judaism. Established in summer 2025, it is already transforming the experiences of students, scholars, and the public in Halifax and beyond. We embrace key values learned from thousands of years of Jewish tradition: diverse perspectives, cultural exchange, and creative adaptation.

In times of division, our Centre holds out a bold vision of connection and hospitality. We insist that Jewish Studies is for everyone: all people who value Canada's multicultural mosaic can learn from Jewish culture, because Jewish tradition has always been multi-ethnic, multilingual, and open to difference.

Through academics, collaboration, and the arts, we invite everyone into the Jewish story, told from a global perspective but rooted in our Atlantic context. We lead with values of hospitality and diversity common to Maritime and Jewish cultures. It's an honour to be doing this work alongside brilliant students, colleagues, and community partners right here in Halifax. We invite you to discover what we've achieved in our first semester — and to be part of building Canada's youngest and most exciting program in Jewish Studies!

Eva Mroczek

Simon and Riva Spatz Chair in
Jewish Studies

Associate Professor, Department
of Classics and Religious Studies

Director, Centre for Jewish Studies
at Dalhousie University

SIMON AND
RIVA SPATZ



The Centre for Jewish Studies at Dalhousie University owes its origins to the establishment of the Simon and Riva Spatz Chair in Jewish Studies, a faculty position currently held by its founding Director, Eva Mroczek. Simon and Riva Spatz met in Germany after the Second World War. Simon had escaped a labour camp the day before the Nazis murdered all its occupants, and Riva survived with the resistance in the woods of Poland. In the face of great loss, they built new lives and a thriving family in Halifax, helping build our diverse and vibrant city. The Centre is proud to honour their legacy.

Certificate in Jewish Studies launched in Fall 2025

Our new Certificate program for undergraduates—the only academic credential in Jewish Studies east of Montreal—invites students of all backgrounds to get excited about Judaism. Many of our professors incorporate significant Jewish content into broader classes: students who take courses like “Death and the Afterlife,” “Gender and Sexuality in the Bible,” “Ritual, Myth, and Music,” or “History and Memory in Modern Russia” will engage Jewish culture and history, and be on their way to completing the Certificate in Jewish Studies.

Through thirty courses across four departments (and counting), we bridge the gap between the endlessly rich complexity of Jewish tradition and basic public understanding. Jewish students will find new opportunities—classes, events, internships, and scholarships—to connect with Jewish cultures and each other. For non-Jewish students, an exciting Certificate program offers

unprecedented opportunities to challenge their own preconceptions and encounter Jewish tradition with empathy, nuance, and joy.

The first Certificate students are expected to graduate in 2026. We can’t wait to congratulate them in our next newsletter!

“It has been extremely valuable to see my Jewish and non-Jewish peers be exposed to and passionately engage with the exciting and immensely relevant content... The creation of this program is very impactful and I’m so glad it’s here to stay.”

— Reanna Druxerman, Class of 2025

“I went into [a Jewish Studies course] relatively uninitiated in Judaism—though not without my share of preconceptions—and by the end of our twelve weeks together, Professor Mroczek had masterfully dispelled any misconceptions by introducing us students to the true complexity and nuance behind Jewish history, identity, religion, and culture.... I felt confident in the new breadth of perspective I had acquired on Judaism. Jewish culture is far too varied and complex to become acquainted with through your environment alone.”

— Nick Kinley, Class of 2026

Looking ahead:

Look out for a new standalone post-baccalaureate Certificate program, open to all learners from the community who have a university or college degree!

Jewish Studies in Classics: the Crossroads of Antiquity

Dal’s Department of Classics is not just the Greeks and Romans: our program stands at the crossroads of an interconnected ancient world, where “a philosopher of Athens meets a poet from Spain, a warrior king of Babylon meets a desert saint, Sappho meets Constantine, Krishna meets Heracles, Moses meets Plato.” We take Jewish culture and thought seriously as a key part of the ancient Mediterranean world, and five of our faculty regularly teach Jewish texts and languages.

In November, we welcomed **Dr. Chaya Halberstam** (King’s University College at Western University), an expert on the intersection between

Rabbinic literature and the classical legal thought of Athens and Rome. In her talk, “Jewish Legal Thought Beyond the Rule of Law,” Dr. Halberstam introduced her book, *Trial Stories in Jewish Antiquity: Counternarratives of Justice* (2024), and showed how Jewish thinkers under Hellenistic and Roman rule privileged practicality and compromise — not a technical adherence to the rule of law — in the effort to create just and harmonious society.



Looking ahead

Dal Classics’ legacy of excellence in premodern philosophy continues – with a Jewish flavour: courses on the first century philosopher Philo of Alexandria and the medieval thinker Moses Maimonides; a new course on Jewish mystical thought; and scholars from near and far who

highlight the deep connections between Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Arabic traditions. Visit us at dal.ca/classics.

Events

Explore our Fall semester activities!

“[She] made me have a strong sense of hope in my soul for my future”: Students learn from a 95-year old survivor and trauma therapist

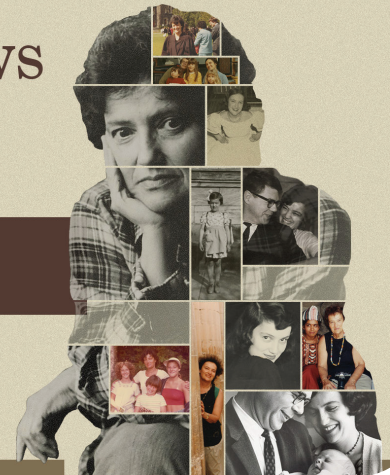
Convened by Prof. Seth Sanders (Classics), the Centre's first public event was the live multimedia performance, *What Inge Knows*. We welcomed Inge Fleischmann Fowlie: a 95-year old who had fled the Holocaust and is one of the last known Jewish witnesses of Kristallnacht. Using a blend of live storytelling, photos, and interview audio, Inge and producer Josh Greenhut shared her life story. Fleeing Nazi Germany in childhood, Inge grew up as a Jewish immigrant in mid-twentieth century America, where she would study under Abraham Maslow and practice psychotherapy, grounded in her unwavering commitment to feminism. Josh interwove his own story as an American Jew with Inge's life, telling a multigenerational Jewish story about identity, education, remembrance, and connection.

What Inge Knows

Child of the Holocaust. Therapist.
Feminist. Jewish woman. Buddhist.

a live documentary performance
+ discussion with 95-year-old Inge

2:00PM, Sunday, October 5
Scotiabank Auditorium
Marion McCain Arts and Social Sciences Building
6135 University Avenue, Halifax



Some testimonials from Prof. Sanders' students:

“[S]uch a beautiful event. Inge is nothing short of magnificent and her decades of experience and knowledge were incredible to even hear snippets about. I'm sure I'll carry her words with me for years to come!”

— Taryn Gilbert

“I personally found the experience to be incredibly motivating; hearing a woman who faced so much hardship still manage as meaningful a life as she did made me have a strong sense of hope in my soul for my future.... With everything happening in the world right now I think it's easy to get lost in this perpetual void of negativity. However, hearing this talk made this sparkle of hope appear for me in the deepening dark void that maybe one day things will get better and I am so very grateful that I was able to hear someone as strong as Inge speak about her life and experiences.”

— Taya Johnston

“Looking at her story from escaping Nazi Germany to giving talks about her experience at 95 years old is simply incredible.... an experience I will remember for a long time.”

— Sydney di Sensi

“Some horrific things feel like they happened a long time ago, and surely we have learned from them, but we haven't. Sometimes it feels like thinking about these things, and living through the horrors of the current day will eventually tear me down, so it was really inspiring to see Inge living through it all, and hearing about the coping mechanisms she uses. It was meaningful to see someone who has survived through so many different heartbreaks, both in her personal life and in the world continue to live with joy and meaning. It was an amazing talk and I am so glad I went.”

— Alyssia Halvorsen



INGE FLEISCHMANN FOWLIE WITH EVA MROCZEK FOLLOWING THE Q&A

Inge's presence and engagement with the audience was the highlight of the event. She interjected at various points in the presentation, and fielded audience questions with startling insight and humour. The multi-media delivery encouraged the audience of students, faculty, and community members of all ages and backgrounds, to dynamically and sincerely connect with Inge's story.

Jewish and Muslim Dialogue through Poetry

In a public talk held at St. Andrew's Church, "Muslim and Jew: A Love Story," Dr. Syed Adnan Hussain, a scholar of Islamic Studies at St. Mary's University, and Dr. Eva Mroczek, the Simon and Riva Spatz Chair in Jewish Studies at Dalhousie, reflected on expressions of love and desire in premodern Jewish and Islamic poetry. The two scholars emphasized the centuries of cultural exchange between the two traditions that created the framework for the poetry, drawing out common themes and language that appeared throughout the poems. Countering the dominant narrative that often sets the two in opposition, audience members were invited to recognize the affinities between Islamic and Judaic love poetry — both religious and secular — which point towards broader cultural resonances. The event brought together members of the local Muslim and Jewish communities in a conversation centred on ideas of love, desire, and the divine that are common to both and, in fact, co-evolved in dialogue with one another.

Looking ahead

Stay tuned for exciting academic and artistic experiences planned for the 2026-2027 academic year, including:

- *Fostering Indigenous-Jewish Dialogue in Mi'kma'ki: A Two-Eyed Seeing Approach* (featuring a public concert of Yiddish and Mi'kmaw music)
- *The Refusal of Death: Catastrophe and Musical Memory* (featuring a public performance of composer Viktor Ullman's "The Emperor of Atlantis, or, Death's Refusal," an opera written at Theresienstadt)



Looking ahead

Join Dr. Hussain and Dr. Mroczek for a co-taught course, "Muslims and Jews: Cultures and Coexistence," RELS3022, at Dalhousie in Fall 2026!

Lunchtime seminar series



DR. JAMIE MOSHIN



DR. DENIS KOZLOV

The Halifax region is an academic powerhouse! The Centre's lunchtime seminar series showcases local expertise in Jewish Studies. In the Fall 2025 semester, Dr. Denis Kozlov (History, Dalhousie) presented his new archival research on Soviet Jews whose immigration journeys took them through Italy, many of whom lived in limbo, without legal status or assistance, for years. Dr. Jamie Moshin (Contemporary Studies, King's) introduced us to the study of Jewish masculinity and racialization through contemporary hip-hop.

Looking ahead:

January 13: Daniel Brandes (King's), "On a Neglected Messianic Strand in Hannah Arendt's Thought"

February 11: Solomon Nagler (NSCAD), "Wedding Songs: Encountering The Poetry of The Cochin Kabbalist Rabbi Nehemiah ben Abraham Mota (Kochi, Kerala, India)"

February 25: Michele Byers (SMU), "A Jewish History of TV in Five Decades"

March 11: Alexander Treiger (Dal), "Judeo-Arabic Manuscripts and History of Philosophy: Solving the Mystery of the Longer Theology of Aristotle"

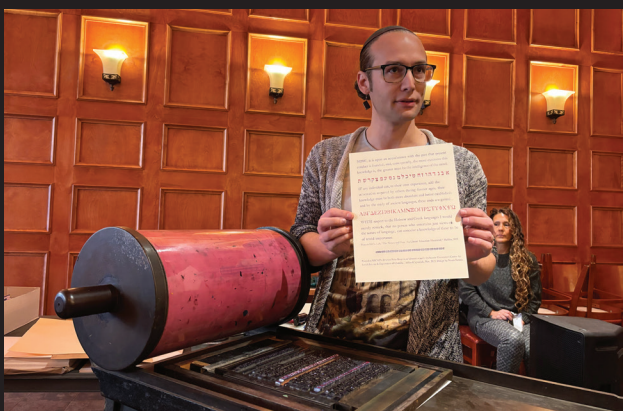
Scholar/ artist-in-residence

From November 17th – 21st, the Centre welcomed Dr. Noam Sienna, a trained scribe, calligrapher, book historian, and one of the world's only experts on historical Jewish printing. The vibrant week of art and learning with Dr. Sienna cast a wide net: a hands-on workshop in Hebrew calligraphy at Shaar Shalom Congregation attracted participants from across Nova Scotia, aged 18 to 80+.

In our first collaboration with NSCAD University, Halifax's university for the arts, Dr. Sienna demonstrated the workings of a traditional printing press and introduced the craft of Hebrew printing at NSCAD's downtown campus. Some 30–40 design students — most of whom had never engaged with Jewish culture — learned about Jewish book arts and printed their own posters using Hebrew type. Connecting with students, the Jewish community, and local artists and designers, the Scholar/Artist-in-Residence invited a diverse audience into Jewish history and art.



HEBREW CALLIGRAPHY WORKSHOP AT SHAAR SHALOM WITH NOAM SIENNA. PHOTOS: AARON SILVER



LETTERPRESS PRINTING DEMONSTRATION AT NSCAD WITH NOAM SIENNA. PHOTOS: MAY CHUNG.

Looking ahead:

The Centre's annual residency program will create presence and visibility for Jewish visual and performing arts in Halifax and strengthen our relationships with NSCAD and local cultural institutions.

"I was so excited to meet and do workshops with Noam Sienna, whose book I had already read. The programming during the week was amazing and I was so happy to have this opportunity on Dalhousie campus!"

— Rosa, first-year undergraduate student

The Third Century of Hebrew at King's and Dalhousie: a celebration

Did you know that Biblical Hebrew has been taught at Dal and King's since the 19th century — and is still going strong in the Department of Classics? It was high time for a party at a top student hangout spot on campus, the HMCS King's Wardroom! Over Hebrew-inspired cocktails — how about a Ruth's Harvest or a Burning Bush? — kosher lox sliders, and aleph-bet cookies, we celebrated the vibrance of this language and the achievements of our Hebrew students. Dalhousie faculty Seth Sanders and Eva Mroczek spoke about the origins of Hebrew, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the role of language in Jewish mystical thought. Guest scholar Fiona Black from Mt. Allison University introduced us to her work on biblical poetry and modern uses of the Bible, and Scholar/Artist-in-Residence Noam Sienna spoke about the history of Hebrew among other Jewish languages and gave away his original Hebrew prints as door prizes. Finally, Hebrew instructor Dr. Christopher Grundke awarded seven new scholarships for exceptional students. "It was the best class I've taken at Dalhousie," said Zoe Beiles, one of the scholarship winners, expressing her gratitude for Dr. Grundke's teaching and the deeply meaningful role of Hebrew in her life.



AT THE THIRD CENTURY OF HEBREW PARTY, DR. MROCZEK EXPLAINS THE MYSTICAL MEANING OF THE HEBREW LETTER BET... WITH A SUGAR COOKIE. PHOTO: AARON SILVER



DR. NOAM SIENNA INTRODUCES HEBREW BOOK ARTS WITH AN ORIGINAL PRINT. PHOTO: AARON SILVER



PROGRAM COORDINATOR KATIE BLATT

Meet the Program Coordinator

Students have a vital role in building our program, and the Centre is proud to offer internship and research opportunities. Meet Katie Blatt, who has helped build the Centre from the ground up!

"I'm an undergraduate student studying Contemporary Studies and Sociology jointly at the University of King's College and Dalhousie University. I currently work as the Program Coordinator at Dalhousie's Centre for Jewish Studies, with previous experience in office administration, including communications and outreach. My main research interest lies in the folkways of Ashkenazi women in the Pale of Settlement: I'm passionate about recognizing and honouring the thought, history, and rituals of these women. It's been so meaningful to be a part of the Centre for Jewish Studies, and I'm excited to see it continue to flourish!"

Looking ahead:

The Centre looks forward to creating additional student research and internship opportunities that offer financial support, career experience, and a chance to live and breathe Jewish culture at Dal.



Contact us:

dal.ca/jewish-studies
jewish.studies@dal.ca

 [jewishstudiesdalhousie](https://www.instagram.com/jewishstudiesdalhousie)