

CENTER FOR JEWISH HISTORY

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Center for Jewish History Announces Innovative Program Series Premiering this January

Series include: *History Matters*; *Very Short Introductions: Short Talks on Big Subjects*; *First Person: Jewish Stories, Jewish Lives*; and an Exhibition on *Jews in Space*

New York, NY (January 9, 2018) – The Center for Jewish History has announced the launch of a robust series of public programs, mini-courses, and a new exhibition that re-introduces the Center as a major cultural institution in New York City. Under the leadership of the Center’s recently appointed President and CEO Professor David N. Myers, these new initiatives will engage participants in some of today’s most challenging issues, bringing critical knowledge of the past to current conversations. Together, the various series confirm the Center’s role as a public leader and a pivotal forum for discussing some of the most vexing problems we face.

Tackling the roots of the current political turmoil, antisemitism, and the legacies of social change in the 1960s, the Center will introduce its keystone series *History Matters*, featuring preeminent scholars whose historical work sheds light on today’s pressing events. According to David Myers, “*History Matters* will bring world-renowned scholars to help us think through what the past teaches us—as we together grapple to understand the present and navigate the future. This is what the Center should be doing: putting historical knowledge to work for the betterment of society.”

For visitors short on time but long on interest, the Center, in partnership with Oxford University Press (OUP), will present *Very Short Introductions: Short Talks on Big Subjects*, a series of one-hour programs based on Oxford’s popular Very Short Introductions books. The series premieres on January 23 with the Center’s own David Myers leading a fast and fascinating conversation about 5778 years of Jewish history - and covering it all, in just one hour.

“*First Person: Jewish Stories, Jewish Lives*,” presents speakers whose experiences and encounters with Judaism have shaped their lives. Premiering the series in January, author Tova Mirvis shares her story about leaving her Orthodox faith with Tablet Magazine’s Marjorie Ingall. Later, in February, the Center will present an exhibit on “Jews in Space” in collaboration with YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, and acclaimed scholar Shaul Magid will teach a four week course on Radical Jewish politics.

More Information on New Series

History Matters schedule:

January 30: **Professor Deborah Lipstadt** (Emory University) on antisemitism past and present

February 20: **Professor Jan Gross** (Princeton University) on Europe, the Holocaust, and the rise of the right

March 27: **Professor Todd Gitlin** (Columbia University) on the legacies of the 1960s and liberalism

April 26: **Professor Ruth Wisse** (Harvard University) on Jews and power

May 16: **Professor Jonathan Sarna** (Brandeis University) on rupture and renewal in American Jewish life

Very Short Introductions: Short Talks on Big Subjects

On January 23rd, CJH President and CEO, Professor David Myers kicks off the first of four programs in 2018 featuring authors from the popular Oxford University Press Very Short Introduction series. Author of “Jewish History: A Very Short Introduction,” Professor Myers will cover 5778 years of Jewish History in less than one hour. Next up: On March 21st, George Washington University Professor Eric H. Cline, author of “Biblical Archeology: A Very Short Introduction,” will answer the five most frequently asked questions about this fascinating field.

First Person: Jewish Stories, Jewish Lives

Featuring remarkable stories of Jewish lives, the Center’s new series premieres with author Tova Mirvis on January 24 discussing her moving memoir, “The Book of Separation,” with Marjorie Ingall (Tablet Magazine).

As Tova explains, “‘The Book of Separation’ follows the first year of leaving my marriage and this religious world, and it explores what it means to leave a way of life that is scripted and mapped, and instead to enter into a world where there are far fewer expectations and rules...It’s a book about letting go and starting over, a book about learning to live with uncertainty and to heed your own voice. It’s also a book about parenting (I have three children) when there is this rupture between then and now, and when, as a result, there are no easy answers.”

Family History Today

The Ackman & Ziff Genealogy Institute is excited to offer “Family History Today,” a series of workshops focused on different approaches to researching one’s own history. January’s workshop will focus on searching for your living relatives and February’s workshop, presented with the American Jewish Historical Society, is centered on understanding the American Jewish immigration experience.

A former workshop participant, Peggy Teich, attests to effectiveness of the programs: “As someone who has attended several of the Center's genealogy programs, I highly recommend

them to both newbies as well as experienced genealogy researchers. The speakers were experts in their fields, the programs were very informative, well organized, welcoming and the program length was perfect. There were always useful handouts and plenty of time for Q and A. I always found that whatever I learned at the programs, I could put into immediate and effective use.”

Center for Jewish History Mini-Courses

As part of its commitment to share Jewish research with the broader public, the Center will offer an array of mini courses in 2018, intended for both scholarly and lay audiences. Courses will consist of three or four sessions; the courses are lecture-oriented, but also include the reading of texts and seminar-styled learning. Our visiting scholars, senior fellows, and other affiliated faculty teach these courses in the spring and fall.

The first course will be taught in February by National Endowment for the Humanities Senior Scholar Shaul Magid. Professor Magid (Indiana University) will teach on Radical Jewish Politics in Postwar America and Israel. The second course will be taught in March by Center for Jewish History Visiting Scholar Roberta Rosenberg. Professor Rosenberg (Christopher Newport University) will teach on “What’s So Funny? Jewish Humor from Genesis to Seinfeld and Soloway.”

Jews in Space: Members of the Tribe in Orbit

In partnership with YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, the exhibit Jews in Space will tell the story of Jews’ relationship to the solar system, and will feature materials ranging from rare 18th- and 19th- century rabbinic tomes on astronomy in Hebrew and German, Yiddish, English, and Russian works of science fiction, periodicals and serials, and other ephemera from literature and popular culture.

From as early as Genesis, Jews have pondered the heavens that surround our planet, as well as their place in them. As science and technology progressed, Jewish thinkers became interested in new discoveries, often attempting to unite science and Jewish tradition. Numerous such books appeared in Hebrew and other languages during the 17th through the 19th centuries.

By the early 20th century, when science and tradition already seemed irreconcilable, Jewish inventor Hugo Gernsback coined the term “science fiction,” and founded a series of magazines that became the home for a new genre of space literature that would come to inspire generations of readers. Eventually, the space programs of both the United States and the Soviet Union would send real Jews into space, also utilizing the work of Jewish scientists and engineers to reach these milestones.

Jews are also represented in popular culture renditions of space, space travel, and science fiction, starring in groundbreaking television shows such as “Star Trek”, and beloved movies such as “Spaceballs” by Mel Brooks.

Full Calendar of Events

JANUARY

Tuesday, January 23

6:30 pm

Very Short Introductions: Short Talks on Big Subjects

All of Jewish History in Less Than an Hour with David N. Myers

Presented by Center for Jewish History in partnership with the Oxford University Press

Book Talk

Love history but short on time? Join CJH President and distinguished Jewish History Professor David N. Myers for a fast and fascinating discussion. Author of “Jewish History: A Very Short Introduction,” Myers covers 5778 years in a very short program. Sound impossible? Set the clock. And see how much you’ll learn. Meet our new CJH President! Book signing and reception to follow. Book included in price of admission.

Tickets: \$15 general; \$10 CJH/partner members, seniors, students

Link: <http://programs.cjh.org/event/all-jewish-history-2018-01-23>

Wednesday, January 24

6:30 pm

First Person: Jewish Stories, Jewish Lives

The Book of Separation

Presented by Center for Jewish History & Jewish Book Council

Book Talk

When she broke away from Orthodox Judaism, Tova Mirvis left her marriage and the way of life she’d always known. The bestselling novelist of “The Ladies Auxiliary, The Outside World,” and “Visible City,” Mirvis speaks with columnist Marjorie Ingall (Tablet Magazine) about her moving new memoir, “The Book of Separation,” and her new life in the secular world. Book signing and reception to follow.

Tickets: \$10 general; \$5 CJH/Partner members, seniors, students

Link: <http://programs.cjh.org/event/book-of-separation-2018-01-24>

Monday, January 29

6:30 pm

Family History Today

From Family History to Present Family – Finding Living Relatives You Have Never Met!

Presented by Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute

Lecture

Are you interested in reconnecting with your long-lost cousins? This lecture will cover major resources and strategies for locating the living descendants of deceased individuals on your family tree.

Tickets: Free; reservations required

Link: <http://programs.cjh.org/event/family-history-today-2018-01-29>

Tuesday, January 30

7 pm

History Matters: Deborah Lipstadt
Presented by Center for Jewish History

Panel Discussion

The first History Matters lecture brings acclaimed Professor Deborah Lipstadt (Emory University) to the Center for Jewish History to reflect on the importance of the study of anti-Semitism in the past to help understand anti-Semitism in the present. In putting historical scholarship into dialogue with present-day concerns, this series will highlight the importance of history — and especially Jewish history — in public discourse.

Tickets: \$15 general; \$10 CJH/partner members, seniors, students

Link: <http://programs.cjh.org/event/history-matters-2018-01-30>

FEBRUARY

Tuesday February 6

7pm

Radical Jewish Politics in Postwar America and Israel

Presented by Center for Jewish History

Course

This February, NEH Senior Scholar Shaul Magid (Indiana University) will teach Radical Jewish Politics in Postwar America and Israel. In this course, we will examine a number of leading radical Jewish thinkers in the post-war period, focusing on: Arthur Waskow, Meir Kahane, Yoel Teitelbaum, and Rav Kook. Different as they may seem on major social and political questions, these four were united in proposing radical Jewish visions of a post-liberal society. Continues February 13, 21, 27.

Tuition: \$250 non-members; \$200 CJH members, seniors; \$50 students. Enroll at

<https://donate.cjh.org/CJHCourses>

Link: <http://programs.cjh.org/event/radical-jewish-politics-2018-02-06>

Tuesday, February 20

7 pm

History Matters: Jan Gross

Panel Discussion

The second History Matters lecture brings acclaimed Professor Jan Gross (Princeton University) to the Center for Jewish History to reflect on the importance of the study of the past – in this case, on Europe, the Holocaust, and the rise of the right – for understanding the present.

Tickets: \$15 general; \$10 CJH/partner members, seniors, students

Link: <http://programs.cjh.org/event/history-matters-2018-02-30>

Wednesday, February 21

6:30 pm

Family History Today

Researching your Ancestors' Immigration Experiences

Presented by Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute & American Jewish Historical Society

Lecture

Designed for beginner or advanced genealogy researchers, this lecture will present research tools and approaches to finding data on, as well as imagining an informed historical context of your ancestors' immigration experiences. No previous experience or preparation necessary.

Tickets: Free; reservations required

Link: <http://programs.cjh.org/event/family-history-today-2018-02-21>

Wednesday, March 21

6:30 pm

Very Short Introductions: Short Talks on Big Subjects

Fantastic Feats, Fabulous Finds

Book Talk

Did Abraham exist? Did the Exodus happen? What do biblical archeologists discover about our ancient past? Join George Washington University Professor, Eric H. Cline, author of "Biblical Archeology: A Very Short Introduction" as he uncovers secrets hidden in the sands.

Tickets: \$15 general; \$10 CJH/partner members, seniors, students

Link: <http://programs.cjh.org/event/very-short-introductions-2018-03-21>

The Center for Jewish History is located at 15 West 16th Street in Manhattan.

About the Center for Jewish History

The Center for Jewish History in New York City illuminates history, culture, and heritage. The Center provides a collaborative home for five partner organizations; the partners' archives comprise the world's largest and most comprehensive archive of the modern Jewish experience outside of Israel. The collections span a thousand years, with archival documents and books, as well as thousands of artworks, textiles, ritual objects, recordings, films, and photographs. The Center's experts are leaders in unlocking archival material for a wide audience through the latest practices in digitization, library science, and public education. www.cjh.org