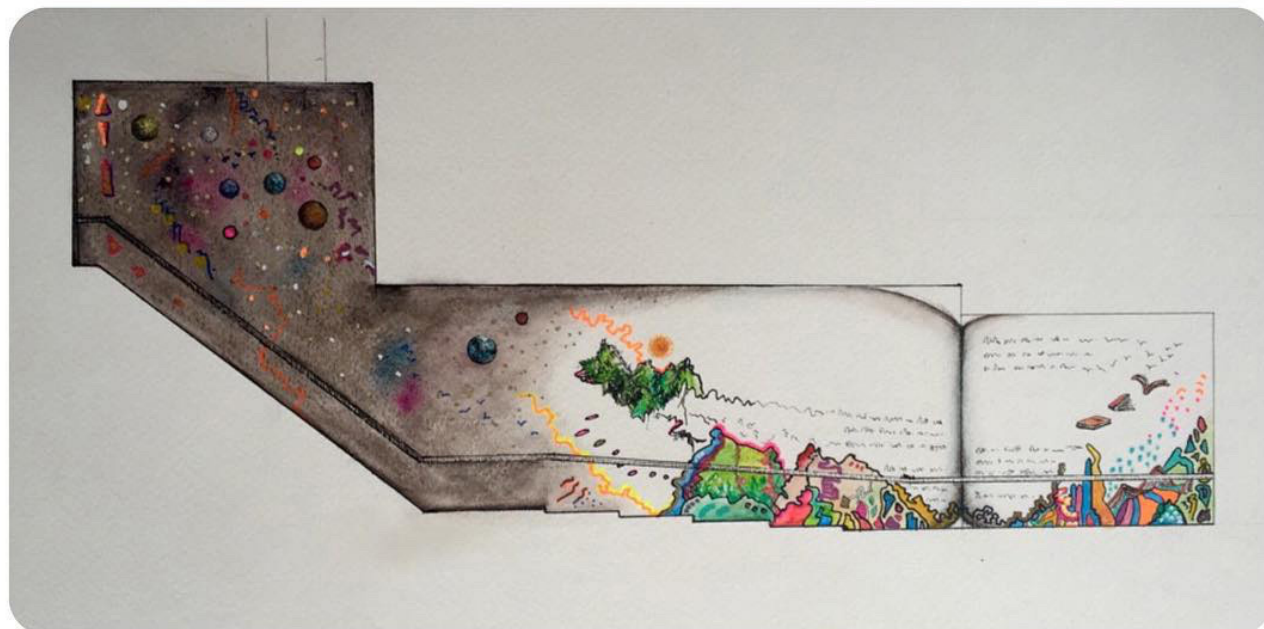


The Commentator

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Artist Connie Rose's designs for the new mural in Nagel. Read more on page 14

Yeshiva University's First Chanukafest A Success, Fills Max Stern Athletic Center

By Noam Feifel

The third night of Chanukah saw over 800 of YU and Stern students fill the Max Stern Athletic Center on the Wilf Campus for the first ever Chanukafest. The event took the place of the usual holiday-inspired Chanukah concert that served as the primary co-ed Chanukah celebration for a number of years at YU, but whose attendance had declined in recent years. ChanukaFest was a novel proposal from the seven student council committees of the Wilf and Beren campuses that orchestrated and executed it.

The carnival-themed event comprised various booths set up across the lively, crowded room. Energetic students could be seen playing Chanukah-spirited games, snacking on the free food, socializing with old friends, and making new ones amid all the excitement. "I can tell a lot of work went into planning this," observed sophomore Noah Frankel at the event. "I'd say it's paying off too. There are so many things to do! This is a great Chanukah party."

The main attraction of the night, though, was the mesmerizing dance moves showcased by street performing and former America's Got Talent duo, Tic and Tac, who performed two different acts at the fest. Both acts drew an animated crowd of students, who flocked towards center-court and huddled around to watch the performers deftly execute their acrobatic stunts.

And the overall reaction of the student body to the performers seemed positive. "The event as a whole was really fun. But the Tic and Tac performance took the night from good to unforgettable," exclaimed sophomore Joseph Solomont. Senior Ari Marder confessed that he wasn't having the best time

SEE CHANUKAH, CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Review: Geography of a Horse Dreamer

By Etai Shuchatowitz

Producing something meaningful takes luck, hard work and, most of all, inspiration. Thus the ground is set for YCDS's interesting and inspiring production of Sam Shephard's *Geography of a Horse Dreamer*. The play opens in a decrepit hotel room wherein two gangsters, Sandy (Jack Turrell) and Beaujo (David Cutler) sit around watching over Cody (Binyamin Bixon) who lies tied to the bed. We quickly learn that Sandy and Beaujo are working for some men who have kidnapped Cody believing him to have the powers to dream up the winning horses in that day's race. However, it seems that his, and, by extension their, luck has run out as Cody's dreams no longer produce anything meaningful. What happens next include a man being convinced he's a dog, a psychotic doctor, a surprising shootout and probably the strangest room service help I've ever seen (granted, I haven't seen much - it's not a frequent trope).

The play moves at a brisk pace, coming in at under an hour and a half, and kept my attention the whole time. There are moments in act one, which predominantly features three actors walking around a room and talking, where I started to lose interest, but the play quickly regains itself by changing things up.

The play is weird - there's no getting around that. And by that I don't mean this interpretation of the play. I mean the play itself. However, as things go on and more and more dreamers are left to suffer, all of the seeming lunacy and strangeness seem to gel together to form this odd whole that can only be thought about and appreciated once all is said and done.

Lin Snider's direction takes what is already a crazy play and fills the space with interesting choices. Every time a character starts to speak about their own real dreams - real hopes that are not the product of gangsters forcing them to dream - they step away from the light and towards the audience. They become different from the rest of the action that's trying to crush them and take what's theirs. Ultimately, though, their

dreams end and they're forced to rejoin the brutal hotel room that wants to take everything away.

The acting here is all good stuff, but I need to make special mention of Ben Machlin's take as Fingers, the head of the crime syndicate. As soon as he stepped on stage in act two, he owned the scene. He's not onstage for too long, but his whole character is a surprising change of pace. Fingers is big and loud and everything you thought he wouldn't be, and Machlin makes it his own.

Turrell's Sandy is cocky and confident even when he shouldn't be. Although there are moments where one can clearly see Turrell more than Sandy, his interactions with the rest of the cast help elevate the two scenes that make up the show.

His interactions with Bixon's Cody are especially nice. Bixon, as written, has to adopt an Irish brogue as well as the mannerisms of an animal, and, while much dialogue gets lost in the accent, his physicality speaks volumes.

Similarly, David Cutler's Beaujo is best exemplified by the too-big suit he wears throughout the show. His dedication to playing cards by himself and wavering in his voice throughout everything he does give a real sense of how uncomfortable the char-

"AS THINGS GO ON AND MORE AND MORE DREAMERS ARE LEFT TO SUFFER, ALL OF THE SEEMING LUNACY AND STRANGENESS GEL TOGETHER TO FORM THIS ODD WHOLE THAT CAN ONLY BE THOUGHT ABOUT AND APPRECIATED ONCE ALL IS SAID AND DONE."

SEE DREAMER, CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

The EDITORIAL

Our Academic Future is in our Hands

By Raymond Cohen

There is no doubt that Yeshiva has struggled from a public relations perspective over the last couple of years. Headlines from 2014 proclaiming Yeshiva's \$150 million annual deficit and half a billion dollar endowment contraction, combined with Moody's downgrade of the University's credit rating to junk status have marred the school's reputation as a leading academic institution and have at times called the school's survival into question. This past year's faculty votes of no confidence and student petitions have bolstered the notion that Yeshiva is on the brink of colossal failure.

From a student's perspective, buying in to the narrative of a University defined by its financial woes is all too tempting. Burdened with the pressures of deciding our futures and forging our own path, students here can easily opt to fold their hand and choose from a plethora of excuses as to why they didn't achieve their personal short-term or long-term goals. Many students here have indeed fallen into the trap of playing victim to the school's circumstances to compensate for their personal failures.

Yet a closer look at Yeshiva reveals a portrait not nearly as unpleasant as the headlines paint it out to be. George Eliot taught us not to judge a book by its cover and in the words of our Sages, "Do not look at the vessel, rather examine what is inside of it." Inside of YU is a student body with vision, resilience and an entrepreneurial spirit, largely unwilling to be deterred by the rhetoric that surrounds them. YU provides the students with fertile soil for grassroots initiatives; the institution enables us create our own experience, and we respond in kind by taking advantage of the opportunities that exist.

For example, students who wanted to sharpen their understanding of financial markets founded the YU Investment Club (YUIC) and created an educational platform for investing. The club quickly grew to become one of the most popular and active clubs on campus and has hosted several multi-billion dollar hedge fund managers.

A student who wanted to spice up the Miztva of bikkur holim founded Music Vs. The club-turned-organization now has 31 chapters internationally where people gather together to visit the sick and elderly, using the universal language of music to create a warm atmosphere.

Other students have sought to use technology to bring Torah to the world and have started initiatives like En Minutos and Torah Exchange, utilizing digital media to produce re-

latable bits of Torah. As well, Halachipedia, a website founded by YU students and guided by Roshei Yeshiva, provides an easy-to-use resource for practical halachic questions. The site currently has 500 pages and over 10,000 footnotes.

My intention is not to list every initiative at YU in the last couple of years (that would be beyond the scope of this editorial), but rather to demonstrate the fact that success is alive and well at Yeshiva and that it is up to us, the student body, to convert our dreams into reality.

As founder of The Commentator's business section I can attest to the feeling of fulfillment that comes with executing a vision. Around two years ago, I felt very strongly that business students needed a platform for expression at YU. I started to do research, met with the deans of the business school and spoke with some of the student leaders on campus to get an idea of how I could go about giving Sy Syms students a voice. Through what was initially a request for advice, I met with some of The Commentator's board members and we mutually agreed to create the business section.

Having a business section has enabled students interested in business to simultaneously pursue and write about their passions. Some have written about Israeli business, others have focused on entrepreneurship, accounting, finance and nonprofit. This year alone, the business section has been quoted in Bloomberg Business and received private accolades from a partner at PwC and the CEO of the UJF's Jewish National Fund -- achievements far beyond what I had imagined.

I've had the opportunity to meet with some unbelievable personalities who serve as senior executives in fields such as law, finance, healthcare, real estate, human resources and nonprofits. Despite their demanding schedules, these YU alumni were full of insight and advice about how to succeed in business and all voluntarily went out of their way to ask if they could help me from a networking perspective. These alumni carried themselves with the fiery spirit that I have described.

To my fellow students who are just starting out: although their will be no shortage of opportunity to assign blame to the administration, as Dale Carnegie would say, 'do not criticize, condemn or complain.' You have more control over your situation than you think. If you feel what you perceive as a void at YU, it is up to you to speak up and take initiative, it is in your hands to write the story that you wish to read. YU may not have a stellar reputation, but it has character, and amending the words of Peter Drucker, character eats reputation for breakfast.

Financial Efficiency within Presidential and Administrative Salaries

By Yechiel Schwab

Earlier this month, The Chronicle of Higher Education released its annual survey of university presidents' salaries. The survey revealed that Yeshiva University's President Richard Joel amassed \$2.6 million in 2013, despite the fact that the university was struggling financially and continues to grapple with ongoing budget troubles and financial cuts. This salary places Joel as the 4th highest paid university president in the nation out of 497 universities surveyed. News organizations from The New York Times to The Forward and Forbes commented on the incongruous relationship between President Joel's salary and our University's ongoing financial trouble. Yeshiva responded in a statement that this 2013 salary represents an anomaly for President Joel, who received payout for six years of deferred compensation in 2013, resulting in an unusually large sum[1]. Further, they noted that President Joel generously took a \$100,000 dollar pay-cut in 2014, and an additional \$50,000 dollar pay-cut this year.

In this light, President Joel's salary remains far less egregious, and indeed, his voluntary pay-cuts are commendable. However, even with these pay-cuts, and detracting a one-time payout, President Joel's annual salary, including bonuses and average deferred compensation, still exceeds \$1,000,000. Accruing a salary to the tune of \$1,000,000 and

above is a distinction held by only 31 other presidents in the nation. In fact, the median presidential salary barely exceeds \$400,000. Further, in the Forward's recent survey of Jewish non-profit leaders, President Joel's base pay ranked 4th, and when accounting for annual bonuses, President Joel ranks first among these Jewish non-profit leaders.

Much ink has been spilled, both in this paper and others, condemning President Joel's large salary. The purpose of this article is not to add my voice to the (rightfully deserved) cacophony, but rather to look towards the future.

As our university continues to identify new paths to cut costs, I encourage our decision-makers to examine the administrative salaries listed in our yearly 990 Tax Form. This list documents our University's highest paid employees, including more than a dozen administrators earning over \$400,000. Comfortingly, half of these salaries, and many of the largest, belong to Einstein administrators, whose salaries will soon be paid by a different institution. But a significant number of continuing Yeshiva employees still earned hefty salaries in 2013, and more high-earning administrators who have been hired or promoted since 2013 will likely appear on future forms. Though none match President Joel's outlandish 2013 salary, or even his yearly average of \$1,000,000, a mission-driven University which hasn't offered faculty rais-

SEE SALARIES, CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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The Commentator is the official student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

For 81 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious, and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.

The Commentator staff claims students spanning the diverse spectrum of backgrounds and beliefs represented at Yeshiva.

We are united by our passion for living the ideals of Torah u-Maddah, and a commitment to journalistic excellence.



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1 Connie Rose's Mural

Who knew that this institution was hooked on abstract surreal art? Now that I think about it, though, this explains a lot -- my trips to the registrar are often characterized by an overwhelming feeling of abstract surrealism.



2 Us

We, the mysterious composers of 7 up 7 down, are modern-day prophets. For those who don't remember, in last issue we called that thing in Nagel's "a giant picture frame" and a "modern art installation" that was "radically pushing the bounds of the aesthetic." We are the champions, my friends.



3 President Joel's Salary

We may have some legitimate complaints, but we should thank President Joel for keeping us on top of at least one college ranking list.



4 YU Angel

"To my right is Michael, to my left is Gabriel, before me is Uriel, and behind me stands YU Angel." YU Angel is my saving grace -- a messenger of light, a beneficent guardian, "the angel who has delivered me from all harm."



5 Falcon Waterfree Technology

The new urinals in the library bathrooms are so cutting-edge that they have evolved beyond flushing. They smell pretty bad, but save lots of water! However, the absence of the familiar whooshing sound does make the experience somewhat anti-climactic; you walk away happy to be helping the environment but feeling strangely unfulfilled.



6 Windows

Transparent walls allow oodles of daylight to stream into our newly-renovated book-sanctuary. But beware: if you pick your nose while studying, all of Amsterdam Avenue will bear witness.



7 YouTube Rewind

Oddly enough, the YU gym made a surprise guest appearance in this year's video which featured hordes of YouTube celebrities whipping and nae naeing in the Max Stern Athletic Center. Not entirely sure why no other gym was available, but it's always fun to see a Macs logo in a video with 65 million hits.

7 UP ~~7~~ DOWN



1 Steve Harvey

I can't recall ever seeing a more deliciously awkward moment on live television. Steve Harvey comforted his audience with these reassuring words: "We feel so badly, but it's still a great night." Not sure if Miss Colombia agrees.



2 The Wall

President Joel finally heeded our cries and tore down that wall! When the caution tape is removed, we will finally be able to move freely between Glueck and Nagels.



3 The YU Security Van

Gritty and hardened criminals are just not intimidated by a Toyota Sienna. We prefer the YU Security Humvee and the YU Security anti-aircraft tank.



4 The Winter

Even the most passionate snow-haters are feeling a bit uneasy. Thankfully, recent press releases are reporting that this season overslept and missed its flight to the northeast, but should be arriving pretty soon.



5 Having a Final on the Last Day

Everyone else is sipping Pina Colodas on the beach and you are stuck in Furst 207 writing furiously in one of those dreadful blue booklets. We feel your pain, bro.



6 Yeshiva U. Shadchan

Yenta the Matchmaker for the 21st century! It's a funny idea, but we can safely assume that this service will go the way of YU Compliments and vanish into internet obscurity within a week.



7 Degree Track

Based on the name, one would think that this thing tracks your degree. Sadly, it does not. Want to know how close you are to finishing your major? Want to figure out which requirements you still need to take in order to graduate? Too bad. Just take a bunch of classes and hope for the best.

SALARIES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

es in over five years while decreasing faculty pension plans and cutting professors, courses and athletics teams, should display similar frugality with its administrative salaries.

The University will soon structure a new presidential contract for its incoming president. Beyond simply accounting for the ubiquitous outcry over President Joel's salary, we must factor in the changing nature of our university. Even ignoring the ongoing cuts and efficiency-measures that the administration has enacted, the separation from Einstein alone will halve our university's budget. With only 32 universities nationwide paying their presidents a total of \$1,000,000 annually, a smaller and tighter Yeshiva University, without a medical school and without inefficient excess, does not belong on this list. Our undergraduate education, the core of our University, must remain both our fiscal and axiological priority and our future President, and his or her salary, should embody this focus.

[1] President Joel's compensation package, similar to many university presidents, consists of three main sums: 1- His base pay, of around \$700,000. 2- Other compensations, which includes benefits like a University subsidized home or driver, which totaled over \$300,000. 3- A deferred compensation plan of \$255,000 a year, but of which President Joel only receives payment for at the fulfillment of his contract. In 2013, President Joel received this deferred compensation, which had matured over six years, accumulating to over \$1.5 million. Note that many of the other top ten salaried presidents received similarly large portions from bonuses or deferred compensation plans.

News Briefs

By Commentator Staff

Yeshiva University Ranked Among Best College Values

Kiplinger rated Yeshiva University 32nd among the best private college values this December. The ratings are based on academic quality as well as cost and financial aid measures. Each school is judged on its competitiveness of admission, graduation rates, academic support, cost and financial aid, and student indebtedness. Among private universities ranked, Princeton, Harvard, and Vanderbilt scored the highest. Yeshiva received the 111th place for all universities, private and public. Kiplinger is a Washington, D.C.-based publisher of business forecasts and personal finance advice, available in print, online, audio, video and software products. One of its best-known publications is the magazine Kiplinger's Personal Finance.

Peculiarly, the Daily News Telegraph, an online news company that reports on business, culture, science, sports, and technology with an online circulation of around 700,000 viewers, reported on the ratings when they were released, explicitly mentioned Yeshiva University's ranking among only a select few schools mentioned in their article.

The Situation in France: Fireside chat with Dr. Neil Rogachevsky

On Wednesday, Dec 9, The Schneier Program for International Affairs hosted a "fireside chat" with Tikvah Postdoctoral fellow at YU's Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought, Dr. Neil Rogachevsky, on "The Situation in France". Dr. Rogachevsky spoke about the political atmosphere in France, the French government's approach to handling various situations, the successes and failures of French intelligence agencies

SEE BRIEFS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



Dr. Neil Rogachevsky

Letter to The Editor

Reading Darren May's account of my shiur "Women Rabbis?," given in response to student request, especially as it appears in the print edition of the Commentator (Nov. 30) brought home to me the veracity of Benjamin Franklin's adage "half a truth is a whole lie." It reminded me of the experience of reading one variety of student response on an exam: The student was clearly present in class, many of the words and ideas are familiar, yet significant elements have been misunderstood or omitted such that the response fundamentally misrepresents the material that was taught. When this happens on an exam, I both correct the student paper and consider how to present the material in the hope of precluding such misunderstanding in the future.

I appreciate the Commentator's attempt to present a more complete account in the online version of the article but continue to find a need to clarify elements of my presentation that are still omitted from the Commentator's account, thereby correcting the statement of my position, and to amplify my comments to avoid further misconstrual and misrepresentation. I will not belabor the article's discussion of what has been attributed to me (much, but not all of which, is accurate) but will rather focus on what has been omitted.

Objections (or lack thereof) to any proposed practice or course of action on purely legal, or halakhic, grounds, are relatively easy to determine and articulate. But not everything that is technically permitted is appropriate or wise, and additional considerations must be taken seriously in making decisions, especially those that entail changing communal practice and norms. Thus, the impact on the fabric of our community must be carefully weighed before going forward even if a given practice is determined to be technically permitted. (I note here that many far greater than I have questioned the halakhic viability of the ordination of women.) Certainly change that has the potential to tear our community apart is counterproductive; in my opinion such change violates the prohibition against creating machloket, articulated

by Chazal in no uncertain terms (Sanhedrin 110a).

I prefer to assume the best of motivations on the part of all, and motivations, like the people who harbor them, are frequently complex. As I see it, change should be motivated by communal needs rather than by a desire to adhere to any external ideological vision.

The midrash (Midrash Yelamedeinu Egev) observes that the first luchot were broken because their giving was accompanied by great publicity and fanfare; in the second, enduring, giving of the luchot God kevayachol chose to do things with b'hetzne'a. To my mind, this provides a model for how change, when warranted, should be achieved in our community: Appropriate change must happen slowly and with b'hetzne'a.

I would have preferred not to articulate explicitly what should be obvious from the preceding sentiments, expressed at the conclusion of my presentation, but apparent confusion over my position necessitates my doing so. Recent years have brought a move in some circles of the modern Orthodox community in the U.S. to ordain women under one guise or another. Even assuming the best of intentions on the part of those involved, this push has been highly divisive and is one of the major issues that have pushed our community to the brink of what may be an irreparable schism. Thus, regardless of any theoretical analysis of the halakhic and haskafic issues involved (and I think that these merit serious discussion) it is inconceivable for me to support this attempt. Our community can ill afford such a schism, and the onus of preventing it lies on those who wish to institute change. From the very inception of this move, I have adopted the position that if there is to be change, it must be instituted in the right manner by the right people at the right time. Unfortunately, I don't believe that any of those criteria have been met.

Even more troubling to me is the potential impact that this push for ordination may have on other issues that are not problematic in their own right. I refer to those that have not been communally divisive to any sig-

nificant degree despite genuine difference of opinion, but that are now being tarnished by association. Recent decades have seen many changes in the opportunities and avenues available to women for Torah learning and spiritual growth. We have witnessed the expansion of opportunities both for individual development and for women to meet the needs our community. There is much in this realm about which I am enthusiastic and I see many of these developments as a great blessing for our community. Although not everyone has embraced these developments, they have not had a schismatic impact on our community.

From my perspective, expanding opportunities in Talmud Torah and ways in which Torah knowledge can be used to meet communal needs is sacred work. But the pursuit of change in divisive ways makes many rabbinic leaders unfortunately, but understandably, reluctant to embrace changes that may not be objectionable on their own terms. To my mind, this would represent an incalculable loss to our community.

It would be folly for me to try to predict what our American modern Orthodox Jewish community will look like in a generation or two hence. It is, however, abundantly clear to me that the push for ordination of women in its current iteration is doing considerable harm to our community today. I have frequently found myself in disagreement with the rhetoric and tone of both those in favor and those opposed to this current development. When all is said and done, I continue to count myself among those who are, in practice, opposed. Lo zeh haderekh ve-lo zo haIr

I hope it will not be a tefillat shav to pray that those directly involved step back from the edge of the precipice both rhetorically and in action so that with some divine assistance we can perhaps avoid the schism that so many of us fear. Oseh shalom bimromav hu ya'aseh shalom aleinu ve'al kol yisrael.

Jeremy Wieder

YU Fencing Team Flourishing, Poised for 2016 Season

By Darren May

The art of war has been a human fascination since the dawn of man. In the days of old, fencers from Spain and France would train in secret, in dark castle dungeons away from the prying eyes of the enemy. France and Spain each had their own masters, and in great secrecy each passed down the art of sword fighting to their pupils.

Today, there are no such secret convocations of people to pass down ancient fighting wisdoms, but there is the YU fencing team. The YU fencing team meets in the basement of MTA, a fitting setting as it is like the dungeons of old. There, twelve unassuming young men train in this ancient art of sword fighting four days a week, and through hard work and perseverance many of them have been able to compete with some of the best collegiate fencers in the country, fighting against NCAA D1 schools.

Fencing is a sport that is broken up into three different types of sword fighting based on what weapon the fighters are using. The first is the foil, the most commonly used of the three weapons. It is lightweight, weighing less than a pound. One wins points in a foil bout by touching the point of the sword to the body of the opponent. The foil is coached by John Wilhelm, who has been fencing for over 25 years, and is known for his knowledge of the sport, fencing theory and the complex rules of the sport.

Then there is the épée, a modern derivation of the original dueling sword. It is heavier than the foil, and features a more pronounced guard for the hand. Unlike the foil, in order to score with the épée one is aloud to hit the opponent anywhere on his body. New coach Avinash Somir commands the épée part of the team. He is a former fencer for one of the best fencing schools in the country, Ohio State University, and is in the running to compete at the next Olympics in Brazil, starting with a pre-Olympic event in April. He is an incredibly accomplished fencer and has won several NCAA championship team titles with Ohio State. Somir is also responsible for the conditioning of the entire team. So far, the team has benefitted tremendously presence and expertise.

Lastly, there is the saber, which is a slashing weapon, as opposed to the other weapons, which are thrusting weapons. This area is coached by head coach Peter Rosas, a very accomplished fencer in his own right, having qualified for the Division I NCAA championship in fencing twice in his career and having been inducted into the City College Hall of Fame.

YU will compete in a number of exciting fencing tournaments. The first is going to be held on February 7th



"I THOUGHT THAT WHEN I WENT TO YU I WOULD BE GIVING UP MY FENCING IN ORDER TO PURSUE MY JUDAISM...IN FACT...THE TWO ARE NOT SEPARATE BUT THE ONE COMPLIMENTS THE OTHER."

-SPENCER BRASCH

in the Max Stern Gym. In this tournament, YU will host five schools that are in the Mid-Atlantic Collegiate Fencing Association. This will be a historic tournament, as it is the first time that there has been a fencing tournament hosted on the YU premises in over a decade.

The next tournament will be hosted by YU in the third week of March, and will take place in Vassar College. This will be the NCAA regionals, one of the biggest fencing tournaments in America. Not only is this the tournament that determines who will get into the NCAA finals, but it is also probably the most competitive regionals as it boasts very competitive schools like Harvard, Columbia, and NYU.

"It is a great honor to be hosting such a historic event," said YU fencing team captain Spencer Brasch. "It's truly a historic event not only for YU athletics, but for YU as a university."

Brasch spoke about how the fencing team is an incredible fusion of Judaism and sport, and that this fusion could never happen at another university. "I thought that when I went to YU I would be giving up my fencing in order to pursue my Judaism," said Brasch. "In fact, here in YU we have both very high level fencing and one of the best [religious] study halls in the world. The two are not separate, but the one compliments the other."

Brasch elaborated on several examples where he feels the two--the sport and Judaism become fused "During suicide runs, we scream at the top of our lungs 'Yeshiva!' every time our toes hit the line. When we have tournaments early in the morning, we get up even earlier to pray intensely as a team. And if you descend into the dungeons of the castle-looking building guarded by scaffolding out front on Wilf Campus, walk into the room with a sign 'Fencing Room,' we have a verse from the Bible on the wall, written in bright orange letters, '...and the fiery turning-every-which-way sword to guard the way to the Tree of Life'(Genesis 3:23)."

With so much going well for it, the Yeshiva fencing team continues to be one of the most consistent and high performing teams on campus. They are the epitome of dedication and perseverance, while also being an example of Torah U'Maddah--in essence, following the core principles that are the basis for much of what goes on at Yeshiva.

YU Students Fight Cancer by Eating Cholent and Growing Facial Hair

“Crack Pots” wins cholent cookoff; Robin dubbed best Movember mustache in tasty fundraiser

By Elliot Heller

Dozens of students showed up for the Cholent Cookoff and Mustache Movember competition on December 1. Much like the weather outside, the mood in Weisberg Commons was anything but dry, with students milling about, partaking in each other's cholent, and marvelling at the contestants' facial hair. In the end, junior Yosef Robin won the mustache competition, and the “Crack Pots,” a team consisting of juniors Devorah Pahmer, Shira Koperwas, and Lexi Zimmer, were crowned Cholent Champions.

The event itself was sponsored by the Movember Foundation, an organization dedicated to fighting prostate cancer. A table for donations to the foundation was set up at the door. “We thought it would be nice to raise the money for the charity in November, the month dedicated to raising awareness for prostate and testicular cancer,” said Jacob Herenstein, a sophomore and Vice President of Classes for YSU.

“Noam Safier, president of YSU, originated the idea, ran it by Rachel Rolnick, the President of SCWSC, and they approached me for help with logistics,” said Mr. Herenstein. “Grand and Essex Market in Bergenfield, NJ agreed to sponsor all of the materials for the cholent making. They gave us a discount on all of the secret ingredients we purchased, sponsored all of the basic ingredients, and gave us four humongous bins of cholent – enough for 250 people,” in exchange for advertising their new delivery service to the Heights.



Cholent Cookoff Champion “Crack Pots” with judges Jonathan Schwab and Benjy Isaacs

“The councils worked together to develop a program which could include the women of the Beren Campus, because the mustache competition is technically only open to the men of the Wilf,” added Herenstein. The men of Yeshiva University have always been a part of cake wars, which supports Sharsheret and breast cancer awareness, so we wanted the women to be a part of the Cholent Cookoff!”

For the first part of the event, 19 cholents, each made by YU students, were on display throughout the room, as the students in attendance made their way from crock pot to simmering crock pot to take part in the gigantic taste test. Each team brought a sample to the front for the judges to taste.

After the tasting, the much anticipated Mustache Competition began, with entrants showcasing their carefully designed manes to the crowd. Accounting Professor Lenny Fuld, famous for his own facial hair, was commissioned to judge the contest.

“We picked Lenny Fuld to judge the mustache contest because we saw pictures of him from his younger years, and he had the greatest mustache known to mankind,” said Herenstein.

The contestants included Robin, Shua Brick, Yonah Stromer, Raphael Rosenberg, Avi Strauss, and Uri Shalmon. Stromer was by far the most enthusiastic of the bunch, announcing himself as “focused and ready” from

the aforementioned Golan Heights kosher restaurant.

“We thought Benjy would be a great choice because everyone knows him, and running Golan, he knows all about cholent,” said Herenstein. Schwab was chosen



Contestants show off their manes to the crowd

“ JUDGE JONATHAN SCHWAB MENTIONED THAT BOTH THE WINNER AND THE RUNNER UP “DIDN'T LEAVE ANYTHING ON THE FIELD... OR IN THE POT.”

the beginning of the contest.

After carefully assessing the contestants mustaches for creativity, size, symmetry and more, Fuld dubbed Robin the champion and student council awarded him an \$100 gift card to local eatery Golan Heights.

Robin explained the background to his victory. “I last shaved on Friday October 30 and grew it [my mustache] throughout November. I really alienated all of my friends and family, but I had no choice but to keep my eyes on the prize. Mustache growing is all about perseverance. My connectors weren't growing in so well in the early stages but I kept grinding to get the results I needed.”

“I was going for a “Ross ‘The Boss’ Rhea” kind of look. Thick, respectable, and Canadian.

Other candidates had good flow. It was anybody's game. I was fortunate to come out on top.”

But the result did not go without controversy. One YU student, who requested to remain anonymous, stated angrily, “Yonah Stromer should have won. The man has a mane coming out of his chin.”

Nonetheless, the event continued with the finale of the cholent competition, judged by Jonathan Schwab, Associate Director of University Housing and Residence Life, who sported a fantastic, Monopoly Man-esque mustache, and Benjy Isaacs, owner and manager of the

because “he's always around, and everyone loves him.”

The winners on the “Crack Pots” included juniors Devorah Pahmer, majoring in business management, Shira Koperwas, speech pathology, and Lexi Zimmer, marketing. The three are roommates and have been making cholent for Shabbos for years. The winning cholent contained chicken soup mix, sweet potatoes, and ketchup, as well as a plethora of spices, and a secret ingredient.

The runners-up were “Rita's Boys,” featuring juniors Binyamin Kohanbash, Jacob Finkel, Yoni Fried and Gavriel Racovsky. Kohanbash reported that he “was in charge of the potato department, Jacob was head chef, Yoni was official moral support, and Gavriel was head of water measurement. “Levi Herman said tehillim b'zchus that we would win.”

According to Benjy, great cholent “has to be not too thick, not too soupy, right in the middle. It has to have an original taste – no knockoffs. And it's gotta be he-mish; you gotta feel like it's shabbos.”

In his remarks announcing the winner, Schwab mentioned that both the winner and the runner-up “didn't leave anything on the field... or in the pot.” Crack Pots' cholent was “a little less soupy, more meat and potatoes and spice...you could almost taste the sweat that went into it.” The other was “a little more liquidy, but a fantastic taste, a taste that will stick with me – and my stomach – for quite some time. Benjy summed it up as follows: “some were great, some were ok, some were terrible.”

Schwab added, “In 2007, when I participated in a cholent cookoff similar to this one, we came in 14th place. I never thought I would be here.”

Overall, the event seemed to be a huge success, with much money and awareness raised on behalf of men's health.

BRIEFS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

along with the budget cuts they've experienced, and demographic changes emerging in France as a result of migration and the acceptance of refugees. He pointed to the French attitude of using the government to solve problems and pointed to the recently declared state of emergency that granted the police broad powers to investigate and detain suspects of terror, as well as the recent closing of several mosques accused of harboring and breeding radicals. Further, while Rogachevsky noted the rise of Marine Le Pen's National Front party as a direct reactionary result of recent terrorist attacks on France and populist sentiment against accepting more refugees, he questioned its staying power over the long-term.

After his prepared remarks, Dr. Rogachevsky opened the floor to questions and discussion. Questions varied from attempts the French were making to integrate their new immigrants to questioning the legitimacy of multiculturalism as a viable option for a modern country, which prompted much discussion among those in attendance. Other students inquired about so called

“no-go zones” for French police run by gangs and mobs, to which Rogachevsky acknowledged and was wary of their existence but also cautioned that to some extent, they are over-hyped by some in the media. On a whole students appeared impressed with the breadth and scope of Dr. Rogachevsky's knowledge and preparation. Political Science major Joey Chesir (YC '17) said “He gave a novel insight into one of the world's most pressing issue...it seemed that all who attended came away with a broader understanding of the current French political environment.”

Political Science Department Hosts End of Semester Meeting To Discuss Course Offerings

Continuing its established tradition of hosting end-of-semester meetings, the Political Science Department held an event to brief students taking courses within the department for the spring semester. Open to students majoring and minoring in Political Science, as well as others just interested in taking a course or two, the

meeting gave faculty a chance to present their courses to the students prior to registration. After a presentation by Dunner Political Science Society President Yaacov Sultan, professors began summarizing their courses. Professor Roberto Genoves explained the different areas his Politics Across Cultures class would engage while Professor Jamie Aroosi detailed the approaches he would be taking to tackling American Constitutional Law and his carefully designed Cultures of Revolt class, cross-listed between Political Science and core requirement Cultures Over Time. In addition to her Introduction to International Relations, Professor Zaitseva introduced the new Writing Politics course, which is carefully tailored to teaching upperclassmen how to craft and produce a thesis paper. The course is a pilot for an expansion of such offerings across many majors, partially as a replacement to First Year Seminar, which was recently cut due to budget and faculty constraints. Lastly, the event concluded with Dr. Bevan presented her Honors course on Great Political Thinkers and Israeli Foreign Policy, a class taught by her and visiting professor former ambassador Danny Ayalon.

Students React with Palette of Responses to Developing Mural in Gottesman Library

By David Rubinstein and Avi Strauss

A range of reactions met the beginnings of a mural on the Wilf Campus. The mural, painted on the swinging wall along the uncompleted stairway leading to the Gottesman Library, is immediately visible to all who enter the library building.

Discussion about the mural has brewed among students, both in person and on social media. One post on the Facebook group "YU Marketplace," which has over 2,800 members, gathered a particularly high number of comments.

Students were pleased to welcome the painting's colorfulness to campus. Pre-med freshman Ariel Aminov feels the mural "adds a lot of color to an otherwise colorless school." Fellow first-year Yair Lichtman, '19, studying Jewish studies and math, said the mural is "the most colorful thing on campus; I think our campus needs that."

SOY Vice President Shua Brick, '17, thought the mural "was really nice. I have no problem bringing some color to Yeshiva University. Many YU students have a harder time with change. I suspect that in a few years everyone will be used to it and will like it."

Some were minimally apprehensive about the colors. Pre-med student Chayim Rosensweig, '17, thought at first that the mural "was an obstruction on campus," but then he realized that he "was too busy with finals to care." Physics and math major Benny Aivazi, '17, thought the painting "would have looked better on the first floor, which is so colorful and bright—the first floor is all brick and white."

The addition of the mural to the Wilf Campus perplexed many students. "I don't understand what it is supposed to be," said one psychology student, who preferred to remain anonymous. "I know the artist's [Connie Rose] Instagram explained the ideas, but I still don't get it." One Jewish studies major said he thought the mural "has nothing to do with the campus's aesthetic."

Other students did not understand why the university commissioned an artist from the outside when YU has many talented art students. "Studio art is a serious major on the Beren Campus," remarked one physics major. "They work them [the art students] like dogs. I don't understand why an art student could not have done this

"THE MURAL IS THE MOST COLORFUL THING ON CAMPUS; I THINK OUR CAMPUS NEEDS THAT!"

—YAIR LICHTMAN



Mural in progress

work."

Manny Dahari, a Yeshiva College student who heads the Mishelanu Israeli student organization, challenged naysayers on the YU Marketplace Facebook group: "we don't know why the university hired her—it could be... because that's what she does." Mr. Dahari suggested that commenters limit the discussion about the mural to positive discourse.

Currently, parts of the painting have been sprayed

over with white paint. Ms. Rose explained that she is perfecting the mural and that the creative process involves attempt and erasure. Students expect changes between how the wall currently looks and its eventual completion and have noted that the current painting does not look exactly like the proposal the artist posted on her Instagram.

The wall dividing the Nagel Commons was installed because the library architect and donor wanted the space to have the feel of a library. This feel could potentially be changed by the activity around Nagel Bagel, a cafe that sells snacks, drinks, and a limited menu of hot food. Part of the wall swings so that when needed, the library space and area for Nagel Bagel are separated. When the need arises for an undivided Nagel Commons, such as for the Open House, the wall can swing to be flush with Nagel Bagel.

Junior Class Representative Aryeh Minsky seemed excited about the new layout. "I think it's great that YU is trying to add flexibility in what they do. While this is only a small step, it really reflects YU's attitude for the future."

The architect, a firm called RoArt, thought the mural illustrated the themes of the library. The painting is planned to show books that seem to be flying, intimating that knowledge is something that gives not just perspective, but heaven itself. President Joel confirmed that he reviewed drawings of the plans for the mural.

Ms. Rose, a native of the United Kingdom and currently a resident of the Lower East Side, studied art in her country of birth and has painted murals in places as far as El Salvador and as near as Brooklyn. She was chosen to paint the mural after she submitted the winning proposal for the mural to the RoArt architectural firm. She calls her style "abstract surrealism." She said her mural, themed on books, is there "to inspire possibilities, because that's the whole notion of a book...it can send your imagination into any place that you want it to go."

CHANUKAH, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

at the event prior to their act, but that once Tic and Tac started to perform, his experience drastically improved. "The party was so-so. But then they came out. I've never seen people flip in the air like that before. It honestly was one of the coolest shows I've ever seen, and made everything else here seem better too."

Noam Safier, president of the Yeshiva Student Union, reflected on the event in similar fashion. "People seemed to really enjoy the casual mix of food, games, music and friends." On behalf of the many committees that conjoined to coordinate the festival, he continued "All of us are incredibly satisfied with the result and are glad to see that our gamble of straying from the tradi-

"THE EVENT AS A WHOLE WAS REALLY FUN. BUT THE TIC AND TAC PERFORMANCE TOOK THE NIGHT FROM GOOD TO UNFORGETTABLE"

— JOSEPH SOLOMONT

tional concert paid off."

Even after the festivities concluded, most in attendance got to walk away with a good taste in their mouths, and not just from the Latkes they had just consumed. "The best part of the night, for me, was getting some new YU apparel," said sophomore Deena Drazin, holding up the new "Y" embroidered winter hat that she, and many others received from the school upon entrance to the event. Due to the huge turnout, though, the supply of hats proved to be quite scant. Jacob Herenstein, who was distributing the apparel, estimated a turnout of 600 students, and said the 300 total hats went in about eight minutes. As a result, some students, like sophomore Jeremy Shevach, were deprived of the opportunity to receive the Chanukah gift. "I wish I had



gotten there a little earlier so I could've snagged one," said Shevach, visibly disappointed. "It didn't ruin the night, though," he added on a more positive note. "My friends and I had a great time watching the performers and snacking on the corn dogs and popcorn."

Some students weren't as satisfied, though. Senior Ben Barel criticized the absence of Sufganiyot at Chanukahfest. "I actually left another event I was at early because I was in the mood for some jelly doughnuts and assumed that there would be some here. I mean, what kind of Chanukah party doesn't have jelly doughnuts?"

An aggravated Barel admitted that he exited the event within only a few minutes of arriving there, explaining, "This was a great idea. But I wish they would have stuck with the concert approach as they have in past years." He seemed to be one of the exceptions though, as the general crowd departed from the festivities in overtly positive spirits, and could be heard sharing their favorite parts of the night as students hung around campus even far after the event came to a close.

"My favorite part of the night was the carnival games. How often do you get to play carnival games for free? And there were prizes!" said sophomore Shmuel Knoller. "I hope they do this again next year."

Others simply enjoyed the crowd and company of other students having a good time. Senior Carol Jacobson said "It was just a perfect event—a chance for students from both campuses to hang out and celebrate Chanukah in an appropriate environment." Jacobson, whose family has attended YU for 3 generations, added that her grandparents met at an event just like this one, a Lag Ba'Omer Chagigah over 50 years ago.

Whether it was the games, the show or the food, it seemed like the student body appreciated the event and enjoyed themselves. "Events are run for the students, and when the students are satisfied, we know we're doing a good job" concluded Safier. When asked about the possibility of a second Chanukahfest next year, he simply replied, "That's up to next year's council, but I hope they decide to do it."

Students Debate Aspects of U.S.-Israeli Relationship

By Avi Strauss

On Monday, December 14, YUPAC, the Israel Club, and the Debate Club hosted a debate on U.S.-Israeli relations. The debate featured three students who sparred over the topics of Jonathan Pollard and United States aid to Israel vs. Israeli self-reliance in front of a crowded Ruben Shul.

Junior Esti Hirt (SCW '17), the Programming Director for YUPAC and moderator of the debate, explained why the clubs organized the event. "We felt that unlike other campuses in the U.S., we are predominantly pro-Israel and wanted to delve deeper into the issues of American-Israeli relations rather than just address the relationship itself."

Hirt formally introduced the topic of United States aid to Israel prior to commencing formal debating between the two sides. She noted that Israel currently receives 3 billion dollars annually.

Speakers were each given five minutes to argue their respective sides followed by two-and-a-half-minute rebuttal times.

Junior and economics major Eli Diamond (YC '18) opened up by arguing in favor of continued U.S. aid to Israel. He explained that the aid comes from discretionary funding from the U.S. foreign aid budget. He pointed to the chaos around the world and in particular in the Middle East and that continued aid to Israel is vital.

He then continued by pointing to the fact that despite differences on many issues, the entire, diverse Republican presidential primary field, with the exception of Rand Paul, agrees that aid to Israel must remain in place.

He ended by citing Vice President Joe Biden's assertion that military foreign aid, 1% of military spending, is the best bargain American taxpayers get when it comes to government spending.

Senior and political science major Yaacov Sultan (YC '16) argued against the status quo, opening that aid is harmful to the Israeli economy and undermines Israel's ability to be self-reliant, stating, "Accepting aid from the United States has forced Israel into a state of dependency."

He pointed to the successes of Zionism, both militarily and culturally, citing Yuval Levin, who detailed how Israel's economy was growing around 5% in the 1950's and 60's prior to receiving U.S. aid. However, after Israel began receiving aid in the 1960's, Israel's growth rate shrunk to about 2.1% for the following 25 years.

Sultan then shifted his focus to the United States Military-Industrial Complex, a term coined under the Eisenhower Administration. Given the conditions tied to the aid Israel receives, Israel is forced to buy military supplies and equipment from the so-called Iron Triangle of entangled military interests in the United States

rather than support its own military manufacturing and industry. Israel is seen as the Robin to the U.S.'s Batman and a puppet of the U.S. in the Middle East.

Diamond began his response by emphasizing the fact that Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu recently requested an unprecedented \$50 billion dollars from the United States. Diamond said Israel needs to be able to protect itself against the emerging threats in its region.

Sultan then challenged Diamond's assumed facts and asserted that in his most recent speech to Congress, Ne-



Debaters field questions from the crowd

"[WE] WANTED TO DELVE DEEPER INTO THE ISSUES OF AMERICAN-ISRAELI RELATIONS RATHER THAN JUST ADDRESS THE RELATIONSHIP ITSELF!"
- ESTI HIRT

tanyahu stated to Congress that he wanted to reduce the amount of aid Israel received.

The debate then shifted to the topic of recently released Jonathan Pollard, who was imprisoned for 30 years for spying on the United States on behalf of Israel, and whether or not we should welcome him back into the Jewish community.

In this round, Sultan affirmed the premise of the debate. He started by noting that Israel was entitled to the intelligence that Pollard admitting to handing over based on past agreements between Israel and the United States, the Memorandum of Understanding. Sultan then transitioned to inform the audience that Pollard ended

up being sentenced to a far longer term than he agreed to in a plea deal.

Sultan then stressed that the issue of gaining Jonathan Pollard's release was a bipartisan cause in the Israeli Knesset, uniting even the Arab and Jewish parliamentary members.

Junior Daniel Geller then took the floor arguing that Pollard should not be viewed as a hero. Geller argued that in addition to passing off information to Israel, he disclosed the names of thousands of the U.S.' confidential informants, greatly putting United States security interests at risk.

Geller proceeded to argue that Pollard certainly put United States lives at risk, did what he did for money and, given Pollard's treason, he should certainly be deprived of rights in the same way a standard felon is.

Sultan cited reports that indicated all crimes against Pollard were "alleged" and refuted the premise that Pollard did what he did for money. Sultan also stressed that since the trial and Pollard's imprisonment, nearly all the information surrounding the circumstances of his crime and arrest have been declassified. Therefore, he continued, it makes no sense to waive claims that there isn't enough information for us to know if Pollard's actions were in fact more extreme than what we've otherwise been told.

Geller spent much of his rebuttal challenging this framing of the issue. He ended by arguing that harboring a double standard by Jewish criminals in contrast to others does immense damage to the Jewish community's standing on such issues as crime and loyalty to America.

After the rebuttals, Hirt opened the floor to questions from the audience, which ranged from questions about facts brought up during the debate to the core values that each debater was trying to represent.

Those in attendance seemed to have gained a significant amount from the event, after listening to two sides of two issues that aren't generally at the forefront of political debate, like Israel's immediate security concerns and settlement construction. "It was fascinating to see two peers take diametrically opposing positions on such relevant controversial issues" said Stern College for Women Student Council President Rachel Rolnick.

"I definitely feel I gained a tremendous amount," said junior Aron Harkham. "Even though I was familiar with many of the facts the two sides presented, it was unique and impactful the way the presenters linked them together into coherent arguments."

Hirt was proud with the way the event ran and the opportunity to host a debate for the student body. "This was the first event like this that we've run, but we're certainly looking into having more opportunities to present the nuances of different sides to different issues."

Students Successfully Push for Extended Study Hour Space During Finals

By Binyomin Goldman

For pre-med student Yoni Mehrzadi (YC '17) the library is an important asset. Mehrzadi, who spends much of his waking hours throughout the semester studying, started questioning why the library closes so early. Mehrzadi said "it's frustrating when you're in middle of studying and someone interrupts you and tells you the library is closing for the night."

Although many other schools, like Columbia University and NYU have 24 hour libraries, currently, YU does not. While there are lounges in the dorms that students can use to study through the night, most are not a conducive place to study.

Mehrzadi decided it was time to do something about it, and approached several Gottesman Library librarians, finally making it to the director of the library Paul Glassman. Listening to his advice, Mehrzadi started a petition on change.org, seeking to rally the student body to the cause.

The petition began with Mehrzadi explaining the need for longer library hours, especially on a campus where students are in classes as late as 8:00 PM, or later, on a regular basis. He touched on the fact that we

all have a dual curriculum and have to look for time to study throughout our day, arguing that longer library hours are necessary. He also went on to note that the recent improvements in the library show YU's investment in their students study time, but maintained that the hours are really what need to change to facilitate a more productive learning environment. Mehrzadi appealed to change the opening time to 8:00 AM from 9:00 AM and the closing time to 4:00 AM, from 1:00 AM.

Yoni acknowledged that although 1:00 AM seems pretty late, when you consider the students who get out of class or lab at 10 or 11 o'clock at night, it becomes much easier to understand. YC student Daveed Mozeson explained he was in support of the petition when he said "there are some students who have no other place to study and just need more time in the library".

One hour after posting his petition to change.org, it had garnered 100 signatures. This prompted the Office Student Life that same evening saying a meeting had already been set up to discuss the petition and library hours. When responding how he got people's attention so fast, Mehrzadi said bluntly "take initiative." He continued "We aren't a big school, but that just means that your voice can be heard."

On Tuesday morning, December 22nd, a meeting took place with Director Glassman, John Moryl head librarian of the Pollack Library and Leah Adler, Head Librarian of Hebraica-Judaica at the Gottesman Library, Dean of Students Dr. Nissel, Director of Security Paul Murtha and student representatives from student life committee. They discussed the students concerns of not enough library hours around finals time and came up with a plan. For this semester (Fall 2015) classrooms on the third floor of Glueck will remain open until 4:00 AM, and a printer is going to be placed in the heights lounge in addition to more chairs. Looking ahead, the group came up with a pilot program for the spring semester (to be evaluated at the end of that semester), with the hope to have library hours extended until 4:00 AM the week before reading week, reading week, and until the last day of finals.

As the librarians explore this idea and assess how they can accomplish this goal, it's important to think once again like Yoni Merzhadi who took his idea and made a change, "We mold the university as much as the university molds us."

Expert Panel Discusses the Syrian Refugee Crisis and Social Justice

By David Tribuch

On the night of December 15, the YU Tzedek Society and Stern College Social Justice Society, in conjunction with the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors program and Schneier Program for International Affairs, held an event to discuss the Syrian refugee crisis. Many students and faculty members, including Provost Selma Botman, Dean Karen Bacon, and Mashgiach Rabbi Yosef Blau, filled up the second floor lecture room in Belfer Hall to hear a panel of experts discuss the subject.

Before the panel was introduced, Provost Botman gave some opening remarks, calling the crisis both “timely and urgent, and remind[ing] us all too well of the situation of European Jewry”.

When describing the orchestration of the event, YU Tzedek Society President Yosie Friedman said that “what happens a lot during these discussions is that people either ignore the human aspect of the issue, or they ignore the public policy aspects. It’s important in issues like this that people here about all of the aspects involved”. In this sense, Mr. Friedman and Ms. Dina Chizik, President of the Stern Social Justice Society were successful in arranging a panel with people who are involved in different aspects of the crisis.

The panelists included Zaina Erhaim, a respected Syrian journalist who has won a number of prestigious journalism awards, Mustafar Chisti, an influential immigration lawyer, and Mario Sauder, a German consul member currently posted in Germany’s New York consulate.

Before the roundtable discussion began, each of the panelists gave a short opening statement describing their perspective. Ms. Erhaim said that her view is one of a more personal nature. She said that most of the Syrians who flee the country still have a strong desire to remain there, and hope to eventually return to their homeland. Mr. Sauder opened with Germany’s involvement in the crisis, and their open immigration law meant to atone for their sins of The Holocaust. Finally, Mr. Chizni briefly discussed his experience as an immigration lawyer, and how it is a part of the United States’ value system to take in the Syrian refugees.

At this point, Professor Ruth Bevan, YU’s long-time political science professor and moderator for the event, began the discussion by asking the panelists how the crisis escalated to the way it is today. Ms. Erhaim immediately blamed Assad and Obama’s failure to act once his “red lines” were crossed. Mr. Chizni argued that the crisis has been real for a while now but it “only became real for us when it became the front page of the New York Times, at which point it was too late”.

Chizni further emphasized his point of the United States’ responsibility towards the Syrian refugees when Professor Bevan asked about the turning point in Syrian crisis. He answered that the Middle Eastern countries did their part to help the Syrian refugees, going so far as saying that a large portion of those countries’ populations are Syrians. He then criticized the United States saying that “an immigrant nation founded by refugees should be ashamed at the number of Syrians they have taken in”.

Professor Bevan then asked Mr. Sauder about the effect that the refugees have had on Europe. He answered that the refugees have overwhelmed the countries of the EU, and they are having trouble integrating them into their societies. He again stressed that Germany is trying hard to make up for the past, but that their relatively small country is having trouble absorbing all of them. Additionally, many of the European countries are having their own shift to the right, who feel that the many immigrants are ruining the various national identities. However, he is optimistic that Germany and its people will still welcome in refugees.

Then, Professor Bevan asked about the potential threat that the Syrian refugees pose towards

national security. Mr. Chizni responded that “this claim has been front and center of the Republican Party... but of the 700,000-plus refugees that we have brought in since 9/11, only three of them have been tried for terrorist activities”. He further argued that due to the rigorous screening process “coming in as a refugee would be the worst way for a terrorist to enter the country”.

Ms. Erhaim described that she, as an internationally respected journalist, had visa difficulties and was even blacklisted for a time from entering the country. She said she can only imagine how much more difficult it must be for the average refugee. “We are running away from terror--why would we be terrorists?”, she asked rhetorically. She added that most of the ISIS militants in Syria are those who have been recruited from the US and Britain. Mr. Sauder argued that “terrorism is a concern but that does not mean that you have to shut out all of the Syrian refugees”.

Student response to the event was very positive, especially in praise for the diversity and knowledge of the panel. Ms. Chizik was impressed with turnout and hoped that the event was able to bring the issue closer to home.

The YU Tzedek Society and Stern College Social Justice Society are student organizations that intend to effect social change and bring light to issues of social justice on campus. The Tzedek Society is best known on the Wilf Campus perhaps for their annual sock drive, which gives needy families socks to manage the cold New York winters. This is the Stern Social Justice’s first major event of the year.



Friday Class Offerings Significantly Expanded

By David Mehl

During the recent registration for classes, students found that Yeshiva College has significantly expanded the number of Friday course offerings available in the coming spring semester.

The courses offered this spring come from a cross-section of majors, but core courses and other requirements are the most popular. Diaspora Literature, taught by Elizabeth Stewart, and Courts and Social Change, taught by Akiva Covitz, which satisfy the COWC and the HBSI core categories, respectively, have each reached the maximum number of students permitted.

Yeshiva College Associate Dean of Operations and Student Affairs Fred Sugarman expressed excitement over the changes.

“THE IDEA OF TAKING A CLASS ON FRIDAY IS DAUNTING.... COME THURSDAY AFTERNOON, I AM LOOKING TOWARDS THE RELIEF OF THE WEEKEND!”

- ARI TEPLER

“Invariably, our students have time conflicts and have to give up many classes they might actually enjoy.” The addition of Friday classes would, he added, give students more flexibility with their weekly schedules, as well as offer them a class option without the stress of the dual curriculum, with a full week between sessions, and with sufficient time to discuss complex ideas at length.

Students’ reactions were mixed. “Friday classes are awesome because they make your week really free,” said Chaim Metzger. “If you wanted to have a job on Friday you can’t do Friday classes, but for anyone else, I would say they are definitely beneficial. You have more free time, learn more stuff, and teachers are more laid back.” Ari Tepler was less impressed. “The idea of taking a class on Friday is daunting. With the heavy schedule of a YU student from Monday through Thursday, come Thursday afternoon, I am looking towards the relief of the weekend, not the stress of another long night followed by a day of class.”

Other students expressed concerns that Friday classes would limit their ability to travel before Shabbat, with the time for candle lighting as early as 4:51 on the first Friday of the semester. Another had a less conventional take, suggesting that “overtired classmates make for enlightening and fascinating discussions.”

In total, registration for Friday courses for the spring semester is more than double that of the fall. The period for registration ends February 9.

The Delay on the Library

By Aaron Szydlo

Despite a long series of delays, most of the renovations to the Gottesman Library have finally been completed. All of the floors are accessible to students except for a part of the second floor, which is still under construction.

After much anticipation, the beautiful library has become the most popular spot on the Wilf Campus. “I go to the library almost everyday. Now that it looks so much nicer, it has even become crowded at times. I can’t believe how popular it is,” said sophomore Yehoshua Zirman. With so much talk regarding the library, the remaining renovations are greatly anticipated.

Paul Glassman, Director of University Libraries, clarified why the renovations and some new additions to the library have postponed. “Often times, with projects such as these, the projected dates are estimates and can not be expected to be finished by an assigned date. One has to account for errors and delays. Additionally, the University decided to go for quality instead of speed.” Professor Glassman explained that almost all of the renovations to the library itself are finished; the remaining construction will be on the second floor.

The construction that is taking place on the second floor will provide a new brightened atmosphere. There will be a curving staircase connecting the Gottesman Library to the Nagel Family Atrium, up to the main entrance of the Pollack Library. Along the walls of the stair-

case will be a mural painted by a professional artist. Additionally, due to the reformatting of the library layout, the windows along Amsterdam Avenue will provide more natural light in the library, improving the ambiance for studying. Sophomore Eli Weinstein, said, “The fourth floor has become my new home. I go every night to study for my classes, and now that finals are approaching I will be there even more.”

Part of the new construction includes study rooms which students can use with their contemporaries. A significant number of seats have been added since last year so that more students can use the facilities. Furthermore, more lounge chairs have been installed, most on the second floor. Junior Akiva Marder seemed ecstatic about the near-completion of the library: “The library looks so much better than it did last year. I can’t wait to see the final product. Even though I expected to see it a while ago, I am still excited to see what the University came up with.”

Although there is no announced completion date for the remaining renovations, excitement is in the air. Students as well as faculty are thrilled by the new accommodations of the library. Junior Elie Lipnik, said, “I enjoy studying in groups, and the new rooms added to the library are going to be very helpful. I can’t wait until everything is completed.” With finals and term papers around the corner, the future looks bright for the Gottesman Library.

YU Joins World of Online Education with Arch of Titus Class

By Eitan Lipsky

Although Chanukah has concluded, Yeshiva University is still trying to spread its light as far as it can. In early December, the university took a big step in expanding its global impact by releasing a course entitled, "Arch of Titus: Rome and the Menorah," on Coursera, a company that works with top universities to make some of their courses available online as massive open online courses (known colloquially as MOOCs).

This project was initiated by Dr. Akiva Covitz, who serves both as a visiting professor in Yeshiva College as well as the Executive Director for Strategy at YU Global. Covitz formerly worked as the Vice President of edX, another MOOC provider, and felt that putting this course out for the worldwide audience would be a perfect way to extend the YU message to the public eye. For this project, Covitz worked closely with YU Global's Senior Product Developer Ben Bowman as well as Dr. Steven Fine, who is the course instructor and whose international Arch of Titus project provided the content for this course. The team worked diligently to create the course materials that would be placed online. It is a product of their tireless efforts, along with major contributions from the entire YU Global staff, that allowed this course to become YU's first public online course. "This was really YU's first major foray onto an international platform," said Covitz regarding the immense effort put in to make this course, "so we wanted it to be right, good, beautiful, educationally sound and compelling".

Braced with the exciting task of being able to create a course that would represent YU and that could potentially be viewed by thousands of people, the team had to answer a few basic questions for themselves. Firstly, 'what is the message YU is uniquely capable of spreading to the world?' Would it be a Jewish Philosophy class? Principles of Talmud? Perhaps an Intro to Bible? After making this selection in consultation with Provost Selma Botman, they would then have to determine how to ensure the proliferation of their desired message, by presenting the course in the most inviting way possible, thereby attracting many students and allowing them to gain as much as possible from the course. In order to do accomplish these goals they needed a course with universal appeal.

After much contemplation, the team sought out a course topic that really builds upon YU expertise. The first step came in teaming up with Professor Fine, the Churgin Professor of Jewish History at YU, and his international Arch of Titus Project (yu.edu/cis). Professor Fine, a renowned expert on the history of Judaism in Roman times, has been thinking about this topic since high school. He is world renowned for his discoveries; some even calling him the "Jewish Indiana Jones". He has written several books on the topic, including one set to be put out by Harvard University Press in the fall on the history of the Menorah. In addition to his personal research, Professor Fine is also an incredibly knowledgeable and passionate professor who engages his students and gets them excited about the pursuit of historical truths.

The Arch of Titus is an artifact of history that has universal cultural appeal and can be used to portray a profound perspective on the last 2000 years of Jewish and World history. The Jewish relevance of this structure is clear. The arch was constructed in 82 A.D. by the Emperor Domitian in honor of his brother Titus on the Via Sacra in Rome, where it still stands today. On the Southern side of this arch is an image that celebrates Titus' victory over the Jews in 70 A.D. This victory is coincidentally one of the most tragic events in Jewish history, the destruction of the Second Temple, and the beginning of the Jewish exile which has lasted into the present day. The image depicts Jews leaving Jerusalem after this event, carrying many of the spoils from the Temple with them. The largest and most detailed of these vessels is the Menorah. The arch represents a marvelous piece of ancient Roman architecture, one that to this day can be found all over the world, as all of modern-day arches of any sort are patterned after the ancient Roman design. The image of the menorah is one of the most well-known symbols of the Jewish people, and one that in more recent history has taken on even more significance with its appearance on the em-

blem of the State of Israel. Historically, this arch represents Roman culture and the exile of the Jews from their homeland, an event which changed the course not only of Jewish history but of world history. This course, therefore, appeals to a diverse set of disciplines, while focusing on a particularly crucial time period, the understanding of which gives a great insight into Judaism and many other areas.

Luckily, Professor Fine has a particular interest in new technologies for higher education and was excited



Carvings on the Arch of Titus

**"IF I CAN HELP ONE
PERSON TO THINK A BIT
BIGGER AND WANT TO
ASPIRE HIGHER, THEN THIS IS
A WORTHWHILE PROJECT."**

-DR. STEVEN FINE

by the idea. He spent much of this past year filming the lectures that would be part of the class-- in Los Angeles, New York, Rome and Jerusalem. He spent hours upon hours editing to make sure he was both clear enough to be understood by different levels of students and thorough enough to engage the viewer in the subject in a real way. Professor Fine has taught this course twice in YU, including this year's fall semester. "Professor Fine is very, very passionate about what he's teaching," said Zach Serman, a first-year student who took the course this fall, "This is his life study, and he is truly emotionally invested in the course."

In reality, the course as it appears on Coursera has appeal for many more reasons than the topic of study. Capitalizing on the possibilities of an online course, the videos display Dr. Fine not in a classroom lecture setting, but walking through different museums, sitting on park benches, and in many other locations that make the learning come to life. Throughout the videos, Professor Fine is meeting and talking with people in all of the places that he goes. YU History Professor William Stenhouse and Professor Jacob Wisse, director of YU Museum both appear in the course, together with scholars in Los Angeles and New York city. The course features virtual field trips to such museums as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Jewish Museum, YU Museum and the Getty Museum in Los Angeles; historical sites such as Wilshire Boulevard Temple and the Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn and a symposium built around Prof. Fine's work at the University of Southern California. Students "visit" with internationally known scholars and curators and in all of those places.

The course was designed as a series of 3-7 minute videos, based on the amount of time that the average Youtube clip can hold a viewer's attention. The videos themselves are of a theatre-like quality, a product of the incredible work done by Executive Producer and Creative Director, Abby Russell and her team. The product is aesthetically impressive and hopes to give a very positive impression of YU.

Another way the team utilized the online forum is through the unique assignments that Bowman and Fine created for the course. As he does in his "brick and mortar" courses, Fine calls on students to be creative. In fact, all of the assignments in the online course were tested out on Professor Fine's Cultures over Time course

on the Arch of Titus. The online assignments require students to display their understanding of the material in different ways such as taking pictures of arches that they see near their homes or wherever they are. These assignments are designed to pique the students interest in the topic, as well as to highlight the relevance of the topic in their everyday lives. The goal in all this is to be as user-friendly as possible, so that many people will be able to enjoy this course.

The content and format of this course are designed to attract many different types of people, and particularly different types of Jews. "The cool thing for me is that my "students" for this course include both members of our own Jewish community, the general population worldwide, and people from every walk of life," said Fine. "I have already heard of YU alumni who have taken the course, but also Hareidim, Chabadniks and reform Jews from the US, Israel and Europe!"

With all this said, there is a profound message that is intended to be understood by the students of this course. In many ways, this course is one that explores Jewish ideas through the lens of the larger world. This truly represents one of the main ideals that YU holds dear. "The goal is to show students how to live as part of the larger world and the Jewish community simultaneously, while maintaining that strong attitude of communal dignity. These courses teach how to bridge and connect to the world, viewing Torah u'Madda as having a connecting "vav" and not merely one that simply means plus," said Fine. "What YU is truly about is creating sophistication, and this course allows us to study a time when our great sages navigated and were formed as a community". This is the main goal of the YU learning experience, and is exactly the message they seek to spread to the world. "If I can help one person to think a bit bigger and want to aspire higher, then this is a worthwhile project," Fine said. "In fact, I hope that she or he will reach out and find me someday."

By joining Coursera, YU has taken yet another step in establishing its place as one of the world's premier institutions. YU will now be able to interact with other quality universities who are connected to Coursera, and hopes to be able to take insight from these large and prestigious institutions on how to achieve the greatest level of success.

A course of this nature being spread to the public should be a great source of pride for the YU community. The course displays YU faculty going out into the world and discovering; representative of the hopes that YU has for all of its students to engage in the world around them. "The message is clear," said Dr. Fine, "We are in the center of the culture and not peripheral to it. Of course we're on Coursera! Our faculty is really tops, and this is our moment. The YU Global team has done a marvelous job!"

"The Arch of Titus: Rome and the Menorah" can be found on Coursera.org. As of print, there have been 955 people worldwide who have viewed the course. Participation has steadily increased since the launch in December. All are welcome to participate, at no cost.



The Arch of Titus

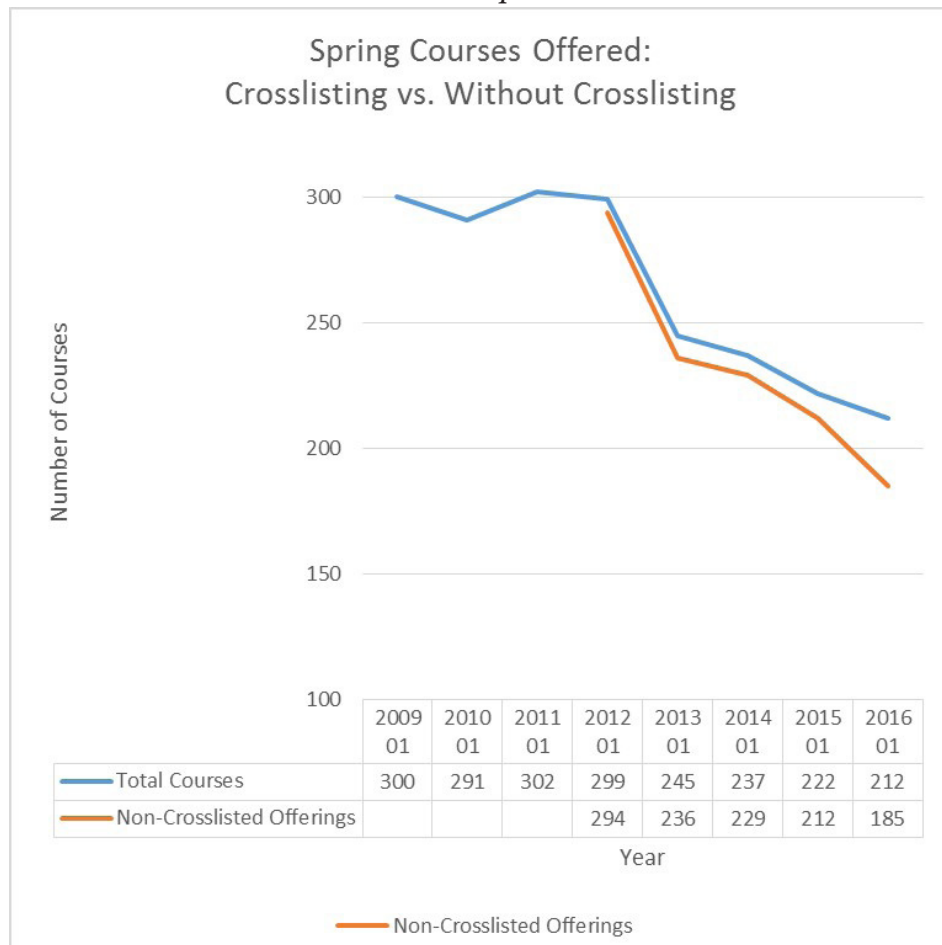
Behind 2016's Cross-Listing Craze: An Incomplete Solution to a Worrisome Trend

By Yechiel Schwab

Graph 2

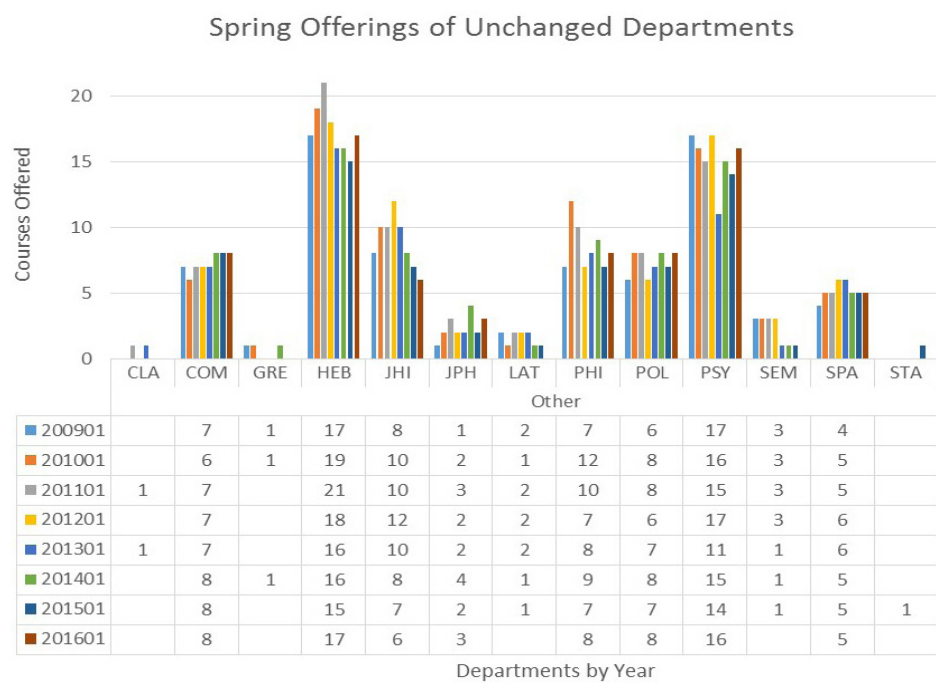
In 2012, our University introduced its new Core Curriculum. This shifting curriculum was supposed to accompany an increase in professors and number of classes offered, or, at the very least, a preservation of the status quo. Instead, an extended hiring freeze, combined with many professors retiring and leaving, whether voluntarily or forcibly, led to a decrease of almost 100 total Spring courses offered, and an even greater decrease when discounting cross-listed courses (i.e. counting them only once, instead of under both departments)

Graph 1



Some departments remain largely unaffected, with their Spring offerings appearing relatively stable in recent years (See Graph 2).

The departments which account for the majority of these 100 missing courses vary in both size and subject. Some departments, like Speech, Statistics, or Art, are small majors that have all but disappeared. Others, like Physics, Chemistry, Economics, are large majors which have shrunk (See Graph 3, next page. Note that some of these missing courses relate to the changing requirements and lab courses within these departments, but these changes were all concurrent with fewer elective courses available for students):



In terms of the Core Curriculum itself, overall it maintained its total course-load in recent years. The one exception is the elimination of FYSM in 2016 -- in order to cut costs and decrease professors, this requirement was eliminated.

However, though the Cores themselves remained constant, the departments whose professors teach the majority of the Core courses, namely History, English, and Sociology, saw significant drops in offerings, beyond simply the required accommodation for these new Cores. Due to a decrease in the number of professors, in conjunction with remaining professors offering courses within the Core, once-large departments like English and History have shrunk considerably. (See Graph 4, next page. Note that the chart displays English, Sociology, and History in 2016 without their cross-listed Core courses, and instead counts those courses only toward their Core Sections. This was done since most of these courses have been offered as Cores for a number of years, but only starting this year were cross-listed with Majors. Further, most spots were available within the Core sections, with limited space available in the majors' sections.)

To combat these decreases, and in an attempt to maintain variety, almost all Core courses this semester were cross-listed (16/20), and offered within majors. The English department received most of these courses, with six offerings cross-listed. Sociology and History each received two cross-listed courses. The other six cross-listed courses were spread across various departments.

By cross-listing these courses, the University was able to increase the variety and quantity of offerings within a number of majors, and indeed, when including cross-listing and accounting for the elimination of First Year Seminar, this year's total course offerings exceed last year's offerings. However, though cross-listing helps, it's

SEE CROSS-LIST, CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

DREAMER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

acter is to be in that situation. But, as an actor he feels right at home onstage.

If I had one gripe (and, as a reviewer, whether this is misplaced or not, I feel I must have at least one), it's the character of the Doctor, played by Matis Axel. Where Fingers was a big surprise, the Doctor, who barely gets mentioned in act one, feels like a character I've seen before, and done better. That's not to say that Axel doesn't do him justice. Rather, the menace that the Doctor is supposed to bring just felt like a vanilla choice among a play of weird surprises.

The set, designed by Yosef Boniuk, (which, full disclosure, I worked on) is funny and impressive. It's not so much that the set itself is impressive; it's fairly minimalistic, leaving the actors plenty of room to do their thing. Rather, it's the fact that one room that was a dreary, gross hotel room that gets transformed into a big fancy place in a matter of minutes that had me admiring the ingenuity of it all.

However, most of all, I left the play

thinking. Thinking about what it means to be inspired. Thinking about what it means to be young and to dream. Thinking about what it means to not be good enough when everybody needs you. I'm often plagued by a sense of self doubt that looms over me when I at-

tempt to create anything. And a lot of that is probably warranted. But, after leaving the play, it got me thinking about these feelings. I'm interested in whether Cody really has a gift, or whether he is just a guy unsure of who he is, trying to do his best with what he's got. The fact that the play made me think about personal issues means that it's worthwhile in my book.

When the play started, it seemed as if it wanted to be a Tarantino movie put on stage (the play starts with two Brooklyn gangsters talking to a Southern cowboy - if that weird geographical mix doesn't scream Tarantino, I don't know what does). But, I quickly realized that it's not about the geography, it's about the dreamer. All dreaming is done from a hotel room - a place far from home. Even after they move to a fancier hotel room - after Cody regains his inspiration and starts producing winners - there's still this aura of tension, as if nobody quite feels comfortable where they are. But, they're still being told to dream. They're still being told to make something great. It turns out that greatness doesn't just come from dreaming. As YCDS can attest to, greatness also requires a hell of a lot of hard work.



Jack Turrell, Binyamin Bixon, and David Cutler in "Geography of a Horse Dreamer"

Can Exercise Make You High?

By Kochava London

In a way, yes. Researchers have discovered that exercise, and specifically high-intensity activities like running, produces increased levels of endocannabinoids in the bloodstream. Endocannabinoids are the body's natural form of marijuana, also known as cannabis. Cannabis is composed of cannabinoid molecules which bind to receptors in the brain, thereby reducing anxiety and producing a high or feeling of euphoria. These molecules are also naturally produced when people exercise, which explains the "runner's high" that many experience post-workout.

Until the 1980's, scientists believed that endorphins, the body's natural painkillers, were responsible for producing the runner's high. They came to this conclusion because research showed that high levels of endorphins are present in the bloodstream after exercise. However, endorphins are too large to cross the blood-brain barrier, so they can't be responsible for the high.

In 2003, scientists discovered that the endocannabinoid system plays a major role in producing runner's high. Researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology had college students run on a treadmill or use a stationary bike for 50 minutes. They found that after exercising, the students' blood had increased levels of endocannabinoid molecules (Sparling, Giuffrida, Piomelli, Roskopf, & Dietrich, 2003). These molecules, which are mainly composed of lipids, are small enough to cross the blood-brain barrier.

Since 2003, many additional studies have been conducted on the relationship between the endocannabinoid system and exercise. In 2010, French researchers bred mice (who naturally enjoy running) without an endocannabinoid system. The mice ran half as often as mice with functioning endocannabinoid systems. The researchers hypothesized that endocannabinoids must also play a role in motivation to exercise (Dubreucq, Koehl, Abrous, Marsicano, & Chaouloff, 2010).

A study conducted this year in Germany measured the anxiety level of mice before and after running on a wheel. After the mice ran, their blood had higher levels of both endorphins and endocannabinoids. The mice were also calmer and more tolerant to pain. The researchers then repeated the experiment but blocked the endocannabinoids from binding to receptors in the brain. This time, the anxiety level and pain tolerance of the mice did not change after they ran on the wheel. When the researchers replicated the experiment a third time, they blocked endorphins from binding to receptors, and yet the mice still displayed lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of pain tolerance after running (Fuss, Steinle, Bindila, Auer, Kirchherr, Lutz, & Gass, 2015).

"SURPRISINGLY, RESEARCH SHOWS THAT THE COGNITIVE CHANGES THAT RESULT FROM USING MARIJUANA... ALSO OCCUR TEMPORARILY DURING LONG SESSIONS OF RUNNING AND CYCLING."

Interestingly, exercising at high altitudes produces higher levels of endocannabinoids. In 2012, researchers studied three groups of Italian mountain climbers. The first group hiked at a low altitude, the second group went on a similar hike at a high altitude, and the third group took a helicopter to a high altitude. The hikers were given blood tests at various points to determine the levels of endocannabinoid in their blood. While endocannabinoid levels were high in the first two groups (but not the third), the second group had higher endocannabinoid levels than the first. The researchers suggested that endocan-

nabinoids help human beings adapt to both physical and emotional stress. Hiking at a high altitude makes exercise harder, which puts greater stress on the body, therefore producing higher levels of endocannabinoids (Feuerecker et al., 2012).

In addition to these empirical studies, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence linking the endocannabinoid system to runner's high. The runner's high is often described as "pure happiness, elation, a feeling of unity with one's self and/or nature, endless peacefulness, inner harmony, reduction in pain sensation, and boundless energy" (Dietrich & McDaniel, 2004). These descriptions are extremely similar to the way people describe the high from marijuana. Surprisingly, research shows that the cognitive changes that result from using marijuana, such as deficits in attention and working memory, also occur temporarily during long sessions of running and cycling. However, scientists caution that such evidence is merely anecdotal and that more controlled studies must be conducted before conclusions are drawn.

Much of the research on the endocannabinoid system focuses on running, but what about other forms of exercise, like swimming or weightlifting? Dietrich and McDaniel (2004) suggest that these forms of exercise may not have the same pain-relieving qualities as running because the endocannabinoid system kicks into high gear when the skin is activated by painful stimuli, like when feet pound the pavement during an intense run. This does not mean that the endocannabinoid system is not activated at all by other forms of exercise, but rather that it may not be activated to the same extent. However, further research is needed to determine which forms of exercise stimulate the endocannabinoid system, as well as the duration for which exercise must be performed.

Although there is still plenty to learn about the endocannabinoid system and its role in the body, perhaps the lure of a natural high will serve as an alternate motivation for people to begin an exercise regimen.

CROSS-LIST, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

scope is severely limited, both in terms of the majors it can help and in the extent to which it can bolster those major offerings.

Firstly, in terms of the majors affected by Core courses, most majors wisely added only one, or sometimes two, courses from Core offerings. Extensively cross-listing core courses would hurt either the Core, the Majors in question, or both. If the purpose of the Core is to provide interdisciplinary study which is relevant for student of all disciplines, how can these courses match the rigor and intensity of high level major electives? Indeed, for this reason, the one department which features a large number of cross-listed Core courses, English, imposed a cap on the number of Core courses allowed towards the major. On the other hand, if these courses do match the rigor of the offerings within the major, how can they still fulfill the purpose of the Core, which appeals to students from all majors, often in their first year? Therefore, cross-listing Core courses does not, and cannot fully rectify the severe decrease in number of professors seen by many departments. Secondly, beyond the limits within the Majors it can affect, cross-listing offers no help to many departments which saw significant decreases in recent years, such as sciences which are unaffected by these offerings (the one or two NAWO and EXQM courses per semester are miniscule in comparison to the size of each of these majors. Further, these courses replaced similar courses offered under the old curriculum).

The overall trend of courses offered continues to point downwards, with an increasingly intense slope. Though cross-listing courses helps certain majors to an extent, a more comprehensive solution, including hiring more professors, would be required to maintain the variety and number of courses offered only three years ago.

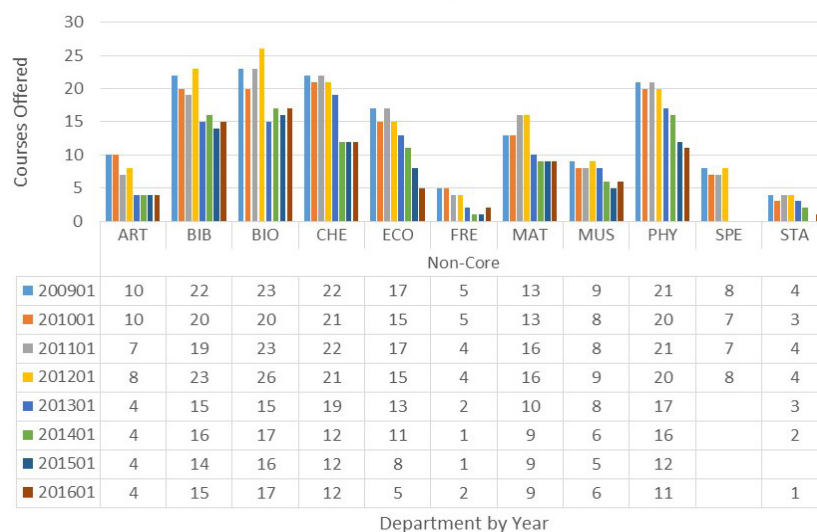
Notes on Methodology:

- Class schedules were copied from Myyu, and separated by subject and year
- Research offerings and directed studies were discounted
- Recitations or zero credit Problem seminars were similarly discounted
- No Colloquiums in any department were counted
- Courses listed with zero students were discounted
- In the Music Department, 1 credit courses were discounted.
- Individual Lab sections were all counted as individual courses (except for zero credit labs, like Computer Science Lab).
- All cross-listed courses were counted for both (or in one scenario, three) departments, except for in the "Core" chart, where they were counted only under their Core listing.

Shlomo Friedman contributed reporting.

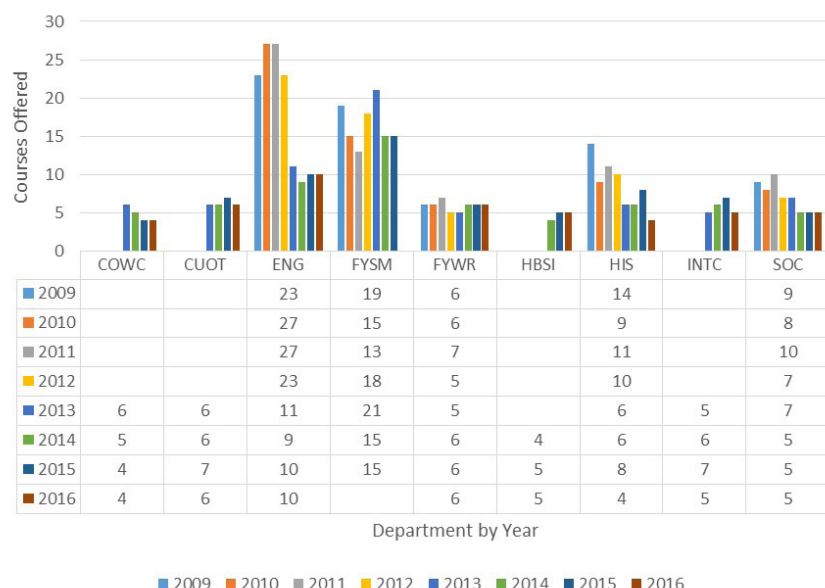
Graph 3

Departments with Significant Decreases in Spring Offerings



Graph 4

Spring Offerings of Cores and Related Majors



From The President's Desk: Syms Student Council

By Josh Teller

As the semester slowly winds down it is incredible looking back and reflecting on the achievements and accomplishments of the Sy Syms School of Business. One of the goals set forth for this past semester was to allow students to gain a better understanding of the profession they want to enter as well as give them more opportunities to network within the industry. The club heads went above and beyond putting on a record number of events and site visits. The Accounting Society put on two different events bringing in various industry professionals to speak to students on a variety of topics such as the differences between various types of accounting. These events were well attended by both accounting and non accounting majors, and was extremely beneficial for the Syms community.

Aharon Shevach, president of the Accounting Society had the following to say about his role. "I wanted to be president of the Accounting Society so that I could make a difference. I love the responsibility of providing students with networking events with industry professionals, in order to help them get one step closer in landing that dream job." This mindset and attitude is common across all of our clubs and have really helped strengthen the Syms community.

The Hospitality Management Club is another prime example of what Syms is trying to accomplish. Yadin Teitz, president of the club, has arranged numerous site visits including a tour of the newly ren-

ovated Park South Hotel which enabled students to learn about the challenges of running a hotel in such a competitive market. Club members also got a behind-the-scenes tour of Mr. Broadway and learned some of the key business strategies behind this very successful enterprise. When asked about his greatest accomplishment thus far, Yadin said, "I think my greatest accomplishment this semester was opening up the dynamic world of hospitality to students who knew very little about the sector. Having them join our club members on tours and to hear them ask questions and become more enlightened about our industry was

"THIS YEAR'S SYMS SHABBATON WAS A HUGE HIT AS IT WAS THE LARGEST POPULATED SHABBATON OF THE SEMESTER. RABBI DANIEL AND MRS. RACHEL KRAUS WERE THIS YEAR'S GUEST SPEAKERS AND THOSE IN ATTENDANCE QUICKLY LEARNED HOW MUCH OF A DYNAMIC DUO THEY ARE."

incredibly fulfilling for me, and I was honored to be a part of it."

One of the highlights of the year for Syms is the annual Sy Syms Shabbaton held at the Beren campus. It is always exciting seeing a large portion of the Syms student body gather together outside school hours and really bond in a fun, casual setting. This year's Syms Shabbaton was a huge hit as it was the largest populated Shabbaton of the semester. Rabbi Daniel and Mrs. Rachel Kraus were this year's guest speakers and those in attendance quickly learned how much of a dynamic duo they are. Rachel, who is the Group Director of Global Brand Ventures for the Westfield Corporation, where she leads brand partnerships and strategy for the World Trade Center retail development project as well as being on the leadership team for global expansion, invited students to partake in a hard hat tour of the building of the new underground commuter-hub they are building in the Financial District. This was an incredible opportunity and experience, and everyone who participated learned a lot about the rebuilding of the World Trade Towers.

After a great start to the school year and one semester almost over, the Sy Syms Student Council have already begun heavily planning for the Spring 2016 semester. One of the main things to look forward to is the annual Sy Syms Gala awards dinner. This year it will be held on April 14th, 2016. Expect some changes to the traditional dinner, and get pumped! Spring 2016 is going to be an incredible, jam packed semester for Syms!

5 Songs to Change Your Life

By Etai Shuchatowitz

This is a not a music review or a list of "Best Songs of 2015". Rather, the following is a personal reflection as told through music. Songs that have played an important role in my life, whatever that may mean.

Postcard From 1952 - Explosions in the Sky

For this list I knew I had to bring one song from my list of "Pretentious Orchestral Post Rock", and so went through my iTunes looking for the one. There are a few bands I put on the list of "Pretentious Orchestral Post Rock" (see: Sigur Ros, This Will Destroy You and From Monument to Masses), but none match Explosions in the Sky and their raw power and energy. I saw this band open for the Flaming Lips (hands down the best show I've been to), and they just totally nail it. Their songs all basically follow the same pattern, light guitar and ambience, drums kick in, heavy distortion filled big finish. But, this song, and especially it's beautiful music video, get me every time. I'm starting to tear up already as I type this with the song going on, and I'm not much of a cryer in real life. Sad things don't seem to affect me. If a friend says something I don't like, or if somebody I love passes away, I just kind of keep going. But, when I turn on music, it opens something inside and I can cry extremely easily. Music is my emotional connection to the world. And, nothing gets me more emotional than a good "Pretentious Orchestral Post Rock" song from the best band of the group. The song gets me excited and scared and hopeful in a way that no other song does. When the drums roll along I just feel like anything is possible. This is coming from a kid who doubts himself in just about everything he has ever tried doing ever. I spent a lot of my short lived music-writing career trying to emulate this band. And, while I never quite got it, they really kept me going for a long time.

Thoughts of a Dying Atheist - Muse

Muse is my favorite band ever. I don't think they're as talented as Radiohead (and, to be honest, some days Radiohead is my favorite band ever), but their excitement and energy is unparalleled. So, I started looking through Muse to pick a song to put down here. I think Black Holes and Revelations is a better album than Absolution, and I probably like Take A Bow and Animals more than this song, but I picked this one because I

freaking love a great rock song. A lot of their later stuff appeals to my love of interesting time stuff and synths, but this song, and really the whole album, is nothing but a great rock song. The guitars are loud, the lyrics are angry and meaningful, and the bass carries the whole thing. It's short - it's only 3 minutes long, and every second of it is pulsing. This especially resonated with a younger version of me who loved the lyrics, "Scares the hell out of me. The end is all I can see," as if somebody else acknowledging a fear of death validated my own (I don't know if I really deluded myself into thinking that Muse is the only band to write about death, probably the most common theme in all of rock). Coming from my origins of Green Day and Blink 182 (and other mediocre 90's punk-pop), this song just reminds me why I love music: it's fun and exciting, but sad at the same time. You can't really dance to it - all you can do is sit back and let it wash over you.



ing mincha from my dorm looking out on Washington Heights and, this is gonna sound stupid, but I felt almost something that I understood. As a young confused kid, unsure of what he believes or thinks or anything, trying his best to pray to Somebody or Something, this was the song I was looking for. I've felt emotional while listening to music, but right then, at that moment, I knew what I felt: I felt alone. I felt a wish to be different from where I was and for the rest of the world to care. But nobody would because my problems are just my own. And that moment, the one where the song came through my speakers, as I prayed that Somebody would hear me, stays with me. While the moment may no longer exist, I keep going back to it. It was real. It was a real moment of connection and loneliness and desperation all culminating in one big emotion. And, I'll be honest, I'm listening to the song right now as I type this and I can't help but go back there. And, just as the song cuts out abruptly, it feels like there's no answer; everything just ends.

Young Americans - David Bowie

Back in high school I went through a Bowie phase where all I listened to was Hunky Dory and The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars. Now, this song is from neither, but the reason it makes this list (even though it's from Bowie's later, weirder phase) is because of one Sunday when I was in the eleventh grade. I worked at a bagel store throughout high school called Rosenfeld's. One of my coworkers was this kid named Zach. He and I became pretty close friends (and still are), and we used to goof around. He wasn't much of a Bowie fan, but he had this song on his phone and used to play this game wherein he'd just play this song in the most unsuspecting moments and places over and over and over again. And I grew to hate the song with all my heart. But, ever since then, everytime I hear this song I'm back to that moment and I start to tear up. It's this stupid nostalgia for a moment that wasn't even that great, that I keep coming back to and trying to capture. I didn't love the 11th grade, nor did I love working at this bagel store. But, this one song is able to transport me back to that time and make me think that it was the best time in my whole life. It's the only song that really has the power of associating me with a moment in time.

SEE SONGS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

Floe - Philip Glass

Full disclosure: this is a recent addition as I only found this four months ago in my annoying "modern composers" phase, but boy is this song something. It's six minutes that starts slowly with single synths playing and very progressively gains flutes and a woodwind section before rising to a seeming cacophony of noise and instruments none of which mesh to form one song. It sounds like the bustle of everyday life with each instrument struggling to be heard over the confusing sounds of the rest of the band. I first heard this as I was daven-

More than Auditory Cheesecake

By Elliot Shulman

“Music is auditory cheesecake.” Steven Pinker, in his book *How the Mind Works*, argues this notion, that music is merely an evolutionary by-product, “an exquisite confection crafted to tickle the sensitive spots of at least six of our mental faculties.” Allow me to explain how an analogy so sweet could have so embittered musicians and cognitive scientists alike (I will get to the outrage of cheesecake enthusiasts next issue).

Pinker wrote this in 1997, when scientists were beginning to investigate the immense power of music, and its role in the evolution of the human species. Where exactly does music fit in along the line of human development? Why do we need it? This was a focal discussion in “Music and the Brain,” a course taught here by Professor Harry Ballan, a director of the Institute for Music and Neurological Function, as it introduces music in an entirely new light. Now, perhaps you may ask: maybe music is just a by-product, a mere manifestation of pleasant sounds thrown together? This question, though, actually highlights the key argument scientists are making – music is so much more than a collection of pleasant sounds. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Many scientists were frustrated with Pinker’s assumption, as music’s wide range of capabilities clearly indicates its evolutionary importance.

There are several theories as to why music is a staple of the evolving human species, but the one that seems to have gained the most traction is the social-bonding theory. Music unifies us, and a cohesive group is more likely to survive and produce offspring. Concerts and kumsitzes are more obvious examples of unification through harmonious harmonies, but there are subtler cases. Every game, the players for the New Zealand Hawks, a rugby team, prepares themselves for their matchup with a war chant, called the haka. There are no instruments and not much of a melody, but the ritualistic pre-game warmup is just as effective. The Hawks stand ready for battle.

The social-bonding theory explains why we have evolved to appreciate music, but what exactly is it that evolved? It is the wiring of our brain, which lends itself to several evolutionary processes integral to appreciating music.

A primitive cranial structure, the auditory brainstem, is where music strikes its first note. Sound travels through our ears directly to our auditory brainstem, where it initiates bottom-up processing and evokes a visceral response. Bottom-up processing is a type of process that works in tandem with top-down processing. Bottom-up processing involves perception of a stimulus, while top-down processing involves higher-order processing that influences perception. Here’s a simple illustration of these processes at work: when an outfielder hears the crack of a bat against a ball, he employs bottom-up processing, perceiving a specific stimulus (the bat hitting the ball). When he tracks down the ball, he employs top-down processing, using his mental faculties to locate the final destination of the ball. Bottom-up processing doesn’t require learning; it is just perception of a stimulus. When the stimulus is sound, it can be very evocative. Sound traverses a complicated pathway in our brain, reaching the cortical areas for higher-order processing only after first triggering a primitive reaction in the auditory brainstem. Vision,

on the other hand, does not travel through the auditory brainstem – it goes directly to the cortical areas. By activating the auditory brainstem in this roundabout route, sound offers our brain greater depth in perception than vision does. We can determine a person’s location from the sound of that person’s voice, and we can also sense that person’s emotional state through that person’s voice. The core of music’s immense power is our intricate auditory pathway, whose complexity enriches our perceptions and sensations.

Music’s journey doesn’t stop at the auditory brainstem, though. The cortex, too, is an important evolutionary development in music processing. It combines the evolutionarily ancient with the evolutionarily modern. An important aspect of the auditory pathway is that it is strongly connected to the emotion of fear. Without the cortical areas, music would only frighten us. The prefrontal cortex inhibits this fear response, and allows us to process the music, to appreciate its beauty. The very same clapping that can frighten a reptile, an animal without a prefrontal cortex, can entertain a human. This also explains the sensation of goose bumps when we listen to music: the hair rising on our skin is a result of the fear response, and the pleasure we derive from this sensation is due to prefrontal cortex inhibiting the fear emotion.



Music has an extensive sphere of influence. Unlike language, a process confined to the left hemisphere of the brain, music activates areas throughout the entire cortex. This can become a crucial factor in treating patients with aphasia, a speech/language disorder. Several years ago, an Arizona congresswoman named Gabrielle Giffords was shot in the head, losing the Broca’s area of her brain as a result. Broca’s area is the region in the left hemisphere responsible for producing speech (Wernicke’s area, also in the left hemisphere, is responsible for comprehending speech). Without this area, she could barely speak; but, she could still sing. Her singing activated her right hemisphere, allowing her brain to develop language there (this is known as melodic intonation therapy). Using music, patients with aphasia can acquire linguistic function in a completely different area of the brain.

Music can also be of great use in regulating our emotional and mental states. Hormones and neurotransmitters are responsible for regulating our daily functions, and imbalanced levels can have terrible consequences. For instance, soldiers suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder have high levels of cortisol, which increase stress and cloud the mental capacities. Music can act as a therapeutic agent by lowering the cortisol levels. Having imbalanced levels of serotonin and dopamine, as well, can cause emotional distress. Music can help raise our spirits by modulating the levels of these neurotransmitters.

Beethoven’s musical movements not only move us, but they also move us to move. Physically and physiologically, our bodies tune into music’s rhythm. The natural tendency to foot-tap or head-bang stems from the connection between our auditory and motor systems, in which music entrains motor activity. Ever get the feeling that you’re walking down the street in step to the song you’re hearing? That’s probably because you are. Our brain contains many internal rhythms, neuronal oscillations critical to many functions (including the circadian rhythm), and our motor systems are capable of synchronizing the internal rhythms to the external rhythm of the music we hear. When you clap in time with a rhythm, after the first beat you will always be clapping a fraction of a second before you hear the sequential beats, as your motor system is actually producing the internal rhythm to clap to before you hear the external rhythm itself. For those with compromised motor systems, such as patients with Parkinson’s disease, music can be used to entrain the body’s skewed internal rhythm, helping the motor system reacquire lost skills (walking, grasping). Physiologically as well, many organs in our body respond to music. Music induces a change in heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate, muscular tension and more (stimulative and sedative music typically induce in opposite directions). Exercising while listening to music that is synchronized to your pace doesn’t just get you in the mood mentally – it can actually increase your stamina by 15%!

Music can impact memory, and memory can impact music. Studies have shown that students who listen to music before a test fare better than those who don’t, as music improves our memory and attention. Listening to music while studying, though, does not seem to be a sound idea, as it distracts us from the task at hand. Memory in itself can shape the music we listen to. In psychology, there is a concept called the mere-exposure effect: the more you are exposed to something, the more that thing grows on you. This is true for music as well – the more you hear a piece of music and the more repetitions are embedded within the song, the more you’ll enjoy it. You probably won’t enjoy an automated playlist playing songs you’ve never heard before as much as the playlist playing songs you’ve heard more than a dozen times.

This article presents only a small glimpse of a vast and growing field. There is a great deal of research currently investigating the interplay between music and the brain, exploring the nitty gritty details of music theory and neural processing. Nevertheless, this article clearly demonstrates how erroneous it is to consider music as a commodity for consumption, a delicacy for our delight. Music is much more than just auditory cheesecake.

SONGS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

It’s a song, and a moment that I’ll carry with me forever. Or at least, until I forget about it. Whichever comes first.

Ramble On - Led Zeppelin

It feels almost obligatory to have a Zeppelin song on a list of songs to change your life. In fact, I’m convinced every single person who listens to rock goes through a Zeppelin phase. But, it doesn’t make it any less valid. I was a stupid kid. Like, a really stupid kid. Up until about the fifth grade, all I listened to was N’Sync and The Backstreet Boys. Not only did I listen to these very mediocre boy bands, but I wrote a fan letter to N’Sync. I’m not proud to write that sentence here (or anywhere - hell, I’m not really proud that it happened in general),

but I’d be lying if I didn’t. But, then something happened towards the end of elementary school. It began when I saw School of Rock, and then I started seriously playing the guitar and listening to Green Day. I then began my pretentious phase wherein I thought I knew more about music and rock n’ roll than anybody else. I proclaimed any rock album after 2004 to be a betrayal of rock and an act of “selling out”. It was during this insufferable phase of my life, in a desperate act to look like I knew more about music than I did, I bought Led Zeppelin II. Now, I don’t condone at all buying an album in order to look smart or sophisticated or anything, but I do fully condone buying Led Zeppelin II. Every track on that album was different and interesting and doing things I had never heard before. I was taken with the strange breakdown on Heartbreaker, and the drum solo

on Moby Dick is amazing, but Ramble On, a classic Zeppelin song if ever there was one, is what sold me. It starts off slow and acoustic with John Paul Jones’s light bass carrying the track. And then, just when you think you know what the song is, Robert Plant’s famous screech kicks in as he screams, “For now I smell the rain, and with it pain, and it’s headed my way.” I have no idea what this song is about - references to Lord of the Rings still confuse me - but the music is amazing. It makes me think back to when I picked up the guitar and wanted to be Jimmy Page. It reminds me of what it feels like to be eleven and sure of myself. It reminds me of what it means to be young and stupid and to connect to music more than anybody or anything. It makes me look back and wonder who that kid is. Seriously, go buy Led Zeppelin II.

Abstract Surrealism and Parallel Universes: Feature Interview with Connie Rose, Painter of YU's Brand New Library Mural

By Doron Levine

Just when students thought that the library construction was just about finished, they noticed a woman enter Nagel Commons with a camera, a tripod and a bag full of painting materials. She positioned the camera on top of the tripod, opened up her bag, laid out her materials, and began to paint with the most bright and vivid colors. Intrigued, students began to converse with her and soon learned that her name is Connie Rose, and that she has been commissioned to paint a huge mural alongside the new staircase leading up to the library, a massive abstract landscape that has already become a prominent colorful feature of our small campus. The Commentator sat down with Connie to find out more about her personal story, her artistic style, and the circumstances that brought a young talented British surrealist to the halls of Yeshiva University.

Tell me a bit about your background. Where are you from? Are you originally from New York? Where did you go to school?

I'm British and I studied Fine Art at Chelsea Art School, which is part of the University of the Arts London. Chelsea was my first choice because the school doesn't specify what type of art you have to do. You can choose to do any type of art you want and take your art in any direction during your degree – you don't have to choose just painting, or just sculpture. I did my art foundation, a one-year course before my degree, at UWE (University of the West of England) and I studied for a semester at an art school in Vancouver called Emily Carr. I've now been self-employed working full-time as an artist for nearly four years. I've always painted. I started off doing photo-realistic portraits in oil and then I began developing more of an abstract style. Now I've found what I would call my 'voice' as an artist in the more abstract style. I moved to New York because I think it's the best place in the world to be an artist.

Why is that?

I think there's a real artist community here. So I'm inspired by other artists that I get to know and we have exhibitions together and exchange ideas. I didn't really have that in London. Also, there are so many more art galleries in New York.

Are the galleries concentrated in a certain area of New York?

In Chelsea there are over one hundred art galleries. There are many in the Lower East Side as well, which is where I live. So I find that very inspiring. I think that the art in New York is more avant-garde than other cities that I've been to.

You've been self-employed for nearly four years, and you've spent all that time in New York City?

No, I've only been in New York for about six months. But I've been visiting for years and it's a dream come true to live here. The artist visa is supposedly difficult to get, you have to have a certain number of successes to get it and you have to prove that you earn a certain amount of money as an artist. Getting my artist visa to be able to live in New York was my number one goal, and I sobbed with joy when I got it.

Wow, congratulations on getting the visa and welcome to New York! You mentioned that you paint with an abstract style. How specifically would you define your style and what drew you to this type of art?

I call my style Abstract Surrealism. Because it's not strictly Surrealist and it's not strictly abstract – it's a mix of both. My work often involves Abstract Surrealist landscapes.

Interesting. What elements do you take from abstract art and what elements do you take from surrealist art?

Abstract art is any art that doesn't resemble something in the real world. But Surrealism involves taking things that you might see in real life and painting them in an abstract way. It means seeing things in a way that you wouldn't see them in real life, but it uses objects from the real world. My work is a mix of these two styles because you could point to elements in my paintings and say that they look like an atom or a bubble or a shape that you've seen in real life, but often these shapes don't specifically mean anything and the viewer can take what they want from them.

“THE IDEA IS TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE AN OPEN BOOK, AND THE WALLS ARE THE PAGES. IT IS THERE TO INSPIRE POSSIBILITIES BECAUSE THAT'S THE WHOLE NOTION OF A BOOK, BOTH WRITING AND READING – IT CAN SEND YOUR IMAGINATION INTO ANY PLACE THAT YOU WANT IT TO GO. THE LIMITS ARE ENDLESS.”



Connie with some of her artwork

They are to be visually enjoyed at perhaps a purer level than something representative. There's not necessarily a set meaning to the shapes.

Where does this style of yours come through in the mural you're painting for YU?

That's the whole nature of the mural – it's based on the shape of a book. It was originally a swing wall so that's what I based my design on, and, of course, it leads up to the library. So the idea is to make it look like an open book, and the walls are the pages. It is there to inspire possibilities because that's the whole notion of a book, both writing and reading – it can send your imagination into any place that you want it to go. The limits are endless.

Does that relate to the part of the mural that is designed to look like outer space?

The idea is that the viewer becomes a participant in the

work as they go up and around the staircase into this parallel universe. The concept of a parallel universe is challenging and bewildering. It sends my mind into an uncomfortable yet expanded place. The notion of endless possibilities of what's out there. That again relates back to the book – the book is a symbol of your imagination, which is limitless. A book can expand your mind and go anywhere.

I want to come back to specifics of the painting, but first a few more background questions. You said that you started with oil paintings but now you paint more in this Abstract Surrealist style. What drew you away from the oil paintings toward this style?

I actually still do the realistic oil paintings, but the Abstract Surrealist work is extremely different in terms of the creative process. When I paint a realistic portrait, I'm very slow and methodical and it's a lengthy, still process. Whereas painting an abstract piece comes more from the soul and it's more of an expressive moment that can't be repeated. While I paint a realistic portrait I normally listen to an audiobook. I focus on a small part and then I stand back and look at it and say, "Oh wow, I've done that." But when I paint an abstract piece, I usually listen to a piece of music on repeat – the same track all day – because it sends me into a sort of meditative state. I work with the rhythm of the music and it can inform the piece.

Right, I've noticed that you've been wearing headphones as you paint. Can you share what you've been listening to as you've been painting our mural?

I change the track each day. But the track I've been listening to most is called "Slow Love" by MØ. And I also listen to "I'm The Man, That Will Find You" by Alice Russell. Those are the songs that I've been playing – I've tried painting to these songs many times and they just work; there's something about the beat and the rhythm.

I was wondering if you were just wearing the headphones but there wasn't really anything playing, and it was just so you could pretend that you couldn't hear people...

No, but that would be a good trick (chuckling).

Who is your favorite artist, and why?

I have many favorite artists...

I won't limit you to one choice. Can you name a couple favorites?

Well I love Yayoi Kusama – she actually lives in a mental institution. She paints what she hallucinates, and her work is very bright and sort of trippy. I'm certainly inspired by her work. I

also love Chuck Close, a painter who does bright portraits with a lot of color. I'd be surprised if you can be a surrealist painter without liking Salvador Dali. But I have many favorites, and there are many artists in New York who are my friends who are my favorites as well. I admire Joseph Meloy. He does a lot of bright and colorful street art. We've drawn next to each other and he's inspired me. Also, working alongside Ari Lankin is always inspiring and fun. He asks the right questions and is always mixing things up.

Your work is certainly very bright and colorful. As a painter, do you have to love all colors equally, or do you have a favorite color?

No, I have a favorite color. I love blue.

SEE ROSE, CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

ROSE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14**No way, that's my favorite color too!**

Yes, I could guess by the shirt you're wearing. But my favorite shade is turquoise. I really like all bright colors – I use so many bright colors because it makes my paintings joyful. The mural that I'm painting here is very bright, and most of my abstract surrealist paintings use a lot of color because colorful art makes you feel good.

And you find that turquoise makes you feel better than any other color?

Yes. I think that blue is calming.

I totally agree. When did YU first approach you about this project? Who contacted you?

It was the architectural firm that is renovating the library, called ROART. Someone in the firm saw a mural that I did in El Salvador and I think one I did in Brooklyn. So they asked me to submit a design, and then I was chosen.

Do you have any idea what the process was like? Did they ask a bunch of artists to apply or did they specifically ask you?

I think they asked a number of artists to submit designs, and mine was chosen.

You were told from the outset what the shape of the surface would be?

Yes. I was given a computer-generated CAD (computer-aided design) image and an architectural drawing, and I submitted my design based on that shape.

Were you told why yours specifically was chosen?

They said that it was original and "light", and they said that they wanted something light to lighten the weightiness of the building but still respect the weight in seriousness. They enjoyed the concept of a book with limitless imagination and journey.

In terms of paintings that you've done, is this one of the bigger projects that you've worked on?

In terms of size, it is actually the biggest wall that I've ever painted. So I'm very excited about that.

What does that change practically? Does that make your painting more expressive because you have so much space to work with?

The main difference is the physical strain that it puts on your body while painting something that large. I didn't want to hire an assistant because I believe that there's something special about the artist doing it themselves. But my hand and wrist have been hurting me a lot – I had to have it on ice all day yesterday because I'm pushing down on the spray cans so much.

How many days in total do you expect the project to take?

I think about two weeks.

Do you have a deadline?

They said I can work at my own pace.

Back to the painting itself. You said that your style is mostly abstract and surreal. In this mural, you've painted some specific images that have meaning. Should we be looking for meaning and symbolism in this mural, or should we approach it more on its own terms and let it speak for itself?

There are definitely some symbolic images in there, for instance, the birds. You'll find birds in all of my abstract pieces because the bird is symbolic of freedom and movement, a journey, which all comes back to the idea of imagination and books. But any shapes that you see in the mural are just shapes to be enjoyed visually. The mural is supposed to be a landscape that comes out from the book. There is also going to be a little floating land with tiny people

looking out into the vastness. Whenever you stand on top of a mountain, there's that feeling of elation and wonder, which, again, comes back to the birds and the books.

What materials are you using?

I'm using spray paint, Krink, which is a New York brand of ink-based pens, permanent marker, acrylic, and wall paint.



Connie's mural in El Salvador that was originally noticed by ROART

You mentioned the hinge. What about the rail on the wall? Has that been getting in your way?

A little bit, but I knew that it would be there so it's not a surprise.

YU is a Jewish University. Were you told that before? Did that impact your work here at all?

Yes, I did know. But I didn't feel that it was necessary to include anything particularly Jewish in the mural. I took most of the inspiration from the library.

I'm sure you've noticed that the place where you are painting is a main hall with lots of people constantly walking by. Has the constant flow of people been bothering you at all?

Doing a public mural is nice because you get to meet interesting people. Sometimes, though, when I'm in the flow of the moment I can't stop to talk. Sometimes if I stopped and didn't carry on it could mess up the part that I'm painting; I could be in a particular headspace and the paint dries quickly so I have to work fast. Sometimes I feel bad when people try to talk to me and I can't talk back to them. The headphones help with that. So I guess it is a bit pressurized with all the people passing by but I was on a TV show in the UK where I had to paint live while being filmed and with a huge audience behind me so I've had different practice being under public pressure. Public murals are good for mixing up the solitary studio practice.



Connie Rose, 'In Another Universe You And I Are Lovers' 24" x 36", Mixed media on canvas, 2015

Has it been annoying? How many people have tried to talk to you?

Most people do (chuckling). It's not annoying. It's fine. I'm happy to talk to people and I'm really pleased that people find it interesting. I love the challenge of working in a different environment and when I can, it's nice to have the opportunity to chat with people.

Have you made any friends with people passing by?

Not many, because I've had my headphones on for most of the time. So I can't even tell that someone is trying to talk to me unless I see them. I can't hear anything and I'm usually looking at the wall.

I saw that you have a camera set up...

I'm doing a timelapse of the whole process. I'll post it online for people to see.

Is there some sort of grand opening ceremony planned?

Not at the moment.

So you're just going to finish, pack up, and leave?

Yes that could be. A press release will be sent to all of the major art magazines. There are already a few who have expressed interest.

Students are studying very hard for finals now. Do you have any words of inspiration for us?

My advice would be to stay sober.

We try our best...

At least for this week and just work really, really hard because anything is possible. I grew up in England and always dreamt of having this career and this life. Because I worked hard I made it happen. So don't waste your time. If you work really hard you can do anything you want. It's about working on things you love, enjoy the process of learning as really that's what life is all about.

Any advice specifically for students studying art?

I would say read widely. Go to as many art exhibitions as you can, and go to as many openings as you can. Get to know other artists. Never be jealous of another artist's success, let it inspire you instead. Try to travel as much as you can because being in different environments is always inspirational. I've travelled a lot and I think it has really helped my work.

You've travelled to see different artists from different parts of the world?

I just travel in general. I did an artist residency in Mexico and that inspired me a lot. Because I'm a self-employed artist, I can paint and draw anywhere in the world and use my environment as an inspiration for my work.

We are all wondering, so I'm just gonna ask. What is Connie short for?

Nothing! It's just Connie Rose.

Ok we had to know. You signed your name so early on...

Yes because people kept asking me my name. So I just thought, "Oh I'll just put it on the wall now."

You usually sign it towards the end?

I usually do it last.

Ok well that will put a lot of people at rest. Your name has been the talk of the town. The students of YU will always remember you as the artist who brightened up our school. Will you come back to visit?

Definitely. I will come and check out the mural again and hope people haven't been touching it. But I really hope that people enjoy it because, obviously, you will see it every time you enter the library. I would like it to be inspiring. The main message of it is: through books, your imagination can take you anywhere.



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The Power of Music

By Shimon Lindenblatt

Between living in the Heights and attending Yeshiva University - with its busy days and stacked schedules - we students can almost forget that we live in New York City. This place feels like "The City That Never Sleeps," not because of the city's diverse nightlife but because of endless papers and tests. But if you venture out of the Heights, you'll discover that every night, in this great city, you have the opportunity to see a Broadway show, go to a concert, or experience one of the other exciting events occurring in the city. Earlier this month, I was reminded of the amazing opportunities that are available to me in the city. Various radio stations hold holiday concerts featuring popular and up-and-coming acts, and I had the opportunity to attend and photograph one of these concerts.

On December 2nd, Fresh 102.7, a New York radio station covering "The best variety of the 90's, 2k and Today," held their annual holiday concert called "The Fresh Holiday Jam," at the Beacon Theatre. The show featured a wide variety of acts: Fall Out Boy and Sara Bareilles, who we grew up with, Elle King and George Ezra, stars of today's music scene, and the up-and-coming LOLO.

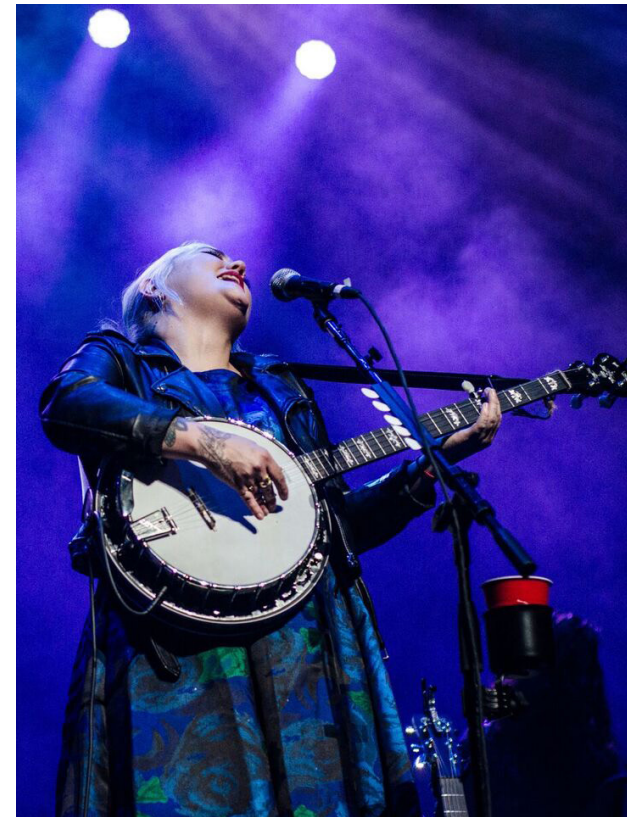
The show kicked off with an acoustic performance by LOLO who is best known for her vocals on the Panic! At The Disco's track, "Miss Jackson." Accompanied by her lead guitarist, she performed a soulful set featuring songs off from her 2015 EP *Comeback Queen*.

Next to take the stage was George Ezra, the British folk singer with a bluesy vibe, best known for his hit single "Budapest." George kicked off his set with an acoustic guitar in hand, and instantly had the crowd mesmerized by his intricate vocal tones in "Blame it on Me." Later during his performance he performed his

most recent single, "Barcelona." He prefaced the song with a short story, telling the crowd about a trip around Europe a few years back that influenced his music and led to the feelings and messages behind many of his songs. The entire experience around George's performance of "Budapest" was one of the most interesting parts of the show for me. The intriguing story involved a bottle of rum bought off a stranger in a Swedish park, the Eurovision Song Contest, and a next-morning decision to stay in Sweden instead of taking his early morning train to Budapest. Beside this being his fans' favorite

song, he also gave a personal perspective by sharing the story behind the song.

ible," to "Dance, Dance" and "Thanks for the Memories." The feeling in the crowd was electric as everyone sang along with the band at the top of their lungs. Fall Out Boy's lead singer Patrick Stump introduced the band's cover of the Charlie Brown classic, "Christmas Time is Here," which the band performed that night for the first time ever as a test run for the following night's performance at the lighting of the Washington D.C. Christmas tree.



Although we are very busy with our duties at Yeshiva University and often may feel stuck in the Heights, it's amazing how live music can help us forget these stresses, and let us separate ourselves for a few hours. A concert can be a time to relax and reflect - it's just you and the music. It is important to remember the power of music as a way to breathe and step back from the stresses of everyday life and to live in the moment, especially around finals time.

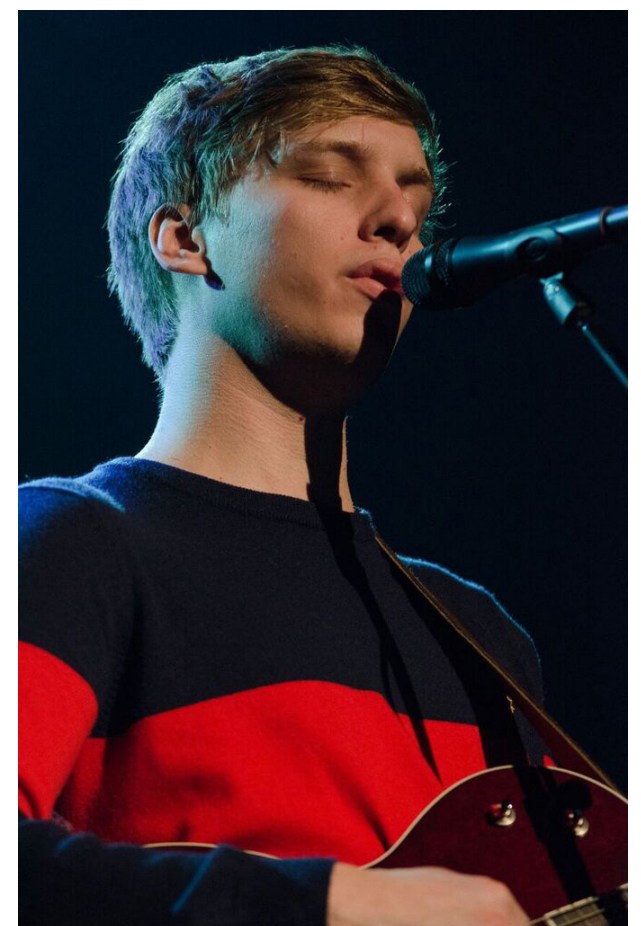
All photos featured in this piece were taken by Shimon Lindenblatt.



After Ezra's performance, Elle King, a country alt rocker, took the stage, accompanied by her band, showcasing her gritty powerful voice and playing a six-string banjo. King is best known for her hit song "Ex's & Oh's" which is now up for two Grammys (Best Rock Performance and Best Rock Song). Her no-nonsense country attitude was endearing, and, between her lively personality and great music, the crowd was captivated. Elle's performance included songs off of her most recent album *Love Stuff* and even included a cover of the Beatles "Oh! Darling." Her introduction to the performance of, "Ex's and Oh's" exemplified her personality: "If you know the words to this song, sing along; if you don't, make 'em up." She included "Happy Hanukah" in her holiday greetings at the end of her set; these two words, and the inclusiveness they portrayed, drew me closer to the concert as I felt my connection to the musicians grow stronger.

The fourth act of the night was Sara Bareilles, whose piano has been entertaining audiences since 2007 with her hit song, "Love Song." She began with her hit song, and from the first note the crowd was singing along. Sara then performed the Carole King classic, "You've Got a Friend," and dedicated it in memory of the victims of that day's attack in San Bernardino. She also performed "She Used to Be Mine," a song from *Waitress*, a Broadway musical that she wrote the music for. Sara ended her performance with one of her recent hits, "Brave," a song covered by the Maccabeats.

Fall Out Boy kicked off their thirteen song set with, "Sugar I'm Going Down," and as soon as the crowd heard the opening drums and guitar of the song followed by "Am I more than you bargained for," it went nuts. The band performed many of their current and former hits, from songs like "Centuries" and "Irresist-



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Alcohol-Wise: Scared Sober

By Moshe Blockman

We've all heard the complaints. Whether on the internet or amongst your peers, YU's required alcohol course (Alcohol-Wise) is worthy of a Coke chaser. While many of you might think I'll be bashing the course, I'm actually more interested in improving it. The truth, is I believe this class is extremely important.

I know not everyone shares my sentiments. "YU thinks alcohol is the devil," some quip, or "This is a joke requirement to replace a legitimate class," others scoff. In fact, this course is common in major secular universities—and if they're doing it, so should we. (Many also require students to take a sex-ed class—gasp!) The one bone I have to pick with the online course, however, is its extremist approach.

Simply put, all current students in YU have been instructed to take a tedious online course about the extreme dangers of alcohol consumption. Failure to do so will result in an account lockout for class registration.

In the class, students fill out a quick survey pertaining to the maximum amount of alcohol consumed in a certain amount of time by that individual. Honestly, if you're asking me to recount the time I drank the most alcohol, you have better luck finding a Washington Heights party you actually enjoy.



After filling out the form, Blood Alcohol Content percentages are revealed to illuminate the potentially dangerous effects of your calculated BAC. From this point on, the course takes on seriously ominous tones.

As my BAC levels climbed, I was met with a series of less than earth-shattering statistics. Listen, I get it. I'm 340 times more likely to get in a car accident when my

BAC was at its highest. From what I (don't) remember, I could barely put together a coherent sentence and I'm sure I couldn't even open a car door, let alone drive one.

Did you know that you are 470 times more likely to get destructive stomach issues if you eat 4 schnitzel laffas from Golan in one sitting? Now I'm no nutritionist, nor have I ventured to laffa binge, but I can tell you with certainty that you'll soil your drawers if you eat this much.

Too much of anything is bad for you, so why keep reiterating the same adage over and over again? The more you run over a cat, the flatter it gets. Ironically,

"IT'S HARD TO TAKE THE COURSE SERIOUSLY WHEN IT FEELS LIKE HALF OF ITS CURRICULUM IS AN INTIMIDATION CAMPAIGN"

it appears that Alcohol-Wise creates more flat cats than drunk driving itself.

Various sections began to discuss how overconsumption could make one "black out, pass out, or even die." To me this is borderline a scare-tactic. Across the spectrum, from drinking water to poking a hibernating bear, too much of anything can be fatal.

The constant fatal reminders of alcohol's dangers are reminiscent of the current anti-smoking ads on TV and billboards. The US government has been producing grotesque advertisements with the hope to captivate and convince audiences to abstain from smoking by tapping into their deepest fears. I'm not the queasy type, but when I see a commercial of a guy struggling to talk out of a hole in his throat since smoking gave him throat cancer, I switch the channel.

Realistically, the vast majority of you readers have experimented with alcohol at some point and most of you didn't die from it. It's hard to take the course seriously when it feels like half of its curriculum is an intimidation campaign.

If Alcohol-Wise truly wants to have an effective curriculum, it is in need of some alterations. Instead of having sinister, fatal undertones, perhaps the course would benefit from placing greater emphasis on practicality. We should be learning how to take care of our peers when they have drunk too much, instead of displaying



daunting facts like, "Heavy drinkers between 18-25 are two times more likely to get an STD in the past year than those who abstain from drinking." I would venture to say this method could save more lives than what is currently being taught. Preach holding your friends' hair while his/her head is in the porcelain bowl, not, "Drinking games like beer-pong can be dangerous and sometimes fatal." Learning the importance of how to properly hydrate and diet after drinking and when it's safe or not to fall asleep is far more important than trying to make us quake in our boots and telling us alcohol leads to poor academic performance. College kids are going to drink and they aren't going to stop just because their computer says so.

Under the given circumstances, Yeshiva University is closely following the status quo of collegiate alcohol awareness. Alcohol awareness is no joke and everyone needs to learn the dangers of copious consumption. Whether you're shicker at the farbrengen or turnt at da club, people from all backgrounds can abuse alcohol. Although it may have an over-the-top agenda, the course serves the important purpose of educating alcohol awareness.

And remember, Alcohol-Wise is one of the few courses YU offers where you can ironically drink booze while taking. Cheers and safe drinking!

Homogeneity on Campus: What We Can Do to Broaden Our Horizons

By Jordan Miodownik

This university has a problem. There's been a rash of self-congratulatory articles disputing the stance that YU has a lack of diversity. As an overwhelmingly white, religious Jewish, student body, I think this stance only serves to fetishize minority groups to make it look like we are an open-minded group of people. The goal of diversity on campus should be about inclusion and exchange of ideas that make us all more understanding and give us insight into the human condition, not about making us feel good about ourselves for having minority friends.

All this got me thinking about my own time on campus. What I've noticed over the last three years since graduating from YU (and found to be true for many of my friends who attended YU), is that this has been my first experience interacting day to day with people who are not mostly white, Jewish men. I have also learned that no area of learning is limited to only one perspective. True learning occurs when problems are approached from many perspectives. And that goes for college classes as well as in life beyond school. In fact, it never really even occurred to me while I was on campus just how homogeneous a group the YU student body actually is. So I did a bit of research. U.S. News and World Report releases annual rankings in many different areas for universities across America. It is by this metric that YU often claims its excellence as a top institution. Yeshiva's overall ranking in 2015 put it in a five way tie at #52. In terms of diversity, the average grade of the other 4 schools with a #53 ranking was .57, with 0 being the

lowest and 1 being the highest. With a 95% white and 5% "international" student body ("international" qualifying as a non-minority in this case), YU's grade was 0.

Besides statistics regarding the student body itself, what seems to be the biggest problem on campus is that discussing diversity is nearly taboo. During my time running the Seforim Sale, I pushed hard to carry obscure, often controversial titles and was met with considerable

"BESIDES FOSTERING A CLIMATE OF INCLUSIVENESS, DIVERSITY EXPANDS OUR CAPACITY FOR VIEWING ISSUES OR PROBLEMS FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES!"

pushback from the employees of the sale. If the world's largest Jewish themed book sale, which takes place in an institution of higher learning is not a place to explore controversial ideas and books, where is it ever going to be appropriate? I find it hard to believe that I am alone in thinking this way. Clearly, since YU has shifted the core requirements to follow a more interdisciplinary model, they see value in looking at issues from more than one perspective - and that's exactly what diversity on campus creates. Some people might argue that while YU has a largely homogeneous group of students racially and religiously, it does in fact encourage lively debates

and interactions amongst its students. But I assure you, lunch time debates about how much of the recession is to be directly blamed on Obama's particular brand of socialism does not qualify as a rich and diverse exchange of ideas. Really the biggest problem with the homogeneity of the student body is that it makes dissenting voices and already marginalized populations even more marginalized.

To be sure, I understand that Yeshiva University is not for everyone. What makes YU unique is specifically that it caters to a narrow group of people who form a community linked by religious affiliation. I am not arguing for sweeping reforms to push to accept people who wouldn't gain from YU's particular perspective on education and modernity in America. Without religious affiliation, there is little reason to select YU. What I am saying is that we need to be spending more time and energy embracing and celebrating the already existing diversity on campus.

There are already a number of groups of people in YU who qualify as minorities that most people seem perfectly happy to pretend don't exist. I refer specifically to male students who hope to pursue careers in the creative fields. Consistently cutting art classes every semester drives a significant portion of students who might otherwise add to the conversation, and only reinforces the overly medicine/law/accounting/finance oriented conversation.

SEE HOMOGENEITY, CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Refugee Plea

By Daniel Luxenberg

It is our duty as Jews living in the United States of America to defend the rights of Syrian refugees and to welcome them into our country. As Jews, we try so hard to educate our children about the Holocaust and its tragedies. We frequently talk about the Holocaust as we try to share the message that discrimination is wrong, and preach acceptance of all people. In light of the Syrian refugee crisis and the charged political atmosphere in certain European nations, many have been invoking the Holocaust and referencing events that happened in Europe in the last century. But rather than focus our attention on events overseas, we must examine what happened in America during that time.

Just seventy-six years ago, in 1939, America turned away the SS *St. Louis*, a ship containing refugees from Germany, and sent it back to Europe. Almost all of the nine hundred and thirty seven passengers aboard that ship were Jewish, and over a quarter of them were captured by the Nazis and murdered upon their return. Americans have a longstanding history of not wanting to accept refugees in the aftermath of atrocities for fear of their corrupting American society. Following the events of Kristallnacht, Gallup released a poll on January 20, 1939, that asked Americans if they would be willing to accept ten thousand "refugee children from Germany — most of them Jewish — to be taken care of in American homes." Sixty-one percent of Americans said no. Nine percent had no opinion (of whether they should save the lives of Jewish children).

Since 2012, the United States has accepted just over two thousand (of the four million) Syrian refugees with the commitment to accept just ten thousand by next year. Compare the American position to that of Germany, which has already accepted over fifty-seven thousand refugees, and intends to accept over one-hundred thousand, and the 'just' is ified. The vetting process to enter our country, according to the Migration Policy Institute, "typically takes 18-24 months, with high hurdles for security clearance." It begins with multiple interviews that consist of hundreds of questions. Once the refugees are vetted through the UN, they are sent to be considered for refuge in accepting countries. After another set of interviews with every committee/department dedicated to our security, they are subjected to multiple rounds of finger-printing which is scanned through almost all of our terror-suspect databases. Simplified into just two questions, a recent refugee who took asylum in New Haven, Connecticut said he was asked this: "Do you want to go to America?," and, "Did you engage in terrorist activities?" His response to Ian Parker of the *New Yorker* was simply, "I'm trying to escape terrorism."

There is a fear being widely spread that refugees cause terrorism. Yet of the 784,000 refugees accepted into the United States since September 11, 2001, three have been arrested for planning terrorist activity. Of the three, two were not planning their attacks on American soil. Not that this makes their activities better or more acceptable, but it does help put mat-

ters into perspective and further amplifies our vetting system. (An often referred-to statistic is that the Boston bombers were refugees. Yet this is false. Tamerlan Tsarnaev and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, the brothers who perpetrated the bombings, were in America on student visas.)

A recent letter sent to Congress from a host of national security experts urged our lawmakers to stop proposing laws that will prevent refugees from entering the US. "We believe that America can and should continue to provide refuge to those fleeing violence and persecution without compromising the security and safety of our nation. To do otherwise would be contrary to our nation's traditions of openness and inclusivity, and would undermine our core objective of combating terrorism. The process that refugees undergo in order to be deemed eligible for resettle-

**"WE MUST BE ON THE FRONT
LINES OF THIS STRUGGLE,
PROUDLY WEARING YARMULKES
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ment in the United States is robust and thorough," reads the letter. "Refugees are victims, not perpetrators, of terrorism. Categorically refusing to take them only feeds the narrative of ISIS that there is a war between Islam and the West, that Muslims are not welcome in the United States and Europe, and that the ISIS caliphate is their true home." Amongst those who signed the letter were former Secretary of State and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, former Director of the CIA General David H. Petraeus, and seventeen other highly qualified, bipartisan individuals.

Syrian people flee in order to survive. Ghaith, a law student in Syria, fled to Sweden in order to obtain refugee status there. To sum his story up in one sentence would belittle his struggle and journey: Penniless, he spent tens of thousands of dollars he did not have, lost many friends along the way, was schemed and taken advantage of multiple times, and had to leave his wife behind with the hope that his new status would make her jour-

ney easier. This decision is one that plagues him daily. "In Greece, someone asked me, 'Why take the chance,'" Ghaith began, "I said, 'In Syria, there's a hundred-per-cent chance that you're going to die. If the chance of making it to Europe is even one per cent, then that means there is a one-per-cent chance of your leading an actual life.'"

We must be on the front lines of this struggle, proudly wearing yarmulkes to show the world that we stand with the Syrian refugees. They are lawyers, doctors, businessmen, and university students (!) stripped of their identities by the Assad regime or ISIS. I fail to see a difference between us (then) and them (now). The recent attacks broadcasted throughout the world should not discourage us from helping people from the Middle East, regardless of their religious affiliations. For radical jihadists are perverting a religion, and popular figures are feeding off of the fear of the American public in order to win an election. Sadly, saving the lives of Syrian refugees has become a political argument. Governors are not allowing refugees to settle in their states despite it being a federal decision, and certain presidential candidates are claiming that only they can save this country from impending doom. Similar strategies were deployed by a certain politician in Germany prior to World War II.

I want to pose a question to you: How would you define yourself? Perhaps you would claim to be a college student, or a maybe a young adult, an older brother or sister. You might add a hobby: you like to ski. When you're curled up in bed, and need to get some sleep, you watch one last Louis CK clip. You're twenty-one years old. And what about your family: your sister, your cousin, your uncle, bae? All pretty much going through the stages of life, right? Now, what about Ghaith? A university student studying criminal law. His family? They have either have taken refuge thousands of miles away from where he resides today or remain in Syria, living each and every day in fear for their lives.

The morality of our country, and of our people, depend on our action.



HOMOGENEITY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

I refer to gay students in YU. In my three years in YU, I never once encountered a single openly gay student. Granted, that may have been due to my own ignorance and lack of awareness. But now that I am out of YU, I have a number of gay friends who attended YU. But they remained closeted in YU due to its (and admittedly many other religious institutions') hostile attitude towards homosexuality. I refer to the increasing number of students who suffer from mental illnesses. Having open and honest discussions on campus will, perhaps for mental health more than anything, help to destigmatize this issue. Foreign students remain largely separate from the larger YU student body and are treated as something like second class citizens. Lastly, there is the fact that the Wilf campus is situated in Washington Heights,

an area that has a heavy Dominican population, and that we have so little to do with them is a tremendous waste of a potential learning resource.

So what specific steps can we take to address diversity on campus? I don't know that any policy change is going to get us to a place of openness and understanding. Perhaps taking a liberal arts education in YU more seriously is important. I understand that YU has been struggling financially in the last few years. However, if the best solution is to cut class programming to the point where we become a vocational school, then we will have lost what makes this a great university to begin with. I think that it's worth exploring the idea of reprimanding authority figures who consistently belittle the struggles of homosexual students on campus and in the religious Jewish world as a whole. Why not appropriate more funds for clubs to host neighborhood events? Credit must also be given

to YU Active Minds for already approaching mental health openly, and we must encourage them to continue to do so.

But what good can come of diversity on campus? Besides fostering a climate of inclusiveness, diversity expands our capacity for viewing issues or problems from multiple perspectives. Also, in an increasingly global economy, it's beneficial to meet diverse groups of people before entering the workforce.

It is, after all, higher education's mission to challenge established assumptions, disrupt entrenched thinking, and broaden our frame of reference. I think that YU is an especially poignant setting for this discussion as it's the only Jewish university that prides itself on being the place where "Torah" and "madda", modernity and orthodoxy, come together. Diversity of thought is built right into the model and should be constantly encouraged.

Why The Mazer Yeshiva Program Can't Afford to Be Lakewood

By Netanel Paley

It's 9:23 am on a typical Monday morning. A student - let's call him Moshe - in the Mazer Yeshiva Program trudges into the Glueck Beit Midrash (study hall), coffee in his hand and a dire need for coffee in his eyes. He sits down across from his chavruta (study partner), opens his Gemara Sanhedrin (book of Talmud about the judicial system), and begins to learn.

11:57 am. Moshe finishes studying the sources prepared by his Rebbe, closes his Gemara, and begins the exhausting trek to the caf for lunch. There is no written record of the thousands of words exchanged between the study partners, no trace of evidence that they were even there.

1:02 pm. Moshe enters the shiur (lecture) room, hoping the ideas he discussed with his chavruta will be echoed by the Rebbe. As shiur begins, it quickly becomes clear to him that that will not happen.

2:28 pm. Moshe leaves shiur, satisfied by the intellectual sophistication of the lecture but left with more questions than answers, even if some of those questions are only asked subliminally. Chief among them: What have I gained from this shiur? Why am I learning this now?

9:25 am. Having forgotten those questions, he enters the Beit Midrash the next morning...

Do you see a pattern here?

The Mazer Yeshiva Program has long been the crown jewel of RIETS' Undergraduate Torah Studies division. It boasts more than 30 learned, dedicated Roshei Yeshiva who have devoted their lives to the study and dissemination of Torah. Its hundreds of students can boast that they learn Torah from nine in the morning to three in the afternoon. And as a yeshiva with a storied history and legendary Torah scholars such as Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, it at least deserves (though it does not always receive) the respect of greater Orthodoxy alongside its larger Charedi counterparts Beth Medrash Govoha of Lakewood and Ner Yisroel of Baltimore.

The Mazer Yeshiva Program also has significant flaws. For one, there is no reason or incentive for our Moshe to write down his own thoughts during seder (independent study). This might not be a serious problem on its own, but it seems to be symptomatic of a larger problem: Moshe and his peers are learning solely to prepare for shiur, because they don't feel empowered by their learning. That means if they don't understand shiur, or they didn't understand why their Rebbe's Brisker chilukim (conceptual Talmudic distinctions) are meaningful, their learning is less pragmatically productive and efficient. Of course, every moment spent learning Torah is to be valued and has spiritual significance. But in a program whose students devote as many as five hours to Torah study, it is imperative that they maximize their time. It is quite difficult to do that when they don't understand why they are learning Sanhedrin, even if they don't bother to ask.

The problem is that no one seems to have a good answer to that question. Ask any MYP student and you might hear something like this: the yeshiva adheres to the time-honored tradition of learning so-called "yeshivish" masekhtot (tractates) of Talmud such as Sanhedrin because of their supposed complexity and intellectual sophistication over halakhically practical tractates such as Berakhot. On the surface, this is merely an homage to the Eastern European yeshiva system and an unconscious choice for a respected yeshiva that has to keep up its reputation as an elite Talmudic academy. Yet a simple assessment of this seemingly inconsequential decision reveals how remarkably inefficient it is. Consider the following: The importance of mastering halakha when

one has time to do so is undeniable. Yet the majority of students in MYP do not have time to learn halakha regularly, and even if they do, do not have the time or resources to learn it in depth. Why not learn halakhically practical masekhtot so Rebbeim can teach both theoretical Talmudic principles (sometimes called lomdus) and how those principles become normative halakha? Not only would it provide an opportunity and much-needed time window for students to learn halakha, but it would also teach them about the halakhic process, something that few outside the rabbinic actually understand. And Moshe and the rest

"IF YU WANTS TO MAINTAIN ITS CURRENT INFLUENCE TO CHART THE FUTURE OF MODERN ORTHODOXY, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT IT MAKE A CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO IMBUE THE NEW GENERATION WITH ITS MODERATE ORTHODOX VALUES. AT PRESENT, THAT IS NOT HAPPENING."

of us would actually have something to write down during seder, whether it be notes on the margin of the Shulkhan Arukh or halakhic musings on the latest technological innovation for Shabbat.

Administrators and students might counter by highlighting the RIETS semikha (rabbinic ordination) program's intensive focus on studying halakha in depth, or the new 6-year-program for semikha-track undergraduate students which requires participants to master the Mishnah Berurah, an essential halakhic work that summarizes the laws of daily living. While both are certainly to be applauded, neither constitute a solution to the problem. Most MYP students do not study for semikha, rendering their years in MYP perhaps their last chance to devote a significant amount of time to studying halakha in depth. Many will graduate YU having never properly learned the myriad laws of Shabbat and Kashrut. And while Mishnah Berurah is one of the most important halakhic works of the last century, it cannot serve as a substitute for in-depth halakha study because of its condensed format.

It becomes even more difficult to defend the status quo in MYP when one considers its negative

MYP students groan when they reach portions of Gemara that are not intellectually satisfying, such as Aggadic material or kiddush ha-chodesh (declaration of the new month). And on Shabbat in the cafeteria, you'll be hard-pressed to find an MYP student reaching out to a student of another Jewish studies program (which, ironically, have a superior, more balanced curriculum) to share their learning that week. This sort of intellectually dishonest Talmudic elitism might have its roots in yeshivot in Israel where these students studied, not YU. But at any rate, MYP's current model is allowing this attitude to thrive, and that alone is a reason to make changes.

It is not enough to rebut that every yeshiva is like this. The largest Torah study program in the flagship institution of Modern Orthodoxy needs to be more than a traditional yeshiva. The majority of MYP's graduates will enter the workforce rather than the rabbinate, creating a new generation of laymen who will help shape their Modern Orthodox communities. It has always been YU's mission, if sometimes unstated, to play a role in weaving the halakhic and ideological fabric of those communities; the Center for the Jewish Future, for example, provides YU-sponsored pastoral and educational resources to Modern Orthodox congregations across North America. With the ever-increasing influence and broader acceptance of Open Orthodoxy, however, YU's grip on these shuls and schools is beginning to loosen. While the halakhic and ideological lines between Modern/Centrist Orthodoxy and Open Orthodoxy are clear to those in RIETS and those associated with it and its faculty, they are rather hazy to communities who are not, particularly outside the New York area. Especially in new congregations, RIETS graduates are competing with Yeshivat Chovevei Torah graduates for pulpits. If YU wants to maintain its current influence to chart the future of Modern Orthodoxy, then, it is essential that it make a conscious effort to imbue the new generation with its moderate Orthodox values. At present, that is not happening.

The unfortunate result is that less and less YU graduates and students, even those in MYP, understand these values. Take the concept of mesorah (tradition), for example, which was the most favored argument of many RIETS Roshei Yeshiva in their opposition to rabbinic ordination of women. I am completely confident that these Roshei Yeshiva, given the depth and breadth of their knowledge of Torah, can precisely define what mesorah means to them and how it plays a role in the halakhic process. I am much less confident that my fellow MYP students can do the same. In fact, I have discussed the meaning of the term with several of them, from different shiurim, and have yet to hear a satisfactory answer. Yes, there could be many different reasons for that. But regard-

less of the answer, it is quite probable that a new Torah curriculum, one less heavily focused on theoretical lomdus and more balanced by practical halakha, will leave MYP graduates with a deeper, more grounded knowledge base and a more thorough understanding of the halakhic process. This new curriculum, in turn, will prepare them to establish communi-

ties within the boundaries of YU's Modern Orthodox ideology and allow them to defend those boundaries from questionable halakhic innovations.

I'll be the first to admit that I am not expecting any changes to MYP soon, perhaps not ever. But I do know that the current hashkafic climate is too volatile for one of YU's greatest intellectual and spiritual resources to stand by and wait to react to the next halakhic innovation. It's time for a change.



correlations with the yeshiva culture. Perhaps most grievously, the disproportionate focus on theoretical lomdus has resulted in disproportionate enrollment numbers in different shiurim. The shiurim of two elder Roshei Yeshiva, two of the greatest poskim (halakhic decisors) of their generation, have significantly less students than in previous years because students are attracted to shiurim that favor Talmudic theory over Halakhic practice. It is not uncommon to hear

What History Teaches About Donald Trump

By Yadin Teitz

In a speech given in March of 2000, Condoleezza Rice informed the American people that “We need a common enemy to unite us”. Rice, speaking about the relationship between Russia and the United States, probably didn’t anticipate that this advice could also serve as an effective political strategy for running a presidential campaign. Fortunately, a certain Donald Trump came to this realization on his own in time for the upcoming presidential elections.

Since June 2015, when Trump announced his intent to run for president, his campaign has embarked on a dizzying trail of tactics designed to secure the Republican vote. Initial attempts were innocuous enough. It seemed that the objective was to place Donald in the conversation, to transform him into a viable and serious candidate who could take a place amongst experienced and well-known senators and politicians. It was to change Trump’s image from being an outspoken and loudmouthed real estate mogul to being someone who could actually run this country, and who could certainly run a serious race for the office.

Trump’s campaign has achieved unbelievable success. Over the course of a few short months, it has become impossible to talk about politics in the United States today without mentioning Donald Trump. It’s impossible to open a newspaper or read an online news source without coming across a picture of the ubiquitous redhead, even when his statements and actions are barely newsworthy. More than any other politician or electoral candidate in the country, Trump has succeeded in involving himself in every discussion. He’s managed to make himself profoundly relevant by having an opinion on anything and everything, and he’s managed to share these opinions loudly and prominently. We really must credit Trump for his marketing and self-promotional skills. Trump is so effective at drawing attention to himself that he doesn’t even need to pay for advertising.

Like it or not, Trump has redefined the political campaign as we know it. Granted, our vision of political campaigns, rife with strong internet presences, countrywide traveling, talk show interviews, Saturday Night Live appearances, multiple televised debates, and buzzy catchphrases, has not been around for very long. In the not-too-distant past, presidential candidates would have been expected to give a handful of speeches. It would have been considered inappropriate and undignified for them to travel from city to city and town to town to garner support. As a result, the American people knew very little about the individuals they voted for. If asked what their Commander-in-Chief looked like, I doubt many would have been able to answer. Radio and television changed things, but the level of communication that we have today between candidates and voters is unparalleled in history. Trump has taken this relationship one step further by transforming the presidential elections into popular entertainment for the masses. In the age of reality television, I am certain that more people are following the campaign trail than ever before, just to hear what Donald will say or do next. Trump has succeeded in changing the presidential

race from being about policies and ideological views to being about individuals, and he’s made everything about his opponents fair game to attack. It’s become a personal race, in which real people are fighting and arguing for a job.

All of this would be fine (relatively speaking) if Trump limited himself to bumbling and ridiculous rhetoric about his personal capabilities, experiences, and plans for the future. Even insulting newscasters and his political opponents would be fine (relatively speaking). But the problem has emerged in the second phase of Trump for President, when Trump has taken to attacking minority groups in the United States in order to ensure a constant presence in the headlines and widen his body of supporters. Seizing upon Condoleezza Rice’s statement, Trump’s campaign urges Americans imagine a country without the threat of Mexican immigrants and Muslim extremists. Trump’s campaign invites the American public

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ALREADY FORGOTTEN THE
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THAT THE LESSONS OF HISTORY
HAVE BEEN OVERRIDDEN
ONCE MORE BY CONVINCING
POMPOSITY?"**

to imagine a country where individual liberties are protected and hallowed, so long one is not a member of a minority group or protected class.

Like that of any conservative politician, Trump’s campaign urges America to hearken back to better days, when America was strong and powerful, when it was free of terrorism, when economic woes did not exist, and when the country was not burdened with world crisis. In this incarnation of America, citizens lived and worked together in complete harmony, and serious problems were nary to be found. For Trump

on racial discrimination and the disenfranchisement of minorities. This, too, is an age-old technique of gaining support. In the United States, there has always been a veneration for the idea that our country is positioned to be immune from the world’s problems because of our geographic isolation. There’s always been xenophobia and racial hatred in this country. There’s always been an “other” in American society that could be exploited for the sake of rallying support and unity amongst the majority. From the nativist “Know Nothing” Party of the 1850s protesting against Irish Catholic immigrants to Father Charles Coughlin’s anti-Semitic agenda in the 1930s to the white supremacists in the Klu Klux Klan and the non-interventionist America First Committee, fear and resentment of those who are different has always been around, waiting to be exploited.

Many are surprised that this can still be happening, that in a country as advanced as ours we still cannot tolerate heterogeneity, and that this weakness of ours can be so readily taken advantage of. Perhaps it is even more shocking that an individual like Donald Trump, a highly educated, well-respected, intelligent, and successful person can be the one galvanizing American fears of foreigners. It seems that we have lulled ourselves into believing that this could never happen here, that we are far too sophisticated, too worldly, too hyperaware to fall blindly into the abyss of history. And yet this is what Trump has done to us.

It would be easy to dismiss Trump if not for his worryingly high performance in the polls. While it is difficult to speculate what the ultimate outcome of the Republican nomination will be, the fact that Trump has managed to receive what appears to be overwhelming support from people across America is worrisome. Once again, an element of American society has shown itself to be persuaded by timeless arguments. They are convinced that Trump’s racist, xenophobic, bigoted, prejudiced viewpoints and plans are the way to solve all of our country’s problems. In my mind, the media has invoked references to the Holocaust as a desperate attempt at a wake-up call for Americans. Can it be that we have already forgotten the unforgettable? Can it be that the lessons of history have been overridden once more by convincing pomposity?

It would be less worrisome if Trump could be dismissed as an airhead, an attention-grabber without any real thoughts or visions. But as Trump increasingly stands by his comments and ardently refuses to apologize for his outrageous remarks, I’ve come to suspect that Trump actually believes what he is saying.

What will be the outcome of all of this? Certainly, there will be a segment of the populace who will vote for Trump. But I refuse to believe that it will be the majority. Perhaps it is my naïveté, but I have too much faith in the American people. It cannot be that something is so profoundly wrong with American society as to secure the vote for Donald Trump. In the words of

Professor Douglas Burgess, “We must have faith in the American genius for coming out all right in the end.” We must hope and pray that American voters will show the world that we will not stand for intolerance.

The author is grateful to Dr. Douglas Burgess, Assistant Professor of History at Yeshiva University, for his guidance with this piece.



and his supporters, this imagined utopian past is what we must endeavor to achieve again today. This element is Trump’s tagline of “Make America Great Again,” which implies that we once had greatness and then lost it. Perhaps it is Trump’s uncanny ability to look into the past and adapt it to the present that makes his campaign so successful.

Trump has recently chosen to center his campaign

Finance Jobs Overview

By Elie Sundel

Whether enrolled in Sy Syms or Yeshiva College, you may be interested in pursuing a career in finance. But what exactly does that mean? Perhaps you don't know where to begin, feel overwhelmed by the bevy of options, or believe that nothing exists beyond investment banking, which is famed for its 20-hour work days and overall grueling lifestyle. Although it is impossible to list every job within the financial world, this article will delve deeper into some of the better-known ones. That being said, it is critical to remember that this article contains some generalizations, and individuals should do their own additional research to find the career that best fits their skill set and aspirations.

Before getting into the individual jobs, let us first define Finance. The YU Career Center has distributed a handout that perfectly defines the domain of finance. "Finance addresses the ways in which individuals, businesses, governments, and organizations raise, allocate, and use monetary resources. It describes the system of moving money in order to provide capital where it is most needed."

Investment Banking: Dov Herzberg, an incoming investment banking analyst at Moellis, a top boutique investment bank, sees Investment Banks as serving two main roles: "Firstly, they advise companies on transactions such as mergers, acquisitions, restructuring, leveraged buyouts etc. Secondly, they help companies raise money by acting as the intermediary between the company and the investing public." If you are looking for a 9-5 job, this is certainly the wrong place. Bankers often stay up until the early hours of the morning working on Microsoft PowerPoint or Excel for their superiors and find themselves on-call all hours of the day. Due to the wide variety of roles that one may play, a banker must be detail-oriented, adept interpersonally and analytically, and arguably most importantly, have a very strong work ethic. Many bankers go into the role with a "2-year" mindset, working in investment banking for two years and then moving on to other opportunities, like private equity or venture capital.

Sales and Trading: People employed in a firm's sales and trading divisions will sell stocks and bonds to investors (including institutional investors, wealthy individuals, mutual funds and pension plans), while collecting commissions from these sales. When one of those investors decides on going through with a trade, the order goes to the "trading floor." Traders can either

buy or sell on behalf of those clients or their own bank. As traders often find themselves in need of making split-second decisions in a high-pressure, fast-paced and bombastic environment, one must be prepared accordingly. Although the hours at work vary per bank and per person, a trader, on average, makes it into work before the stock market opens and leaves shortly after it closes.

Private Client Services/Wealth Management: According to YU's career center pamphlet, those working in wealth management or private client services will "provide brokerage and money management services for extremely wealthy individuals." In some sense, it's "highly entrepreneurial," as one has to build and maintain a host of clients, and cater to them. Wealth management advisors will often take their clients out to lavish dinners and sports events. Among the qualities that are essential for this position are being personable, making the client feel important, and most importantly, executing successful decisions with the clients' money.

Retail Broker: One of the most common securities sales agent is called a broker. They most commonly sell securities (both stocks and bonds) to everyday people. The broker charges a fee for this service, and can also make money by finding a lower price for the security than was arranged with the investor. The wide majority, if not all of one's salary is typically made through commissions. Therefore, attracting and retaining clients is of the utmost importance and there is no substitute for being a good at selling and persuasion.

Research: One can either follow stocks or fixed-income securities. Stock analysts, or equity research analysts, make buy, sell, or hold recommendations to investors. They usually have a "coverage," or industry, which could range from anything like banks to mid-size technology and biotechnology companies, and end up becoming experts in that respective field. Writing, interpersonal and analytical abilities top the list of most important skills. On the flip side, fixed-income analysts, or credit research analysts, "analyze financial data of companies or individuals to determine that degree of risk involved in extending credit or lending money" and their ability to pay it back.

Operations: A firm's Operations division ensures that the the firm's business operations run smoothly and effectively. The YU Career Center pamphlet writes that "although the specific job varies firm by firm, it is helpful to think of those working in operations as internal consultants whose job is to make sure the company

is maximize efficiency, for the most part." For those interested in pursuing a job or internship in Operations, it is essential to have strong problem-solving skills.

Risk Management: Oversees programs to minimize risks and losses that might occur from financial transactions and business operations. The role demands that analysts interact with numbers so having a strong-skill set in that area is essential.

Although you may have noticed similarities between some of the jobs, overall, there are more differences than similarities, making each job a possibility for almost every personality type. That being said, a lot of skills overlap, including being analytically proficient, detail-oriented, interpersonal and most importantly, passionate. Additionally, being enrolled in Sy Syms is not a prerequisite. Although this piece only touches the surface, one should be able to get a good idea of where, if at all, one might fall within these different positions.



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“So You Want To Work In Israel?”

By Dovid Simpser

To cap a semester filled with great events and educational seminars, The Tamid Group had its final event on Wednesday night, December 16th. Ezra Kapetansky, NYC and International Regional Director at Tamid Group, moderated a panel of two Israeli startup executives, Jack Gottesman and Lior Vaknin.

Jack Gottesman was originally from Chicago, Illinois and made Aliyah in 2007 after spending two years in Yeshiva. He graduated from Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya (IDC) with a degree in communications and media studies. Jack is currently the director of marketing and customer development at Umoove, an up and coming software startup recently featured on Forbes' Top Sixteen Israeli Startup Watch, that developed a mobile app that is able to track both your face and eye movement from any mobile device. Jack discussed how making Aliyah before college definitely helped him acclimate to Israeli business culture, but believes that there are endless possibilities to make it in Israel. However, he noted that “the earlier you can get to Israel, the higher the chances that you will find a way to be successful.”

Lior Vaknin was born and raised in Tel Aviv, Israel, was a Paratrooper in the Israeli army, and recently moved to the U.S. to start his organization, Israeli Startups NYC. His organization is the largest active Israeli-American tech community in New York City that helps

" YOU WILL THINK THIS IS THE WORST THING IN THE WORLD... BUT A FEW WEEKS, MONTHS WILL GO BY AND YOU WILL MAKE IT WORK. IF YOU GO OUT THERE AND TRY, YOU CAN MAKE YOUR DREAM HAPPEN."

entrepreneurs, startups, investors, and local partners network and successfully collaborate. He described how as Americans we have a great language benefit.

Speaking from his past experience of working with Israelis he explained that “Israelis, no matter how hard they work on their accents, will always sound like Israelis. For sales and business development positions, you will always have an advantage.”

The panel also answered a question that many have, which is how the salaries in America compare to those in Israel. Jack made it very clear that you won't make nearly as much money as you will in the U.S. “In most entry level jobs in Israel you'll be making between 8,000 to 10,000 shekels a month. In dollar amounts, that is just scraping about \$27,000 a year,” he said. However, as Leor pointed out, “You just need to put in perspective. The salaries may be lower in Israel, but the cost of living is also significantly lower. You can do much more with less money.”

“What about the army?” Ezra asked the panel. He continued, “even though the new law allows new Olim over the age of 21 to be exempt from army service, how does one build a network if they don't go to the army? Is it worth it to volunteer anyway?” Leor was quick to respond that as much as the army is an experience that can shape your character and give you skills that would be applicable in all areas of your life, Israelis don't look at Americans any different for not doing the army. Jack, on the other hand, regretted not doing the army. He felt that the army is an easy connection and can help foster relations with anyone. He said that “if you show up to work on the first day and don't have any way to relate to the Israeli office, the army is a great way to connect. It is a basic conversation starter. ‘Oh, you were in this unit? My cousin, uncle, nephew, etc. were in this unit!’ The army is good for networking and culturally to understand how the country works.” He notes however, that he was able to do it without the army, you will just need to work harder to network.

Offering their advice on moving to Israel, Jack made it very clear that you have to understand the true ramifications of making Aliyah. He told the audience that “Aliyah is an amazing thing, but it has definitely been commercialized into this fantasy that people forget that Israel is a struggle.” “It's a real life over there” he said. “For all the amazing startups that you hear about, there are hundreds more flops and failures.” His tip for suc-



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cess is that one should both “work hard and network hard. People respect that.” Lior seemed to take another route. He told the audience to “just go.” He described that while we are still young and have nothing to lose, now is the perfect opportunity to try our lives in Israel. “You will fail,” he said somberly. “And many times after that. You will think this is the worst thing in the world, you'll call your parents [to tell them] how you made a huge mistake. But a few weeks, months will go by and you will make it work. If you go out there and try, you can make your dream happen.”

Although starting from very different positions, both Jack and Lior agreed that if you want to work for a startup, especially in Israel, you need to believe in what

SEE ISRAEL, CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

Reacting to The Sy Syms Peer Tutoring Program Changes

By Etan (Alex) Neiman

Now that finals season has taken us by storm before we could see it coming, per strict YU tradition, it is time to consider every advantage we students can use to push our grades over the top. One such advantage is the Sy Syms Peer Tutoring Program, which I know well as the student Peer Tutoring Coordinator. Though this program is simply tremendous, it has fallen victim to two of the more common words around YU these days: budget cuts. Over the summer, the administration changed the program's structure and rules. This uncertainty led to a noticeable decrease in returning student tutors. An additional change is that last year's free weekly review sessions, which were open to an unlimited amount of participants, have not as of yet been reinstated. The net result is that while a great number of students still seek to benefit from the program, fewer students are able to attain a session with a tutor. In order to make sure that you can aptly navigate the program's changes, successfully secure a tutoring session, and best understand this terrific program in general, there are five key questions you need to know the answer to.

1) What exactly is the Sy Syms Peer Tutoring Program?

The Peer Tutoring Program pairs student tutors who have previously excelled at a particular course with students currently enrolled in the course who are seeking additional support doing homework, preparing for a test, or just keeping up with the class. In a true definition of a win-win, Sy Syms pays the tutors and the tutoring sessions are free for the students.

2) This program sounds fantastic; how do I sign

up for a session with a peer tutor?

Gone are the days when a student could schedule a tutoring session by just emailing or texting the tutor. It is still, however, very easy to sign up for a tutor. Simply go to the yu.edu Academic Advising Wilf campus homepage and click on the bottom right link, as you would to sign up for an appointment with an academic advisor. Once you log in, select the “Peer Tutoring- Sy Syms” drop down tab from the top-center of the page and use the course filters to find a tutoring session which best fits your schedule.

3) What courses can I get a peer tutor in on the Wilf campus?

The Sy Syms Peer Tutoring Program currently offers eleven courses on the Wilf campus: Accounting Principles I and II, Principles of Finance, Management Accounting, Business Algebra, Statistics for Business, Quantita-

"THE SY SYMS PEER TUTORING PROGRAM HAS CHANGED THE WAY I PREPARE FOR EXAMS."

- ELISHA ROSENWASSER

tive Methods Management, Intro to Information Systems, Corporate Finance, Portfolio Management, and non-CPA Business Law. This number, however, is highly deceptive. While the Accounting and Finance Principles courses offer eight and five tutors respectively, the other eight courses only offer either one or two tutors. Considering that students can also schedule those one or two tutor's



Popular tutor Shlomo Frishman assists Elisha Rosenwasser in preparing for his Accounting Principles I final

available timeslots for the popular principles courses they tutor as well, this makes it nearly impossible to secure a tutor's time-slot for those eight courses.

4) How far in advance should I sign up for my tutoring session?

This is where it starts to get tricky. As was before mentioned, there are less total Wilf tutors this semester than last year (a 30% reduction to be exact) and the weekly re-

SEE TUTORING, CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

The Executive Series

An Interview with Mr. Bruce Taragin

By Raymond Cohen

About The Executive Series:

Through 'The Executive Series', The Commentator provides its readership with access to the thoughts and experiences of highly accomplished individuals in the business world. The column has a conversational style and expresses the unique story of each business leader, including their motivations, struggles, successes and failures. 'The Executive Series' also serves as a forum for a broader conversation about leadership in business and in life.

About Mr. Bruce Taragin (Adapted from BlumbergCapital.com)

Mr. Bruce Taragin currently serves as a Managing Director for Blumberg Capital, a San Francisco based early-stage venture capital firm. Bruce has 23 years of experience as a venture capital investor, entrepreneur, technology investment banker and corporate attorney. Prior to joining Blumberg Capital in 1998, Bruce co-founded and held several senior management positions within technology companies including Charles River Computers. Bruce also structured and managed early-stage technology transactions at Hambrecht & Quist, Mayer Brown & Platt and Bankers Trust Company. A native of New York, Bruce earned his BA in Finance and Communications, cum laude, from Yeshiva University, and his MBA and JD from Fordham University.

Bruce serves as a member or observer on the Board of Directors of Appboy, Arcadia Data, Bee, BioCatch, Coverhound, Lenddo, Mariana, Revionics, Roam and Sealights. He also serves on the board and the investment monitoring committee of the Jewish Community Foundation of Northern California.

This interview was conducted by Raymond Cohen.

Raymond Cohen: When was the first time you considered yourself a leader? How did that experience shape your leadership style as you advanced in your career?

Bruce Taragin: It's an interesting question, and the words "leader" and "leadership" take on different meanings and different shapes and forms over the course of one's life and career. I reflect back to when I was in High School, I was enrolled in the honors program at YU High School where they had some leadership courses and seminars. That sparked my appetite for leadership and as I moved on to YU undergrad, I served as Junior class president, Vice President of the Liberal Arts Club at Yeshiva College and President of the Sy Syms School of Business Student Council. I was actually the first student president of Sy Syms. I graduated 1989, the first graduating class of the business school, and so I was the 'George Washington' of Sy Syms. It was interesting to be a trailblazer in that capacity. I learned a lot about what it's like to lead something from the ground up.

RC: Who were your early influences? How did they impact you as an emerging leader?

BT: Definitely my parents and my siblings. The bar was set really high for me. My dad was a tremendous athlete and was recruited to play professionally, yet managed to balance interests and career and became a dentist who started his own practice. My mom also launched her own business in advertising. So I saw an entrepreneurial spirit in both of them. And all three of my older brothers were all amazingly accomplished – they attended great institutions, graduated at the top of their programs, were captains of sports teams - two of my brothers were Editor-in-Chiefs of The Commentator. All of them inspired me to strive to accomplish my

goals and to avoid settling for mediocrity.

RC: What is one of the biggest challenges young professionals will face on the way to a



successful career?

BT: I think one of the greatest challenges in life is finding that work-life balance. I've personally been a big advocate of Maimonides' approach of balance. Obviously everyone will have their own definition of what that practically means but the concept of seeking out a balance is extremely important. And probably one of the greatest lessons I've learned that I try to transmit to people who are starting out in their careers is to find a mentor - someone that you can really see as a role model. Find someone that understands your priorities and can guide you in a real way.

RC: Who, would you say, has filled that role for you?

BT: My wife, Michelle, who also went to YU for college and is a doctor. Having her as a partner has enabled me to pursue my dreams. I had this inflection point in my career when I left law. I was working at a big law firm on Park Ave. and I wasn't very happy - I wasn't fulfilled, it wasn't my passion. Her perspective was: 'quit - you'll figure it out.' She was in advertising and I was in law. We both quit our jobs and went back-packing across Asia for a couple of months and then moved to Israel where I got a job working for Hambrecht & Quist - a leading San Francisco based technology investment banking firm. My wife inspired me to overcome the constraints and fears that so many of us face in our day jobs. We're always afraid to go out there on a limb and take a chance.

RC: How do you compare your experience in law to being in venture capital?

BT: When I was working in law, I would rue Sunday evenings thinking about going into the office on Monday and, in contrast to that, in venture capital, I work 24/6 and love every second of it. It's inspiring to meet with young entrepreneurs who aspire to build the next Google, the next Facebook, the next Twitter. I have the opportunity to meet with between 3000-5000 companies a year and invest in around 10-15 of them. Working with entrepreneurs and investing in their companies is truly a privilege and I pinch myself every day.

RC: Why did you decide to come to Yeshiva University for your undergraduate degree?

BT: My dad was a dentist, my mom was an entrepreneur, my two older brothers were doctors, my other brother was an MBA and a CPA who worked on Wall Street and actually all of us went to Yeshiva University. My wife went to Yeshiva University as did her father. So, for us, YU was always considered to be the 'Harvard' of religious institutions and something that spoke to us. Although I had opportunities to go to Ivy schools and some other prestigious programs, to me the 'Torah U'Madda' approach was really important to carry forward.

Another thing that I've come to love about YU is the strength of its alumni network. So many alumni have gone on to amazing careers and their first reaction when hearing you're from YU is 'How can I help?' which is really amazing.

RC: What is one of the biggest mistakes you'll see in a pitch?

BT: Insufficient market research. Since we invest pre-product and pre-revenue, often times an entrepreneur will say 'I haven't had any customers, so I don't yet know what the market will think.' That's the wrong answer. Before we invest in a company, we have a network of Chief Information Officers and Chief Marketing Officers from companies like Coca-Cola and Johnson & Johnson who review the product. The question we're after is 'How big is the problem that this is solving?' In other words, is this product a 'nice to have' or is it a 'must have'?

For example, one of our companies, Hootsuite, is a social media aggregator platform now valued at approximately a billion dollars, making it a unicorn. I would say that the CEO and founder Ryan Holmes was incredibly successful at perfecting Hootsuite's product/market fit.

RC: Tell me about an ethical dilemma that you once faced. How did you approach the situation?

BT: In around 2003-2004 we went to Dubai to raise money for one of our funds. Some of the groups that we spoke to were very interested in us and were offering us hundreds of millions of dollars in investments. But considering that we were in Dubai, we had to downplay our involvement with Israel. I was sitting over breakfast with my partner and I said 'Who are we? we are a U.S./Israel fund, we're both Zionists, we are fiduciaries. Some of our current investors come from families who built the State of Israel and part of the reason why they invested with us is because of the value we are creating in Israel and abroad.' Needless to say, we used the situation as an opportunity to reassert ourselves and our values as an organization.

RC: What are some of Blumberg Capital's core values, and how do they shape the company's decision making?

BT: We have integrity. We're transparent. We're entrepreneur friendly, those are the mantras that we live by, that is our ethos. That's what has enabled us to be successful; because people really appreciate the way we interact with them. In life, it's not so much what you say as much as it is how you say it. I try to make sure that as a firm we over-deliver on our promises. Entrepreneurs appreciate that we have a sense of integrity, that my word is my bond. Sadly, most people don't do that. Integrity and a good work ethic will go a long way in your career.

ISRAEL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

you are doing. "Working in a startup isn't a 9-5 job" noted Jack. "You will be answering emails at 1:00am, and that is tough, but if you work for a company that you find to be meaningful, you will feel that you are building something- you are investing in yourself."

Jake Schrier, an Economics Major at Yeshiva Col-

lege, described the event as a "real dose of reality. There were moments that seemed discouraging as you come to realize that the dream of Aliyah isn't such an easy transition, but overall I feel more ready and prepared to take the next step in creating my career in Israel," he told The Commentator. The event was a huge success, enlightening those hoping to gain from the panel's wisdom and experience, so that one day they too

can take the steps to create successful careers in Israel. The panel characterized the journey ahead as one filled with many twists and turns, but one thing is clear: with hard work and devotion, you will find your way to be successful in Israel. As Jack Gottesman said so clearly, "There are so many different ways to make your career a success, you just need to make yours happen."

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Startup Profile: Agora

By Adam Kramer

Some of the most famous entrepreneurs and business leaders, such as Mark Zuckerberg, Steve Jobs, and Bill Gates, dropped out of school to start their own businesses. We idolize these people for their accomplishments, but also for having the gall to suspend their education and put all their eggs in one basket by pursuing their careers. Having a recent YU student, in essence a peer, who followed the same initial steps in his career, is a totally different situation though.

Adam Moisa founded his startup, Agora, in 2013 while still a YU student. Agora allows users to create, edit, and collaborate on documents on three cloud services, Dropbox, Google Drive, and Box, all from one place. As Moisa, the CEO of the company, explains, his product is also “plug-and-play for any future cloud storage service we want to integrate,” which is enabled by the patented technology they developed. He also shared that he’s “been happy with the feedback we’ve gotten thus far from users, investors, and potential corporate partners.” With Agora’s recent launch to Beta, or testing stage, The Commentator decided to look at Moisa’s story and future vision for the startup.

When asked how he started a company that now employs 19 people while still a student at YU managing a



dual curriculum, Moisa answered that when he “first had the idea for Agora, the time commitment was minimal so balancing school and work was pretty easy. I was able to go to class, do my homework, and study for tests but I always made sure to dedicate a set amount of time each day to focus on the business.” Moisa related that he took advantage of YU’s professors and deans, seeking their advice and guidance as he devised his plan for Agora. In fact, it was these conversations with YU faculty that led him to the partners that he still works with today. But, as he got more serious with Agora and brought in two other people to work with him, “things began to get more ‘real’ which is when I had to sit down, weigh my options, and ultimately decide what the best decision was for me personally and professionally,” according to Moisa. Looking back at his time at YU, Moisa thinks that while “being a student has its challenges but the amount I gained both in and out of the classroom is something I don’t think I’d have been able to find anywhere outside of YU.”

Having left YU, Moisa was free to work on Agora full

time. But that’s not to say that things automatically got easier, or that the product built itself. On the contrary, Moisa had to face a whole series of issues as he built up his company and created a functioning product. And, as is often the case with startups, financing his company was the largest challenge Moisa confronted. But, he adds a caveat that financing his project “led to an amazing learning experience and an incredible development team.”

Another issue that Moisa confronted was building up his dev team (computer programming and engineering). When building a software product such as Agora, a large and experienced dev team is needed so that the finished product is functional and enjoyable to use. Agora’s CTO, Ronan Weinberg Waks, “had the idea to build our development team in Argentina, his home country.” There, he’d be able to employ a dev team that would cost less but be just as talented as a U.S.-based team. But, Moisa describes, “this led to a slew of other issues such as the fact that, although we consider our dev team ‘in-house,’ there are cultural dif-

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WHEN YOU NEED TO SHARE
FILES OR WORK TOGETHER ON
FILES, THINK AGORA.”**

ferences, a language barrier, and a physical divide.” However, Moisa felt that learning to work with another culture was an even bigger challenge than the language barrier or physical divide. “You can always sleep less or find a translator, but there’s no quick fix for proper communication.”

Thankfully for Moisa, these linguistic and cultural differences between his domestic and foreign employees were not insurmountable. He describes how Agora “overcame this by learning about their culture, how they worked, how they thought, and it heavily influenced the way we ran our business. We learned new ways to communicate, both literally and figuratively. We use tools that keep the current agenda and tasks very clear to the entire team, especially knowing where we stand on those tasks.” For Moisa, the result is extremely beneficial for the company in that they not only built an “incredible product,” but also one “with a powerful foundation for future growth and iteration.” And, it’s “all at a much lower cost than we thought imaginable,” adds Moisa.

The aforementioned dev team based in Buenos Aires is only one part of the larger Agora team, which also works out of offices in Ukraine and New York City. As CEO, Moisa’s role, in his own words, is to “understand and define the bigger picture of Agora.” This includes “exploring new opportunities, building partnerships, raising capital, paying bills, and my least favorite - dealing with lawyers... my wife is a lawyer though so I have good practice.” Doron David,

Agora’s Chief Operating Officer, oversees the day-to-day activity of the company, enabling the rest of the team to focus on their respective roles. Ronan Weinberg Waks is the company’s Chief Technology Officer, and his job includes managing the entire development team out of Buenos Aires, recruiting new engineering talent, and deciding what technologies to use to build and optimize. His dev team includes project leader Matias Dumrauf, who handles architecture and daily team management. Working under Dumrauf are six backend and frontend developers, a satellite dev team of two people working out of Ukraine, who are responsible for Mac and Windows versions of Agora, and a mobile dev team of three people handling iOS and Android programming responsibilities. Beyond dev responsibilities are the Director of Marketing and a three-person design team. According to Moisa, the Director of Marketing Matteo Balzarini “creates and implements all marketing initiatives and schedules related to branding, messaging, and ultimately reaching new potential customers.” The design team is “responsible for design of all versions of platforms, landing page/blog, and all media related content.”

As mentioned earlier, Agora just launched their product into open beta stage, and users are free to sign up and use the software. That hasn’t stopped Moisa and his team from planning new features and fixes for Agora. In the short term, Moisa plans “to continue adding new features to Agora that will not only help grow our user base but retain those already using it. Since we’re building a product for people, we always build features with users in mind and based off of user feedback.” Moisa delineated his process for considering new features based on customer feedback. “When we get suggestions or requests for new features we always have to ask ‘why,’ not to reject the feedback, rather to truly understand why and see if this is a unique case or something needed on a wider scale.”

With people now using Agora on a daily basis, Moisa related that his team now has to focus much more on hitting their deadlines. “Generally speaking, deadlines are lax in the world of technology and we’re taking what we’ve all learned from mistakes we’ve made along the way to refine the way we operate in all aspects of the business.” According to Moisa, once they refine their product and ensure that users are happy with it, they’ll begin scaling up to larger, enterprise customers.

These shorter-term goals are critical for Moisa to ensure that the company gains customers and reaches its potential in that sense. But as a larger, long-term goal, Moisa wants Agora “to be the platform one use to manage and work with your files online. When you need to get a file, think Agora. When you need to edit on a file, think Agora. When you need to share files or work together on files, think Agora.” Moisa sees himself working on Agora for a long time, with the size of the Agora team and platform the only thing changing between now and then.

For the aspiring entrepreneur in the ranks of YU, Moisa also included his thoughts and recommendations. “First and foremost, I do not recommend dropping out of college prematurely. Really make sure you have your cards aligned...make sure you really understand the consequences of such a decision.” Moisa also cautioned, “being an entrepreneur is really tough. If you do it right you’ll end up working harder and longer hours than most ‘mainstream’ jobs out there.” Lastly, Moisa advised people to get good partners and establish a strong team. Moisa added, “Without my amazingly talented partners, Agora would not be

TUTORING, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

view courses have not yet been reinstated. Due to this overall reduction in available tutoring, you must take care when signing up to make sure it is far enough in advance to get an appointment. To find out exactly how far in advance is necessary, I polled four students who are heavily involved in the program: Shlomo Frishman, Jonathan Kaplan, Eli Lonner and Elisha Rosenwasser. Rosenwasser uses peer tutoring to get support for exams and coursework, while Frishman, Kaplan and Lonner are popular tutors. The consensus among the panel was that in order to make sure that you can get a session at a time fitting your schedule, it is a must to book your appointment a week in advance. It is best to do so as far as two weeks in advance, if possible. For his part, Kaplan sympathizes that he “knows that it can be difficult

to plan that far out, but that’s typically how things pan out.”

5) What is the best way for me to utilize the program?

Rosenwasser has found that “the Sy Syms Peer Tutoring Program has changed the way I prepare for exams.” Lonner, however, cautions students not to wait until right before an exam to book a tutor. Since many courses introduce a new way of thinking, he has found that “one or two sessions with a peer tutor at the beginning of the semester can ensure success throughout the duration of the course.” An additional byproduct of the program, as Kaplan discovered, is that the students and tutors “get to meet guys from all years and have the chance to engage lots of different personalities.”

BONUS QUESTION Why do the awesome peer tutors give their time to the program?

Frishman wants to “pay it back.” He recalls that “The reason I was able to succeed in my courses was because of the individualized attention I received from my professors and the Office of Academic Support. I thought the best way to acknowledge the help I received was by helping those who struggle with the same material I struggled with.” For Lonner, there is nothing better than seeing that “a student who I worked with for several sessions is doing well in the class.” Not to worry, the peer tutors aren’t all crazy. Kaplan readily adds that “a few extra bucks in my pocket can’t hurt.”

Author’s Note: The Sy Syms Peer Tutoring Program administrators and myself are working on a way to reinstate the popular weekly review courses and are hoping to have this fundamental service restored for the Spring semester.



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